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Personal Accounts of AIDS Orphans

Out of tragedy comes hope

Emmy Anguyo never had the chance to say goodbye to his mother. She died four years ago of AIDS in Uganda.

“But I was here in the United States on tour with the Children of Uganda,” Emmy says.

Her death left Emmy an orphan. His father had died in 1992.

Sixteen-year-old Gyavira Kasule has no memory of either of his parents. Both died of AIDS when he was just an infant.

Emmy and Gyavira are just two of some 1.7 million AIDS-related orphans in Uganda, a country with the largest number of AIDS orphans in the world.

AIDS is the leading cause of death, killing more than 300 people a day.

Despite their personal tragedies, Emmy and Gyavira count themselves as among the lucky ones.

They are optimistic about their future and grateful for the fact they were able to live in one of Uganda’s Daughters of Charity Orphanages.

A Place to Call Home

Gyavira lived in an orphanage from about the age of three.

“It was great to know I had a path to my future. Every day I woke up and had something to eat, had someone to show me love and to be friends with,” Gyavira says.

“You know I had something in common with them. We were all orphans, so we were not alone.”

“Living in the orphanage was a privilege, as very many people in Uganda don’t have anyone to take care of them,” Emmy adds.

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 [Listen to Gyavira Kasule talk about how his grandmother's sacrifice placed him on a path to his future.](#)

"AIDS has caused a lot of children to be homeless in Uganda," he says. "You see them living on the streets. They walk around with nothing to do. Many women are left alone without husbands and with no jobs. They can't pay school fees for their children."

The person who provided them the most comfort during these years was a nun named Sister Rose Muyinza. She founded the Daughters of Charity orphanages in 1972 to care for children who lost their parents to war, AIDS and other diseases.

[^ top](#)

Emmy's Story

Emmy has been performing Ugandan song and dance since he was five. He has been part of the [Children of Uganda](#) dance troupe since he was ten. He was on a fundraising tour in the US when his mother died.

It was through his father that Emmy landed in the Daughters of Charity orphanage.

"My dad used to work for the primary school at the orphanage in the capital, Kampala. He was sick and asked for leave to go home to the northern part of Uganda as he couldn't manage to work anymore, because he was too weak," Emmy says.

"Sister Rose asked my father to leave me with her."

Emmy was then five years old.


"At first, when I was young I didn't think about him dying. I just thought he was sick. I thought he would come back at anytime. But after a few years, they came and told us that my father had died. I cried very much."

Gyavira's Story

Gyavira grew up calling his grandmother "mom." She took him and his siblings in after their parents died. Gyavira thinks he was about eight months old at the time. They lived in a poor village in the AIDS-ravaged Rakai district, southwest of the capital, Kampala.

AUDIO



 [Listen to Emmy Anguyo talk about his journey from living in an Ugandan orphanage to studying in the United States.](#)

“My grandmother didn’t have a job. She would get up in the morning and go to her garden and grow some food for us to eat,” Gyavira says.

Gyavira’s grandmother couldn’t afford to pay for his education so she approached the orphanage and asked for him to be taken in. Earlier she had asked the same for his siblings.

“It was hard for her, but she had to do it,” he says.

Preparing for the Future

Both Gyavira and Emmy are living in the United States now. Gyavira has been in the United States for the past four years. When he was 12, he was chosen by the Uganda Children’s Charity Foundation to take part in their study scholarship program—a move that’s allowed him to study at the Bishop Lynch High School in Dallas, Texas.

He started school in Dallas in the sixth grade and will stay until he’s completed college. Gyavira says school in the United States has presented him with a great opportunity.

“The schools here have computers and textbooks and the education is much higher here. Schools here are so much better because they have all they need. They have textbooks. They have books. The teachers are able to talk to the students. In Uganda, you maybe have one book and a pencil and little chance to talk to the teacher after class.”

Thanks to his sponsor, Emmy’s now studying at the El Centro Community College in Dallas.

Emmy says he’s blessed—particularly because of the generosity of UCCF.

“UCCF does a great job in caring for children back in Uganda. They not only give clothing, food and shelter, but also friendship and love—which is not common for most of the orphans in my country,” he says.

For both, there is no question about their future. When they finish studying in the United States they want to return to Uganda to give something back to their homeland.

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