

AISHA BLESSED NABITOSI

My name is Aisha Blessed Nabitosi, a Ugandan female born on 2nd January 1993. Last year in December, I sat for my Uganda Advanced Level Examinations (U.A.C.E) at Comprehensive College Kitetika in Wakiso District. Upon receipt of my UACE exams results, I hope to join either Kyambogo University or Makerere University to pursue a degree in Engineering. Despite the achievements I have realized thus far, my education journey has not been easy. Finding school fees and scholastic materials has been and is still a big challenge.

I grew up in a very miserable family where my late dad had separated from my mother at a time when I was one week old. By then my mother could not support herself and the little baby because of the way she was mistreated by my late dad who used to beat her when she was pregnant. Because my dad had many wives, he did not bother taking care of us at all. My mum suffered so much to an extent of looking for food in the dustbins in order to survive. At this time I was three years old. When I was five years old, my mom handed me over to stay with my step mom. I therefore missed growing with my mother and dad and missed parental love. Life became so miserable when my step mom mistreated me and at times denied me food. She never loved me at any one moment and I stayed so much isolated with no one caring for me even during times when I became sick. Despite all that, I learnt and used to do every kind of housework including cooking, mopping the house, and digging and washing clothes.

When I started going to school, life wasn't good either, for I used to walk a very long distance of about five kilometers yet I had to first finish all the housework activities. This implied that I always reached late at school. Matters became worst that no one was paying my school fees and all the requirements. Imagine I never obtained any school report card throughout my primary level studies. When examination time came, I was always sent away from school and I always missed final exams because the head teacher could allow me enter the examination room without paying the required school fees and other school requirements. When the head teacher realized that I could not afford paying school fees, he allowed me to study for free.

After completing primary seven, I went to the village and started living with my mother. While there, I started doing some activities like digging, fetching water, collecting firewood in order to earn a living. I had no hope of joining high school since I had nowhere to get the fees from. But God is great because it was at that time (2006) that I was enrolled in Bitone Children's Center where I continued to receive high school education, scholastic materials, feeding, accommodation and training in music and dance. Apart from the successes I have achieved thus far in my high school education, I am happy that I have also developed my talent in singing, dancing and making crafts. Currently, I am praying so hard that I can get someone to sponsor my education in order to achieve my dream carrier and also make a difference in other people's lives.

ANGEL NDAGIRE

I was born in a family of 8 children and I am the second last born. My father is a Muganda and my mother was an Alur by tribe. I was born in Nsaggu village. I started schooling in the village at a school called Modern Academy. I was living with my father and mother and other sisters and brothers of mine. My mother died when I was 4 years old. I started living with my father but he made me do a lot of things that were torturing me.

When my cousin sister learnt about what was happening to me, she brought me to town and I started living with her. I stopped schooling since my sister did not have enough money. I lived with her for sometime but her husband tried to rape me. My sister transferred me to her friend's home but the situation never changed because there also my other relative tried to rape me again.

I was brought to Bitone Children's Center in 2007 and I now go to school and I am a Christian. When I came at Bitone Center, I learnt practical skills in dancing, singing and making crafts. Since I did not grow with my late mother, I had missed parental love but at Bitone Center, I am enjoying the family and I have also learned how to live in a big family that respects each other and work for the best. I have also been a leader at my school and I won certificates of being a good poet and for giving speeches on big school days.

I have been able to develop my talent in dance and other values of self-respect, self-confidence, and leadership. In future, I want to become a medical doctor, an entertainer and a volunteer in children's centers. My hobbies and interest include traveling, living in company of fellow kids, watching cartoons, swimming, singing and dancing. Currently, I am the youngest child at the center.

I want to continue with my education because I know it's the only way I can have a better life and get a chance to achieve my dreams. My goal is to study hard and become a professional medical doctor and my dream is to become an actress. I also want to take care of disadvantaged children when I get money in future. When I finish studies and get a job, I would like to give back by using my education skills.

I admire and respect Mr. Branco Lawrence Sekalegga. I admire and respect him because he is an educated man and has a very kind heart. He takes care of us despite the fact that we are not his biological children and I also want to have the same heart like his so that I can take care of disadvantaged children. He has a lot of knowledge on many things.

AUGUSTINE NAMITI

My name is Augustine Namiti. I was born in a family of nine children in Luuka distirct Busoga, Eastern Uganda. My parents are both peasants and when I was in the village, they used to find it hard to take care of a big family. Because of being many children in the family, my parents had a problem of meeting our social needs like paying school fees for us. I missed many years withouth going to school. Studying was so tough since I had no shoes and lunch at school because at even home we had no enough food to satisfy us. I joined Bitone Children's Center in 2008. I started schooling, receiving medical care, scholastic materials like shoes, books, school uniform.

Life at Bitone is very sweet. We interact as a family and share everything as brothers and sisters. At Bitone, I have developed my talent in playing Ugandan musical instruments (xylophones, drums, bow harps and fiddles) and dancing. I love it so much especially when we go and perform at weddings and other functions.

My academic goal I to become and accountant and also time a musician.

BRENDA NAKIGOZI

My name is Brenda Nakigozi, am 15years old. I grow up in the family of 10 members, which consists of 3 boys and 5 girls. When I was 3 months old, my dad married another wife and from then, he stopped taking good care of the family and he turned his care and love to the new wife. He neglected us and there was no enough support for us. My mom couldn't afford the basic need for all of us, so she took me to my grand mom and the rest of my brothers and sisters remained with the step mom. By this time, I had grown so thin and physically weak because of poor feeding. But God was on my side and I grew up. I stayed with my grand mom without going to school because there were no school fees for me. I found it difficult to stay at home without going to school because my friends on the village were schooling.

After two years, my grand mom decided to take me in a government school where the standard was not good at all. I got very many friends from that school and I joined the school choir where I could participate in music, dance and drama activities. Everyone in that school was proud of me and I loved the school so much.

When I joined Bitone Center my life changed because they helped me discover my talent where I have leant how to read and write. I am currently in my primary seven and I hope to pass.

DAMALIE'S STORY

My name is Damalie Nabanankulya , a Ugandan and a member of Bitone Children's Center. I grew up in a very big family of 9 children and I am the second last born. We should have been nice children but our oldest brother died. When I was one month old, my parents divorced. I stayed living and grew up with my mother who used to take care of us all. After some time our father got married to another woman and never came back to us. I missed my father's love and even though he is still alive, I have only seen him twice in my life.

When I stated schooling it was difficult for me and even for my mum because she was jobless and had no money to pay my school fees. They used to send me back home almost every day for school fees. Apart from lacking school fees, I did not have even the basic scholastic materials. This affected my academic progress so much.

When I finished the primary level my mother told me that she had no money for me to join secondary and I lost hope of joining school again. I spent 3 years without continuing with my education, going through going tough times until I was brought to Bitone Children's Center to receive healing, education and training in music and dance. Ever since I was brought to Bitone Center, my life changed.

Last year in December, I sat for the Uganda Advanced Level Examinations in History, Divinity, Economics and Fine Art. I look forward to joining the University this year when I get tuition and other scholastic needs so that I may pursue my dream carrier. My dream is to study Human Resource Management or pursue the profession of Air Hostess.

I believe God will open up our gates and our dreams will come true because I know we are not here by mistake, it is God who united us in this family so he will always fight for us. I thank God bringing me to Bitone, for it has made me who I am today and look forward to excelling in my academic struggles if I get a chance to continue. It is also my wish to share the talents I have in dancing with the rest of the people I meet. I believe music has the power to heal and empower people like it did to me.

DEBORAH NABATANZI

Before coming at Bitone, I was staying with a single parent who didn't have enough money to support me at school because she wasn't working and yet she was struggling with her health. I had just completed senior five and I had nobody to support me to continue schooling. I really loved school because I had it inside me that I was the only hope for the family since my sisters and brothers didn't go to school.

When I came at Bitone Center, I was amazed by the great sense of love kids had towards each other. Irrespective of a few challenges at the Center, children showed each other family belongingness and conducted themselves as brothers and sisters. This was a great comfort I enjoyed and I still enjoy at the center. Feeling and caring for each other is such amazing! When I finished my senior six, I was supported by Klaus and LuAnn family to pursue a degree in Human Resource Management. If I get a chance, I would love to pursue a master's Degree in Human Resource Management. I am sure the skills acquired will help the center and the nations at large.

At the Center I have really gained many skills in music and dance, craft making and leadership. More so, I have learnt how to associate with other people. I have gained a lot of confidence in me since I meet and talk to different people which are also helping me improve on my. I possess basic computer skills. I now have a responsibility to take care of my young sisters and brothers at Bitone Children's Center since I am the oldest kid. I believe I can also make a difference through sharing my skills and education with others.

ELIZABETH NANTONGO

My name is Elizabeth and I am 16 years old. Before I came to Bitone I was deep in the village staying with my mother. I grew up in family of four people and am second last born. My father died when I was three months old. I grew up in a tough situation to the extent that I missed the paternal love of my dad and some many years without schooling. Soon a clan member of ours conquered our property and our situation became black where we could not see our future.

In 2006, I was lucky to be taken to Bitone Children's where I was welcomed with love and care. At Bitone, I have been able to receive education and I am currently a 2nd year student pursuing a degree in Community Psychology. Bitone has promoted my talents, and it's my desire to work hard and payback such privileges in future. I would also like to defend the human rights of especially the children who are mistreated.

GLORIA K. PICHAN

I was born on the 24th of December 1993 in Pader village in Nebbi district of Northern Uganda. I am the 4th born in a family of 8 children. Due to the political instabilities caused in this region by the rebels of His Lord's Resistance Army, my parents were separated before they both died. After losing my parents, I dropped out of school and stayed with my relatives. I missed many years without going to school because of lack of tuition and scholastic materials.

In 2005, I joined Bitone Children's Center for education and talent development. I am benefiting from the rehabilitation and empowerment programs Bitone offers. I am currently in senior six at Kawempe Royal College School. I want to become a professional Medical Doctor so that I can help those suffering from various diseases. I also want to be an advocate for peace and harmony in the whole world. I would contribute to the fight for peace, development and protection of Human Rights across the world. I am passionate about sharing my skills and talent with others worldwide. I am talented in dancing, art craft making, and designing. I love travelling, watching movies and telling stories.

GRANT KABOGOZZA

My name is kabogoza Grant. I was born in the village called Kikondere in Luweero district where I lived with my grandmother at the age of two years old. She did not know about education so, I started schooling when I was seven years old. I did not know even my parents because they had left me for a long time. I faced a problem of body infections particularly jiggers that constantly attacked me. It was too much for me because when my mom saw me she cried and she could not believe that I am her real son who was going through such trauma. After a small period of time, she took me away from my grand mom. By this time, I was seven years old and I started schooling in primary one in a school called Kiluuru. When I finished primary two, we migrated from the place where we were staying due to the imprisonment of my father by the village people who wanted to steal our land property. They destroyed everything including knocking down our house. Few months later, my father was released from prison and found us in the village called Kyotamugavu where we had migrated. During the time he was in prison, we had no food and we survived with the help of the village people. After a year, I joined primary three in a school called Nalweweta however, I missed many classes due to lack of school fees and scholastic materials.

Sadly my father got AIDS, which forced my mum to divorce him. My father had many wives yet he was not financially well. Right now, my father is not in good health condition. My mother is the one taking care of my young brothers and sisters and yet she is a peasant. She artificially ferments local brew (alcohol) to earn a living in order to support my siblings. I thank God that in 2004, I joined Bitone an organization that has helped me to continue with my education for a better future. Also at Bitone, I have learnt how to sing, dance and play various musical instruments including Guitar, Bow Harps, Drums and xylophones. I love performing and composing songs that have healing messages in them. Last year, I sat for my Primary Leaving Examinations and I passed. If I get an opportunity, I would like to join senior one to continue with my education.

JANE-ROSE AYEBAARE

My name is Jane-Rose Ayebare and I was born in Kiyana village in Uganda's Luweero district in a family of four children. Unfortunately, when I turned 1 year old, I lost my dad to HIV/AIDS scourge. This was the time when my life started to turn down. When my relatives saw that my mom's husband is dead, they connived and chased her away from the house where we were staying. We then resorted to staying in the little kitchen that was attached to the house but sadly my mom was tortured and eventually we moved away to save our lives. With little hope left, my mom got married again to a peasant man in the village. When I made 6 years, mom gave birth to my young brother. By that time, I was in primary two in a school called Ndejje Demonstration School. Our family started running bankrupt because my parents did not have a job anymore.

In 2006, I was brought to Bitone Children's Center. At Bitone, I have learned how to dance, sing and also make crafts. I love it because I can do it in holidays and give them as gifts to my friends. I have also learned how to work together with my brothers and sisters at Bitone Children's Center. It's nice because we also play and pray together.

My dream is to become a worldwide model and also become the most experienced engineer. When I get a scholarship, I will have high chances of finishing my education and achieving my goals. Last year, I completed my primary education and when I get a scholarship I will give back by producing good results and by not wasting the school fees and will stay in school until I finish.

I admire famous models like Tyra Banks and Naomi Campbell because my other dream is to become model but with a strong education.

JOSEPH MAYANJA

My name is Joseph Mayanja a Ugandan born aged 15 years old. My life experience before joining Bitone has not been so. I grew up in a district called Luweero in a small lovely village called Kyotamugavu. My mom tried hard to make sure that I become happy in this world but it didn't happen until her health started deteriorating. As I grew up, I developed a working mind whereby I started working for my mom so that she could get something to eat a day. She was so poor to support me during school. I knew a little music and this was a great chance for me to go on with life.

I had group where we could organize and create concerts so as to earn a living. No one liked our family because we were so poor and people thought we were useless. One blessed day came and I was taken away from the village to join Bitone Center to continue with my education and also learn practical skills in music and dance. Bitone has taught me music in all ways and now I am so skilled. I am also skilled in Fine Art making art craft. My dream is to become an industrial artist.

JUNIOR RYAN KIIZA

My names are Junior Kiiza. I grew up in a family of 8 members with 4 sisters and 2 brothers. My dad was poised and died when I was 4 years old. He death was associated with land family land wrangles. My mom struggle to look after us, which was not easy since she had to find the basic needs for the entire family. By that time my elder sisters and brothers were studying in the government schools and my young sister and I had not yet began schooling because of lack of school fees.

Very unusual, I joined school when I was 8 years old. Even then, I could fetch water and collect firewood for the rich people and pay me some small amount of money to buy scholastic materials. Of course, due to lack of fees, I missed many days in a week continuously without attending school. Fortunately in 2007, Bitone Center heard about my story and they decided to take me to Bitone center where I have learnt very many things like discovering the talents, going to school, and learning how to do housework. Now I can dance very well, play very many kinds of instruments like the bow harp, tube fiddle, piano and other things. Bitone has helped me in providing some basic needs and I'm really proud of them.

I'm now studying in senior three and my dream carrier is to become an electric engineer in future. Although my family is poor, I would like to give back in future when I finish school. I believe that it is only through studying that I can achieve my goal and I pray to God so that He can bless me with sponsors who can help me out in my next level of education.

MARY NAKIMERA

My name is Mary Nakimera aged 13years old and I was born in a family of three; one boy and two girls. My mother had to cater for us all alone because she separated from my dad when we were so young. My mother used to live with my father but as I talk now they no longer live together. I don't know where my father is, I just see him in pictures. At first I used to stay with my mother but when she told me that she no longer had money to pay for school fees I stopped studying.

In 2005, I was taken at Bitone Center to receive education and to teach me how to dance, sing and make art crafts. My life in Bitone has been better since I started studying and also stays in a big Bitone family. Last year, I successfully completed my primary school education. I would like to continue studying if I get a sponsor. My goal is to become a lawyer.

MARY NANSAMBA

I am Mary Nansamba and I was born in a family of seven children and I am the second last. I started school when I was six years old and I didn't study Nursery because my parents couldn't manage paying school fees since they were peasants. They took me in a Universal Primary Education (U.P.E). But that school had no good academic standards. After one year of study my parents decided to take me to a better school even though they had no money but they tried to look for my school fees so that I can get a better future, however that school was too far (about seven miles) from our home. Everyday, I walked from home to school because I had no transport although at times I got some Samaritans who used to take me and with my friends in their taxis.

At this school I used to go hungry without breakfast and Lunch, which greatly affected my performance in class. As a kid, I definitely used to enjoy the company of my friends at school despite all the challenges I faced.

After finishing primary level education, I got a chance and got enrolled in Bitone Children's Center. At Bitone, I started secondary school education, and also got a chance to develop my talents in singing and performing Ugandan traditional dances. I feel happy that I have been able to complete my secondary school education. If I get support, I would like to pursue a degree in Business Management at Makerere University. In my free time, I enjoy reading novels, watching movies and travelling. I like to make friends and also perform Ugandan traditional music and dance.

ROSCO KAYONGO

My names are Rosco Kayongo and I am 18 years old. I was born in a family of 11 children but two of my sisters died due to illnesses like malaria. My parents are still a live but they are peasants and do not have enough help and at the same time infected with HIV/AIDS.

Before I joined Bitone Children's Center, I loved music so much. After many years of missing school, I joined Bitone Children's Center to receive education. I also learned dancing, singing and playing musical instruments. Currently, I am doing pursuing a diploma in music, dance and drama at Makerere University in the department of Performing Arts and Film. I like composing and performing music and I believe music has powers to heal and make a difference in people's lives. My desire is to share my talents with people in the whole world.

SEBASTIAN LUTALO

My name is Sebastian Lutalo and I was born on the 08th of August 1994 in Bufumbanswa village in Luweero district –an area that was highly destroyed by political wars. At the same time, Luweero communities have been highly affected by the HIV aids scourge with huge numbers of orphaned children. On the side of my father I am the second last-born and on the side of my mother I am the first-born.

At the age of five years old, my dad passed away. My mom, a subsistence farmer, is now infected with HIV/AIDS along side hernia. After loosing my dad, I dropped out of school due to lack of financial support. In 2005, I was brought to Bitone Center to receive education, rehabilitation and talent development in music and dance. Currently, I have completed senior four at Kawempe Royal College School and I am now hoping to join senior five if I get sponsorship. When at Kawempe, I have been the chairman of the science discussion group. My favorite subjects are Chemistry, Physics, and Math. My dream profession is to become an engineer. Sebastian is a talented instrumental player and loves acting. His hobbies are debating, playing soccer, reading novels and science adventure.

STEVEN KYOBE

My name is Steven Kyobe. I was born in Kyotamogavu village in Luwero district. We are eight children in our family and I am the second born. After some time my father divorced my mother because my father was a polygamous man. When my mother left my father continued bringing women to home and they could treat us very harshly. I missed many years of school. So when I got a chance of coming to Bitone, I had to leave brothers and sisters at home. In our village school, I could repeat classes three times because of lack of school fees. Currently, I am in senior two at Kawempe Royal College School. In my future I want to be a musician and an engineer if God wishes.

At Bitone Children's Center I have learned how to play many musical instruments like bow harps, keyboard, Guitar, drums as well singing and dancing. I love the family environment at Bitone Center.

STEVEN SSEGUYA

My name is Steven Sseguya and I was born alone with my only one sister. Before I was living with my mother and she had no money for school fees, so I used to sit home counting birds. When I joined Bitone in 2004, I started going to school. I have also been exposed to performance opportunities because I have skills in playing Ugandan traditional musical instruments and dances.

Currently, I am in senior three at Kawempe Royal College. I am doing well in class and interested in learning new skills in music, computer, English vocabularies, and I also have friend from every part of the world and like to perform with international musicians. If I get a sponsor, I would like to continue with my education and my dream carrier is to become a Computer Engineer.

SYLVIA NANSUMBA

My name is Sylvia Nansumba and I am in senior two at St. Lawrence Ssonde Senior Seconday. I was born on the 24th December 1997. I have one brother called Elijah. My parents divorced after 3 years of their legal marriage. By the time they separated, I had started schooling and my brother had not yet started schooling. And that was the worst thing that has ever happened to me in my life. Their separation led to the beginning of our poor health.

Our mom took us to the village. After some time, I was moved away from my young brother in deep sorrow and my father took me away from mom's house. I continued going to school at a nursery school called Little Flowers. After some years, my father married another a girl who was in high school. He was taken to prison and spent there some days. But up to now, I still blame myself for handing over my father to the police because of fear for them. Because they asked me where he was and I did not know what they were going to do to him, so I told them where he was and they arrested him. I was left in the house alone and after some days, my uncle started taking care of me.

After some weeks, life continued in a different way because I started living with my step mom. She treated me very badly but my father could not realize it but instead he also beat me. After some time, my dad fell very ill and could sometimes get mad. It was a bewitched diseased. He spent a lot of money to get treatment. When he got better, I was taken to live with my grand mother. At that time, I went back to school at Wobulenzi Public School. But school fees were a big problem because I used to miss so many classes. I lived in a village called Kande in Luweero district. This is where Mr. Branco Sekalegga with other people found me and brought me to Bitone Children's Center to receive education, rehabilitation, and also learn how to sing and dance. At Bitone Children's Center, I met my new brothers and sisters and parents. This made me live in a happy family, which I was missing. Bitone Center supported me until I finished my primary education with 13 aggregates. I am a Christian and a Muganda by tribe.

I want to continue with my education in order to become a respectable, rich and responsible lady. My dream is to become an engineer or a professional doctor. I admire and respect Celine Dion. This is because I like her music so much and her music is really inspirational. Besides being an engineer, I also want to become a musician. I have also involved in singing at Bitone Center with my friends and I am working on my voice so that it becomes professional. I pray to God that He provides me with everything needed and improves my voice beauty and education.

WILLIAM SEMBATYA

I am by names of William Sembatya and I was born in ruwero district in 1999. We are 8 children in our family in our mother. When I started going to school, I could not receive enough scholastic materials since we were so many in our family yet my parents were peasants.

In 2005, I was brought to Bitone Children's Center. Here I began my studies. I got so happy. I started schooling at Guiding star Primary School. At Bitone I have also received other things. I have learned how play Ugandan traditional musical instruments including drums, xylophone, drums, bow harps, tube fiddle and others. I feel happy because we as Bitone we sometimes get a chance to perform on weddings and show the audience our talents. My dream is to become a medical doctor and also be a good and strong musician. If I get a sponsor I believe I will work so hard to achieve my goal.