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October 2026 Newsletter

Soap in Uganda

This is one of our favorite stories, ever. Two teenagers from Seattle were traveling in Africa with their parents. In Uganda, they noticed that there wasn't any soap in public places.



They asked about it and, sure enough, soap wasn't distributed, despite it being easy and cheap to make and an undeniably beneficial public health good.



They recalled their high school chemistry class where soap making was taught as a lesson in "saponification." A simple fat, typically vegetable oil, is combined with a strong alkali, typically lye, to make a universal cleanser. It's cheap and easy. They decided to teach it to students at a local high school.

They hooked up with TGUP's Ugandan NGO partner, Nsawo Community Development Project, who connected them with a local high school, Ssaku Secondary School in the Kampala area. They taught the local students soap making through the school's chemistry classes.

The Ssaku students have since made hundreds of gallons of soap which they have distributed to dozens of other nearby schools. It's been a huge success!

The soap was distributed to 5 additional schools and one medical clinic in 5 gallon jerry cans. At the recipient schools, it was reduced down to 20 ounce plastic bottles. But the usage was terribly wasteful. Children were pouring out handfuls of soap when only the smallest squirt was needed. There was no cultural experience of how to use soap! So…

Another TGUP donor funded commercial-grade one-squirt dispensers for use in all of the recipient schools and medical clinic. What a difference! Now the soap goes about five times further! Five times more children at the local schools now have access to soap to accompany their use of latrines, etc.



This story shows us the very best of humanity: compassion, ingenuity, collaboration, initiative, resilience, self-help. Thousands, soon *tens* of thousands, of African children now have soap that they'd never had before. Not all TGUP projects are glamorous, but they're all heart-warming.

Sigalame School Upgrade in Kenya

Sigalame Primary School in western Kenya has 1,030 students. Most families are subsistence farmers, what we, in the U.S., call "dirt poor," meaning they have no floors in their houses; only dirt. So, the community, too, is dirt poor. They typically live on less than $2 per day.





The school probably hadn't been upgraded in 30 years. "Decrepit" is too kind a word to describe its condition. "Dilapidated" is more like it. Shabby floors. Broken doors and windows. Leaking roofs. Vile latrines. Nobody would want to be there.

TGUP committed to improve the school with the help of local families. Everybody could see that it could be more effective if it were only cleaned up a little. More children would attend; all 1,030 students would take more pride in their surroundings.





We renovated four classrooms and built two sets of new latrines, one each for boys and girls. We installed concrete floors where there had been none, before. We

painted the walls, repaired or replaced the windows, rehung the doors. We built an eight-tap handwashing station outside the latrines. It's simple, commonsense stuff, but it still needs funding, and someone to do the work.



The change is like night and day. You can see it in the faces of the students, and in attendance. The whole project cost $21,000. You couldn't replace a door at a school in the U.S. for that. Thank you to the four donors who made it possible.

Final Word

Very quickly, two things…

In September, we sent around a survey to all recipients of this newsletter. The purpose was to get your feedback on how it's working for you, and how it can be made better. Thank you to the respondents!

We asked about frequency, length, subject matter, geographic focus, and more. By and large, it's being well received. Yes, we're aware of "selection bias," that is, that those who responded might be those that are already happy. But not all. We did what we could.



The only major change is that beginning in January, we will go to every-other-month distribution. People seem satisfied with the content and that we're conveying what we do well enough. Thank you to all readers!

Finally, we just published a new White Paper, ***TGUP's Idea for How to Change the World***. It might be the most important piece we've ever published. It gives an up-close look at why we do what we do, how we do it, and why it's working. We hope you'll read it. It's short, easy, and colorful. **See it by clicking here**.

Fall finally hit in California! That means the lemons are changing and will soon be ripe.

TGUP

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