



Grandmother Serena speaks: "I am not sure how old I am exactly but I was here the last time Uganda had locusts*. I have two grandchildren — a girl and a boy — that I've cared for over the past 18 years. They are now grown and they help me as I am very weak and can no longer hoe or tend to our garden.

Before I joined the Nyaka project, I had no home. My grandchildren and I would sleep outside, seeking refuge in neighbors' homes when it rained. People really harassed us — some even threw stones at us as we slept on verandas or other properties where we could find shelter."

Grandmother Serena continues: "In 2007, Nyaka built me a big house, a kitchen, and a pit latrine. I now feel dignified; when I die, they will find me in my own home. Many members know I am too old to do my own farming so they share their harvests with me. I don't have to worry about going hungry; I am supported and loved because I am a Nyaka granny."

*We have estimated Serena to be around 85 years old.

Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project pivots to Home-based care for Ugandan students and their grandmothers

When COVID-19 lockdowns suddenly disrupted life in rural Uganda, where SLF partner Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project operates schools for children who have lost their parents to AIDS-related illnesses, the organization found itself pivoting to being a provider of home-based care.

Children who normally boarded at school were suddenly without food and health care. When national borders closed, grandmothers whose gardens were in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo were cut off from their food source. But thanks to uninterrupted funding from international donors, including the SLF, Nyaka continued to support students and their families during two years of lockdowns. Nyaka staff delivered food, school supplies, masks, soap, sanitizer, and COVID-19 information on motorcycles, to cover the vast, rural area where students live.

Nyaka staff provided COVID-19 education to grandmothers whose long history with the organization had built an unshakable trust. They translated government-issued COVID-19 materials from English to local languages. The school's clinic, designed to treat students with coughs, colds, malaria, and antiretroviral medication for students living with HIV, suddenly had to prepare for vaccinations. Nyaka brought in graduates who'd gone on to nursing and medical school for their support, and when vaccines became available, Nyaka grandmothers were first in line. Nyaka's founder Twesigye Jackson Kaguri knew the organization's twenty years of work in the community had built a solid foundation on which they could respond to this new pandemic. "I've always told people," he says, "when you empower communities, they will be there for themselves."

Read more about Nyaka at their website (nyakaglobal.org/) or Facebook page (facebook.com/NyakaAIDSOrphansProject/). If you are able check out this video on FB of the founder of Nyaka talking about his grandmother and the power of grandmothers in Africa: <https://www.facebook.com/SLFgrandmothers/videos/2295143514139610> facebook.com/SLFgrandmothers/videos/2295143514139610.

Information from the [Stephen Lewis Foundation 2022 Year in Review](#) and the website page [Humans of Nyaka](#).