

NEWS

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Ugandan School Sounds Off on Need for Musical Instruments

HOLMDEL, N. J. – Since its Oscar win, which was replayed for days due to co-producer Elinor Burkett’s Kanye West-inspired Academy Awards speech, Roger Ross Williams’ “Music By Prudence,” a short film that tells the heartfelt story of Zimbabwean band Liyana’s journey to fame, has given Americans a newfound appreciation for discovering authentic African bands.

Riding on that wave of interest are the students at the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care School in the village of Mbirizi, Uganda. The school, which is comprised of 1,001 children, with a quarter of them left orphaned due to the AIDS pandemic, is currently on the hunt for donations of various musical instruments, which they will use to start up their own Ugandan band. With the new band, the students will be hired to perform at local events and help cover school expenses.

The school is welcoming any and all donations of musical instruments, including everything from classic marching band fare like trumpets, trombones, tubas and marching drums to guitars, violins, tambourines and keyboards.

The school is the first of many models of African entrepreneurship being created by New Jersey-based charity Sylvia’s Children, an organization which raises funds and awareness for orphaned African youth. The non-profit seeks to help the school create a self-sustainable economy for itself, which will then be shared with schools in surrounding sub-Saharan African villages.

Since its launch in 2003, the organization has succeeded in ensuring an annual sponsorship for 93 of the 235-orphaned children and has raised \$300,000, all of which has gone directly to the school. It has built a well and a fully stocked library; purchased seven acres of land; donated an Internet-equipped computer; constructed a dormitory with triple-decker bunk beds; built a playground; provided sporting and musical equipment; and built three additional double classroom blocks as well as providing a full-time nurse and new stoves for increased cooking efficiency.

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For more information, or to donate instruments, visit www.sylviaschildren.org, call (732) 946-2711 or e-mail Sylvia's Children founder Sylvia Allen at Sylvia@sylviaschildren.org.

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