



Beatrice's HOPE

THE NEWSLETTER OF HOPE MULTIPURPOSE, INC., FOUNDED BY BEATRICE GARUBANDA

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From barefoot to white coat:



Lillian the doctor

The unbreakable spirit of Lillian

Dear Friends,
In this edition, we are excited to share the remarkable journey of Lillian, a 24-year-old alumna of Blue House who is on the verge of graduating from medical school in Uganda. She opened up about her

experiences during a heartfelt Zoom conversation with Cindy Howard, a member of the Blue House Board, and me.

Lillian's journey holds profound importance, especially in light of Uganda's severe healthcare crisis. With only one doctor available for every 25,000 individuals—a staggering ratio that is 25 times worse than the standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO)—each new medical graduate brings hope to countless lives. Having found safety and education at Blue House during her most challenging times, Lillian is now stepping up to meet this pressing need. After overcoming a difficult early childhood in Kazo, she is dedicated to pursuing a career in medicine to fill the very gaps she once faced.

Her story exemplifies the incredible outcomes that can arise when compassion and opportunity come together. We hope it inspires you as much as it inspires us.

With Gratitude,
Joshua Garubanda

The Walk: "Go. Whatever happens, God knows." Kazo, Uganda—2011

The red Ugandan earth burned beneath her bare feet as 13-year-old Lillian began the longest walk of her life. Carrying nothing but a small bucket of food and a fragile hope, she walked alone toward an uncertain future.

At home, life had become unbearable. After her father sold everything and abandoned the family, her mother—overwhelmed by poverty—vanished one morning without a word. Left with two younger siblings and a half-sister, Lillian became the de facto parent and they moved to live with her paternal aunt, into a household of 20.

Her mornings began before sunrise.

Lillian recalls, "Wake up. Fetch water. Sweep. Prepare what little food we had—maybe posho if we were lucky—then walk," she recounts, each task punctuated by a tired exhale. "The school was so far. Forty-five minutes barefoot in the dust, sometimes running because I was already late."

The local primary school might as well have been on another planet.

"I'd arrive exhausted, only to be turned away at the door. 'No fees, no class,' they'd say. Again, and again." Her

voice tightens. "The shame... standing there while other children filed past. Knowing I'd have to walk all the way back alone."

The breaking point came one sweltering afternoon.

"I remember sitting under a tree, my feet bleeding, thinking—'Why keep trying?'" She mimics her childhood self, small fists clutching dirt. "Maybe I should just dig in gardens like my mother. At least then I'd eat."

But something stubborn in her refused to surrender.

"Even on the worst days, I'd sneak peeks at the other students' books. I craved learning like water." She rubs her thumb over an invisible textbook page. "But hunger and shame are loud teachers. By Primary 5, I was barely hanging on." Then, one day, a radio announcement. A chance. The Blue House was interviewing children. (Continued. page 2)



Before she was at the Blue House, little Lillian lived in poverty with her auntie who cared for a household of 20.

“She just told me, ‘Go. Whatever happens, God knows,’” Lillian recalls, her voice softening at the memory of her aunt’s words. “I walked for hours in the hot sun. My feet hurt, but I kept thinking—maybe this is my chance.”

When she finally arrived at the Blue House interview, exhausted and afraid, she was met with a sight that made her stomach drop.

“All the other children had parents or guardians with them. I was the only one alone,” she says. “I think that’s why they noticed me.”

The interview was raw and emotional. “They asked about my family, and I cried—90% of the time, I was crying,” Lillian admits with a small laugh. “I told them my father left when I was four. That my mother disappeared. That I slept four to a bed with no blankets. I didn’t know if they would believe me, but I had nothing to hide.”

One question shattered her composure completely: “Why did you come alone?”

“I told them the truth,” she whispers. “My aunt couldn’t afford the transport. She had too many mouths to feed. So, she packed me food and said, ‘Go.’”

Two weeks later, a miracle: a phone call in the evening, her uncle shouting from the house—“Blue House wants you!”

“I was washing dishes outside when I heard,” Lillian remembers, her eyes bright. “I don’t think I slept that night. For the first time, I let myself hope.”

“At Blue House, I learned what love felt like”

Kazo, 2011

Lillian arrived at the Blue House with two dresses and a heart full of fear.

“I had never owned shoes that fit. Never slept in a bed by myself,” she says. “Then they gave me my first uniform. I kept touching the fabric, scared it would disappear.”

But the real gift wasn’t the clothes or the food—it was the family she found.

“The older girls, like Sarah and Agnes, became my sisters,” Lillian says, smiling. “At first, I was scared to talk to them. But they made me dance. They asked about my life. After three days, I wasn’t afraid anymore.”

One memory still brings tears to her eyes: her first Christmas party.



Lillian’s new dress for her first Christmas at the Blue House



Christmas two years later, Lillian (left) and Christine

“They bought us new clothes—a blue skirt and a coat. And shoes! Real shoes,” she laughs. “I thought I was dreaming. We decorated the house, danced our traditional dances, and ate until we were full. For that night, I forgot I was an orphan.”

Then there was Hannah, a visitor from the U.S. who took them on their first-ever trip to Lake Mburo.

“We cooked pilau with meat, rode in a real bus, saw animals... I had never left my village before,” Lillian says, her voice trembling. “Hannah cried when she left. That’s when I knew—some people love you even when they don’t have to.”

“I used to think only men could be doctors!” Medical School, 2020

The pandemic nearly broke her.

“They sent us home from university. No internet. No electricity. Just me, my books, and a village full of doubt,” Lillian recalls. Every morning, she walked miles to charge her laptop in town, determined not to fail.

“I told myself—‘You survived the walk to Blue House. You can survive this.’”

Her dream of becoming a doctor had begun years earlier, sparked by an unexpected source: American TV shows.

“I used to think only men could be doctors!” she laughs. “Then I saw a woman in a white coat on Grey’s Anatomy. I nearly fell off the chair! That’s when I knew—I could do this too.”

But reality was harder than fiction. During rotations, patients often dismissed her.

“They’d say, ‘Where’s the real doctor?’” Lillian recalls her jaw tightening. “But every time I proved myself, it felt like winning—not just for me, but for every girl who’s told she can’t.”

“She believed in me before I believed in myself”

The email arrived when Lillian needed it most.

“Director told me, ‘There’s a pediatrician in America who wants to connect with you,’” Lillian remembers. “I didn’t know who Dr. Cindy was, but I said yes immediately.” Their first WhatsApp message sparked what would become a lifeline. (Continued. page 5)



Lillian was an outstanding student, so Blue House sent her to a secondary boarding school. Director Merab (right) at her senior six dinner on visiting day.



Lillian, in a school sweater, receiving a reward for leadership as a captain at Maryhill High School.

“She wrote: ‘I heard about your story. I want to help.’ Just like that,” Lillian says. “At first, I was nervous. Why would this important doctor care about me?” But Dr. Cindy’s support was unwavering.

When Lillian struggled to access medical journals for her research, “I’d send her a message: ‘I need this article on pediatric care.’ Within hours—hours—she’d reply with the PDF. Every time.”

Then came the bigger challenges. When government stipends for medical students were delayed, “I had no money for rent. No money for food. I didn’t want to ask, but... I had no choice,” Lillian admits, her voice breaking. “Cindy didn’t hesitate. She said, ‘Send me your account details.’ The next day, my rent was paid.”

But beyond the practical help was something more profound—belief.

“She’d tell me, ‘You’re going to be an incredible doctor.’ When I doubted myself, she’d say, ‘Remember how far you’ve come?’” Lillian wipes her eyes. “No one had ever... I didn’t know how to respond to that kind of faith.”

Their bond deepened during Lillian’s pediatrics rotation.

“I’d message her after difficult cases. She’d share stories from her own career. We’d laugh about hospital dramas—how different they are from real medicine!”



This photo changed everything: Lillian, the only woman on her university’s national medical quiz team. “When I sent it to Cindy, she wrote back: ‘THIS is what a doctor looks like.’ That message... I saved it. Still have it.”

“This Is Not Just My Victory”

This October Lillian will graduate with her Bachelor of Medicine degree—a moment she still can’t fully grasp.

“Sometimes I look at my white coat and think—‘How did that barefoot girl get here?’” she says, wiping her eyes. “But then I remember: I didn’t walk alone.”

She lists the names like a prayer:

- “The matron who showed me what an educated woman could be.”
- “Hannah, who taught me joy is a gift you can give.”
- “Dr. Cindy, who believed in me before I believed in myself.”
- Her late aunt who supported her, gave her hope and taught her about love.

Her voice drops to a whisper. “When I stand there in my graduation gown, I won’t just be holding a diploma. I’ll be holding all of them with me.”

A long pause. Then, softly: “And I promise—I’ll be someone else’s miracle too.” ✨

Lillian and more of her stories will be featured at the Mothers’ Tea, May 3.



Mothers’ Tea for the Blue House

Saturday, May 3, 10 am to noon
St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church
2323 W. Como Ave., St. Paul

- Specialty teas (and coffee too)
- Brunch buffet—sweet and savory
- Live harp melodies to set the mood
- **Program: Lillian, the BHU alum is a doctor!**

Moms, dads, kids, grandparents & friends are invited.

To offer to make brunch goodies, especially dads and sons, email bghansen55@gmail.com.

See Blue-House.org for info and to buy tickets.

How withdrawing USAID affects the Blue House

Uganda's health system faces immense challenges after the withdrawal of USAID funding—a decision that threatens decades of progress in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and other essential services. The HIV/AIDS epidemic left countless children orphaned, and was the driving reason for the establishment of the Blue House.

While we do not receive USAID funding directly, the loss of these resources has strained access to vital medical services, including HIV testing, pregnancy screening, and routine health exams. The ripple effects are being felt across Uganda, including in the Kazo District.

Yet, in the midst of these challenges, we remain hopeful and deeply grateful. Our children are healthy, thanks to the unwavering dedication of local clinics and healthcare providers near Kazo, who continue to deliver the care they need.

As uncertainty persists, the Blue House is more committed than ever to strengthening partnerships with these local providers, ensuring that our children's health remains a priority, no matter the circumstances. 🏠



New home-based children who the Blue House supports: Wilbroad, Abednego, Godfrey, Alicia, and Gift



Please **DONATE**
Online or use the
enclosed envelope.
**Blue-House.org/
donate**



Five girls who joined Blue House in March 2025, modeling the clothes made by University of Minnesota students. They were happy for the love.

Ten new entrants bring the Blue House family to 50

In February, we welcomed 10 new entrants. Five children joined as residents, receiving full-time care at the Blue House site. Five are part of our home-based program, which prioritizes family-based care, recognizing its long-term benefits for children's development and emotional well-being.

Our home-based program serves as a crucial safety net, ensuring children remain connected to their families whenever possible while providing essential support when families face challenges. This balanced approach allows us to cater to diverse needs, reinforcing our commitment to nurturing every child in a stable and loving environment. 🏠



**BLUE
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Blue House Uganda is a 501(c)(3) charity, sponsored by Hope Multipurpose, Inc., based in St. Paul MN, for orphans and vulnerable children in Kazo, Uganda.

Donations are tax deductible. See: Blue-House.org/donate

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Updates from the Blue House



Lucky, the youngest of the new entrants with her guardian, receives necessities from the house mother, Ziporah (right).



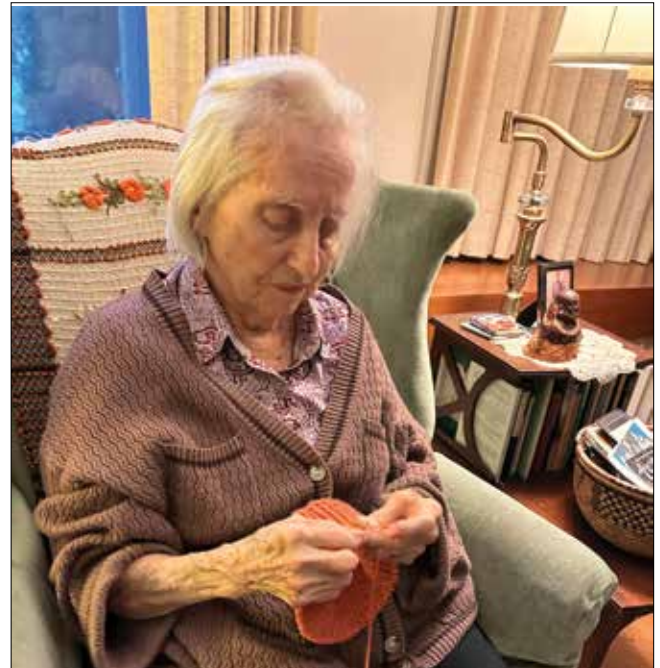
Agnes (Associate housemother, left), Mollen, Mercy, Shalot, Barbra and Patience are some of the girls in boarding school as they leave for first term.



The first home-based boys are growing up: Denis, Elfuns, Robert, Nelson, Chrispus and Yona. Denis is in Primary Seven and one of the top pupils in his class



Ziporah the housemother (center), helps Audrey (left) and Brenda prepare to join Senior Five, upper level high school.



A Boutique Thank You

Our 94-year-old friend of the Blue House knits hats all year long and donates some to the Boutique. Thank you to her and all the other makers, volunteers and shoppers who made the 2024 Blue House Boutique a success, and makes it possible for us to keep supporting these children.



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Lillian tells her story – from poverty to professional – as she graduates from Medical School and starts her career as a doctor in Uganda! Page 1

What's Inside

- 1** From barefoot to white coat: the unbreakable spirit of Lillian
- 3** How withdrawing USAID affects the Blue House
- 3** Ten new entrants bring the Blue House family to 50
- 4** Updates from the Blue House
- 4** A Boutique thank you
- 5** Mothers' Tea for the Blue House

Mothers' Tea for the Blue House, May 3.
See page 5 for details and tickets.

See more online at
Blue-House.org