

## Uganda Program - MIMA Foundation

Written by Mary Kay Thomas  
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Now let's hear from our friends, Norberto and Anna Benitez who head up the MIMA Foundation Uganda Program. MIMA has vowed to respond to the desperate needs in Uganda. Uganda is a country of over 30 million people and half of the population is under the age of 15 years old. Life expectancy is 49 years of age. A typical village consists of sparsely located houses, up to 15 miles apart that share a common school and church. The village of Kayenje is located in the southwestern section of the country, almost two hours outside the capital of Kampala, one hour of that accessible by only one dirt road. Kayenje's school is located in a plush, steep mountainous area far from the end of power lines and beyond running water. It is found in Butambala County, a predominantly Muslim county and is the only Catholic School in the entire region. It has three buildings that house first through eighth grades, each grade having one classroom. The buildings were renovated entirely by the community members with \$63,000 raised by private donations. Three brand new school buildings for Kayenje's over 500 school age children were finished in July 2007. They have new desks, books, school supplies, soccer equipment and even a new drum set. In 2008 a kitchen facility was built and a hot lunch is provided for the students every day. MIMA has installed three 2500 gallon water tanks and two bore-hole wells to assure accessibility of clean water for the villagers. Additionally, MIMA will build a home for the local order of The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters. The Archbishop of Kampala has personally pledged to place up to eight qualified teachers at the school if they are provided housing. This order, made up mostly of African sisters, is very active in Uganda and run numerous schools, hospitals and orphanages. The house will be built adjacent to the school buildings, on Diocesan land, therefore making the walk to school possible every school day despite weather or transportation issues. We are continuing to provide work for the villagers with this new project. The contractor that we have hired, Willie Kiguli, is the contractor that priced and supervised the school buildings and church and has proven to be professional, trustworthy and fiscally responsible. As with the previous projects, we implemented a checks and balance system that included our parish priest, Father Lawrence, choosing the materials during his yearly visit to assure quality. The facility is being constructed on school property which is owned by the diocese. Any major maintenance issues will be conducted under their directive. Upkeep will be done by the order. The construction material has been carefully selected by Father Lawrence to assure heavy grade iron for the roof and top quality cement for the foundation for lasting durability. Historically, the presence of a religious order in a school, or any facility, has proven beneficial in many ways. Not only do the sisters take responsibility for the facilities and maintain them but also the consistency and reliability of the religious is irrefutable. The addition of the nuns will complete the improvements to the village of Kayenje and assure the quality will be upheld. Please visit our website [www.themimafoundation.org](http://www.themimafoundation.org) for more detailed information. ♦ If you are interested in traveling to Uganda with the MIMA team, please contact us via this website. Sincerely, Norberto Benitez, M.D. Board of Directors MIMA Foundation