



The Agnes Zabali Boys and Girls Club (AZBGC) of Kamengo, Uganda was initiated in 2006 to develop and support projects to improve life for vulnerable children and youth in Kamengo and the surrounding villages. It is a youth-led organization and is nationally registered with the Ugandan National Bureau of Non-governmental Organizations.

The AZBGC project seeks to:

- Strengthen the capacity of orphans and vulnerable children to manage the challenges they face
- Provide resources and opportunities that will enable those in our program to overcome barriers and remain in school
- Promote academic achievement and innovation among the youth of the AZBGC
- Increase access to employment and basic health care services for all members of the AZBGC
- Provide additional support to the local community education and health care systems
- Facilitate youth economic empowerment through supporting sustainable small businesses

How do we do this?

Fundamental to the AZBGC is its scholarship program that helps vulnerable children and youth attend school. The AZBGC currently supports 135 vulnerable children, students and 85 community members. They are assisted with basic health care, education, recreational activities, and developmental projects that improve health and overall wellbeing. The AZBGC works with the Canada-Africa Community Health Alliance (CACHA) and the Nkozi Hospital and Ggoli Health Centre. It annually hosts medical doctors, nurses and teachers for medical, leadership, and infrastructure missions.

Over the years, the project has supported the village by building a community centre, which is home to a range of recreational and creative programs to meet the needs of children and youth. All activities at the centre are designed to encourage all children to participate in the unique local culture activities like dancing, enhance youth development, foster community growth, create employment, and reduce poverty and inequality in the future for those in the program. The centre provides a safe space for children, and includes a library, computer room and basketball courts. In 2019, a Women Resource Centre was established in a separate building. It provides a safe space for girls and young women.

Start-up capital is provided for small businesses that are run by the AZBGC youth. These businesses provide valuable work experience and economic empowerment. They include eco-tourism, event equipment rental, farming and a hardware store. The AZBGC generates operational income through these small businesses and other projects such as farming and raising poultry and cows. Members of the club also have an opportunity to learn basic computer training, art and drama and have recently added crafts making at the Women's Resource Centre.

Students who demonstrate consistent academic progress and leadership are supported with school fees, and school supplies. We are exceptionally proud of students in the project who have graduated university and vocational training institutions, those entering high school and vocational training and those who have worked so hard to obtain academic and basketball scholarships.

The AZBGC holds an annual fundraiser in Ottawa to raise the required funds for the project. In summer 2020, thanks to our friends at Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, the AZBGC received a grant to renovate the women's resource centre.

The Future

The AZBGC will continue to partner with CACHA, Ggoli Health Centre and Nkozi Hospital on the annual medical, educational and infrastructure improvements. Executive youth members, who are elected by their peers, and visiting local and international volunteers will continue to assist the club with capacity building and hold educational and health seminars/discussions at the community center and Women's Resource Centre. The youth leaders will also continue to coach sports, plan training/educational trips, promote and improve the dancing and culture group, and help maintain and improve infrastructure of the club. Planned new activities include building bleachers around the court, an outdoor memorial site, installing a water irrigation system at the farm, planting more trees, and building a soccer field and a mini garden near the community centre kitchen and women's resource house.

For more about the project please visit: www.azbgc.ca or email azboysandgirlsclub@gmail.com