

PERSONAL LIFE

My name is Jacob O. Ogweni I was born in 1972 and the 7th born in a family of 10 siblings, eight deceased and two surviving (My sister and I) in a Christian family. My parents are Mama Rusalina Odundo Ogweni and the late Mzee Joshua Ogweni. My parents have been peasant farmers.

Due to unreliable rainfall patterns in our regions, we used to have poor harvest which could not sustain our family. My mother had to supplement this with charcoal burning, selling of firewood, or menial jobs for other households in the area.

In most cases, we had to survive on either one meal or none at all a day. This was normal to us. We had a mud-walled and grass-thatched house that was leaking most of the time during the rainy seasons.

In most cases, my mother had to beg for clothes for us from other neighbors especially while attending trips or attending school since we had very torn clothes.

EDUCATIONAL LIFE

I started Primary school in 1979 at Kirindo in standard one where I sat for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (Standard 8) in 1986 and passed very well. My father had no option but to sell the only one-hectare piece of land we had to enable me to join High School at Tom Mboya in Rusinga Island.

When I reached Form 2, there was no hope to continue with education due to lack of school fees, But luckily enough, I met Mr. Odula who was the then Principal of Tom Mboya High School. I got a miraculous strength to share with him my family's financial challenges and my deep passion to pursue education. Through God's grace, he allowed me to attend classes in Form 2 without paying any fees.

After a fortnight – (2 weeks), he called his office and told me that I had got a sponsor from Finland - Mr. Panula Mati Onto who would be paying my fees till Form 4. It was extremely hard to believe this since I did not know Mr. Panula. This became a real dream! After one week, Mr. Odula called me again to his office and he issued me a fees receipt for the whole year of Form 2. I sat for my Kenya Certificate of Secondary School in 1990. This was the time started to dream of becoming a teacher so that I could also help other poor children from our community. This became my life prayer item.

In 1992 I joined Kisumu Polytechnic for an accounting course that could quickly grant me a job to support my family.

After the course, I got a job as a School Accountant at Tom Mboya High school where I had studied. This allowed me to mentor other students and quickly start supporting my poor parents. In 2004, I left the school job and got a volunteering program in Italy through the arrangement of Mr. Odula. I made some friends and when I came back, I started a school for the other orphans

and needy children in our community. I started a school in our nearby family church and subsequently became the Founder and Director. I got other Nursery school teachers as volunteers to support me.

In 2007, my family members accepted my vision to work for the children by starting. The family had a meeting and voluntarily accepted to donate part of the family homestead land to the project. The meeting was chaired by the local government administration officer- (Area Chief) and the local land officer was also in attendance. I had to move from the place I had built my own house and surrendered it to the school too. I bought another new land where I built my own house.

The land officer accepted then to write a confirmation letter to that effect in the name of the project- NISSII Christian Academy. This officially became the project land. I relocated the project to its site. I then organized for some used iron sheets and other building materials and constructed temporary classrooms which we are currently using.

In 2007, I went to Busoga University in Uganda to pursue a degree in education (Bsc. Edu – Mathematics /Economics) and graduated in 2011- September. This gave me much better skills to manage NISSII Christian Academy (Integrated Community Project). I also then taught on a part-time basis in nearby other high schools to enable me to get some funds to support the project and family. In 2011 September, I enrolled at Makerere University in Uganda for my postgraduate studies-

M.A –Economics and graduated in 2014. This gave me a better opportunity to teach in our local Universities on a part-time basis and then became much more able to support my family and the project.

Finally, in 2015, I again registered for my Ph.D. -Economics at Makerere University and graduated in 2020.

All the teachers at NISSII Christian Academy are volunteering and motivated by the personal passions to work for the children. However, any time, I get some financial support from any well-wishers, I pay them.

Please, on behalf of myself and all the members, I wish to very sincerely register our happiness if The Next Smile could help us put up the buildings for the school and support us in paying salaries to the staff.

Thank you!