

INSTIL SPIRIT OF GIVING IN CHILDREN BEFORE THEY RETURN TO SCHOOL

By Umar Nsubuga

As the holiday season comes to an end, the values of kindness and generosity are more important than ever, especially for children. In a world increasingly focused on material wealth, it is easy to forget that the spirit of charity is something inherent in all of us, especially in children, who often exhibit a natural inclination toward compassion.

The challenge, however, lies in nurturing this innate quality and turning it into a lasting habit that can impact society for the better.

THE GIFT OF COMPASSION

It is easy to look at children's holiday wishlists, filled with toys, gadgets and clothes, and assume that they are primarily focused on receiving. But, if you look closely, there are countless small moments when children show great acts of kindness. Whether it is a young one offering a toy to console a crying peer or an older child comforting a friend who has been bullied, the seeds of compassion are often sown early.

I witnessed this firsthand at Alpha Nursery and Primary School in Wakiso district, when Allan Bemba, a young boy who has a hearing impairment, showed remarkable empathy. Though he faces challenges, including limited memory retention, Bemba's excitement upon seeing new visitors at his school was infectious.

He eagerly waved at the group of children from the Christian Organisation Community Outreach Club, who had come to donate clothes, toys, bicycles and food. Despite his hearing impairment, Bemba understood that these gifts would help him and his family. The joy he exhibited was a testament to how even small acts of kindness can have a profound effect on a child's heart.

Dr Florence Nayiga, the founder and director of Sure Prospects Primary School in Kitala, Entebbe municipality, also underscores the importance of charitable acts, especially in a school setting where a significant portion of the funding comes from donations.



When children actively participate in charitable activities, they learn the value of generosity and the positive impact it has on others

"For some parents, providing for their children is a challenge. Donations fill gaps in essential needs, such as beds, books and school supplies, allowing the children to have a good learning experience," Dr Nayiga says.

The compassion of others helps ensure that these children receive not only an education, but also the resources necessary to thrive.

NURTURING THE GIVING SPIRIT

Fostering a culture of giving in children begins at home. Parents play a crucial role in teaching their children the importance of compassion, not just through words but through actions. Margaret Kiwanuka, a counsellor, says the power of modelling behaviour is important.

"When parents share their toys with other children or donate clothes to those in need, they are teaching their children that giving is a valuable practice," Kiwanuka explains.

The holiday season, with its focus on sharing and goodwill, provides a perfect opportunity to reinforce this lesson. Parents can encourage children to wrap gifts for family members or to donate items to less fortunate individuals in their



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communities.

Muhammad Nsereko, an educationist and the director of Etihaad Learning Centre, takes a more reflective approach with his students. He asks them to imagine what it would feel like to be in need. "There is a saying that 'everyone is just a day away from being homeless,'" Nsereko says.

By placing children in a

hypothetical situation where they are the ones in need, Nsereko encourages empathy and reinforces the idea that giving is an essential part of humanity.

But charity does not always have to come in the form of material goods. "Giving can also mean spending time with people in need," Nsereko adds.

Whether it's reading a

story to someone or simply engaging in a conversation, these small acts can have a profound impact.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

Haspha Nassolo, a parent with a child with a disability, explains the importance of more substantial contributions to communities, such as building infrastructure.

She notes the dire need

RIPPLE EFFECT

Giving has a ripple effect, benefiting not just the recipients, but also those who give. When children give, they learn vital social skills such as empathy, confidence and teamwork.

"Giving teaches children how to engage with others, how to communicate effectively and how to contribute to the wellbeing of their community," Munyambabazi notes.

Dr Nayiga points out that the act of giving also teaches children about gratitude and perspective.

"I remind my students that the hand that gives is more blessed than the hand that receives. When they understand this, they are more likely to be motivated to give back," she says.

for accessible facilities for children with disabilities, pointing to Sure Prospects Primary, where over 70 children with disabilities share just one toilet.

"Construction of another toilet or more inclusive facilities could make a huge difference in their daily lives," Nassolo says.

By teaching children that charity can take many forms, from donating items to contributing time and resources toward community projects, we lay the foundation for future generations of compassionate leaders.

Grace Munyambabazi, the Kabale district principal education officer, emphasises that involving children in community outreach programmes helps cultivate the giving spirit.

"When children actively participate in charitable activities, they learn the value of generosity and the positive impact it has on others," he says.

Engaging children in fundraising activities or community outreach helps them understand the practical aspects of charity, such as organising events, collecting donations, and managing resources. These experiences equip them with valuable life skills that they can carry forward into adulthood.

The culture of giving should not be a fleeting lesson, but rather a lifelong practice. Parents, educators and communities all have a role to play in ensuring that the next generation grows up understanding the true meaning of compassion.