Our work in Uganda focuses on equipping people to live full, healthy lives through our holistic community development program.

Every community we work with is unique and faces different challenges. Kibo Group empowers these communities to develop appropriate and sustainable solutions to the problems they face. In general, we work in three phases:

**Phase 1:**
*Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*
We work for access to clean water and proper hygiene.

**Phase 2:**
*Community Empowerment*
We work to reconcile individuals and communities.

**Phase 3:**
*Mvule Program*
We work to improve economic opportunity for everyone.

In 1989 a small group of college students at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas brainstormed about what they wanted to do after college. They had been mentored by several professors and friends during their time at Harding who inspired them to think missionally and encouraged them to go change the world. These five families ended up moving to Jinja, Uganda in 1994. Upon arrival, they began working with the Busoga people, learning the language, planting churches, and opening The Source Cafe.

In 1998 the men on the Jinja team climbed Kilimanjaro with some of the same mentors and friends who inspired them to move to Africa while they were in college.

During the climb, they discussed how they could remain engaged in the communities they had worked with after moving back to the U.S. Their first four years in Uganda had nourished profound relationships, and they wanted their collaboration with Ugandans to continue to grow.

They developed a plan, and as they stood on top of Kibo peak, the highest volcanic cone and rest camp on Kilimanjaro, they also developed their name: Kibo Group.

This idea has developed and grown over the past 15+ years into our current organization, but we have maintained the same relationships and deep trust with our friends in Uganda.

The foundation the Jinja team laid in the 90s gives Kibo Group a unique ability to interact with communities in the Busoga region in a way that empowers people to reach their full potential.

We inspire communities to rise to the peak of their potential, and display to the rest of Uganda, Africa, and the world, what is possible when we work together.

In 1999 a small group of college students at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas brainstormed about what they wanted to do after college. They had been mentored by several professors and friends during their time at Harding who inspired them to think missionally and encouraged them to go change the world. These five families ended up moving to Jinja, Uganda in 1994. Upon arrival, they began working with the Busoga people, learning the language, planting churches, and opening The Source Cafe.

In 1998 the men on the Jinja team climbed Kilimanjaro with some of the same mentors and friends who inspired them to move to Africa while they were in college.

During the climb, they discussed how they could remain engaged in the communities they had worked with after moving back to the U.S. Their first four years in Uganda had nourished profound relationships, and they wanted their collaboration with Ugandans to continue to grow.

They developed a plan, and as they stood on top of Kibo peak, the highest volcanic cone and rest camp on Kilimanjaro, they also developed their name: Kibo Group.

This idea has developed and grown over the past 15+ years into our current organization, but we have maintained the same relationships and deep trust with our friends in Uganda.

The foundation the Jinja team laid in the 90s gives Kibo Group a unique ability to interact with communities in the Busoga region in a way that empowers people to reach their full potential.

We inspire communities to rise to the peak of their potential, and display to the rest of Uganda, Africa, and the world, what is possible when we work together.

In 1999 a small group of college students at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas brainstormed about what they wanted to do after college. They had been mentored by several professors and friends during their time at Harding who inspired them to think missionally and encouraged them to go change the world. These five families ended up moving to Jinja, Uganda in 1994. Upon arrival, they began working with the Busoga people, learning the language, planting churches, and opening The Source Cafe.

In 1998 the men on the Jinja team climbed Kilimanjaro with some of the same mentors and friends who inspired them to move to Africa while they were in college.

During the climb, they discussed how they could remain engaged in the communities they had worked with after moving back to the U.S. Their first four years in Uganda had nourished profound relationships, and they wanted their collaboration with Ugandans to continue to grow.

They developed a plan, and as they stood on top of Kibo peak, the highest volcanic cone and rest camp on Kilimanjaro, they also developed their name: Kibo Group.

This idea has developed and grown over the past 15+ years into our current organization, but we have maintained the same relationships and deep trust with our friends in Uganda.

The foundation the Jinja team laid in the 90s gives Kibo Group a unique ability to interact with communities in the Busoga region in a way that empowers people to reach their full potential.

We inspire communities to rise to the peak of their potential, and display to the rest of Uganda, Africa, and the world, what is possible when we work together.

In 1999 a small group of college students at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas brainstormed about what they wanted to do after college. They had been mentored by several professors and friends during their time at Harding who inspired them to think missionally and encouraged them to go change the world. These five families ended up moving to Jinja, Uganda in 1994. Upon arrival, they began working with the Busoga people, learning the language, planting churches, and opening The Source Cafe.

In 1998 the men on the Jinja team climbed Kilimanjaro with some of the same mentors and friends who inspired them to move to Africa while they were in college.

During the climb, they discussed how they could remain engaged in the communities they had worked with after moving back to the U.S. Their first four years in Uganda had nourished profound relationships, and they wanted their collaboration with Ugandans to continue to grow.

They developed a plan, and as they stood on top of Kibo peak, the highest volcanic cone and rest camp on Kilimanjaro, they also developed their name: Kibo Group.

This idea has developed and grown over the past 15+ years into our current organization, but we have maintained the same relationships and deep trust with our friends in Uganda.

The foundation the Jinja team laid in the 90s gives Kibo Group a unique ability to interact with communities in the Busoga region in a way that empowers people to reach their full potential.

We inspire communities to rise to the peak of their potential, and display to the rest of Uganda, Africa, and the world, what is possible when we work together.

In 1999 a small group of college students at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas brainstormed about what they wanted to do after college. They had been mentored by several professors and friends during their time at Harding who inspired them to think missionally and encouraged them to go change the world. These five families ended up moving to Jinja, Uganda in 1994. Upon arrival, they began working with the Busoga people, learning the language, planting churches, and opening The Source Cafe.

In 1998 the men on the Jinja team climbed Kilimanjaro with some of the same mentors and friends who inspired them to move to Africa while they were in college.

During the climb, they discussed how they could remain engaged in the communities they had worked with after moving back to the U.S. Their first four years in Uganda had nourished profound relationships, and they wanted their collaboration with Ugandans to continue to grow.

They developed a plan, and as they stood on top of Kibo peak, the highest volcanic cone and rest camp on Kilimanjaro, they also developed their name: Kibo Group.

This idea has developed and grown over the past 15+ years into our current organization, but we have maintained the same relationships and deep trust with our friends in Uganda.

The foundation the Jinja team laid in the 90s gives Kibo Group a unique ability to interact with communities in the Busoga region in a way that empowers people to reach their full potential.

We inspire communities to rise to the peak of their potential, and display to the rest of Uganda, Africa, and the world, what is possible when we work together.
Finding Trust and Water in Bupaluka

After completing Kibo Group’s Hygiene and Sanitation program in 2015, Bupaluka received a new well. Even with the addition of this new borehole, the community was in need of another water access point. Alex, Steven, and David decided the best way to address the community’s water needs was to repair an existing well that was broken.

The Water Access, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team held several meetings with the water user committee to make sure they would take ownership of the project. During the last meeting before the well was officially reopened for use, an older man called out a younger man for failing to follow through on his pledge to support the well. The argument escalated, and the WASH staff stepped in to help resolve the situation. They knew the project would fail if this lack of trust prevented everyone from contributing money to buy the cement and other supplies needed to repair the well.

The WASH team asked both men how they could resolve the situation in a way that would build trust between them and the community as a whole. One of the men suggested they could prove their commitment to the community by immediately going to the local shop to purchase a bag of cement each.

They both rode off on the same bicycle and returned shortly with two bags of cement. The village greeted them with cheers and rejoicing. A situation that could have ended the project was turned into an opportunity to heal relationships, build trust, and provide the resources to make repairs to a well that now serves more than a thousand people.

Finding Trust and Water in Bupaluka

By working together to rebuild the broken well in Bupaluka Village, John and Isa are learning to trust each other and restoring relationships in their community.
Introducing the Life Skills Program

Manuella Ongyera started working with our Water Access, Sanitation, and Hygiene program in 2016, but she quickly realized she could use her skill set to address an important community need in the Busoga region.

She prepared and presented a new program proposal to the Kibo Group board that dealt with the education of youth in all of the villages in which we are currently working. She calls it the Life Skills program.

The Life Skills program is a comprehensive approach to behavioral change that concentrates on the development of communication, self-assertion, and relationship skills. She also offers classes on HIV/AIDS, resisting peer pressure, and gaining self-esteem. The program addresses the development of the whole individual so students can make informed decisions about reproductive health, safe motherhood, communication, and many other important decisions.

The Life Skills program is conducted at schools located in villages where Kibo Group already works. This allows Life Skills to complement our other programs by impacting entire families at the same time. Manuella often invites parents to come and discuss the material their kids are learning so the Kibo Group programs complement each other further.

Kibo Group’s hope is that we can continue to empower tomorrow’s leaders in Uganda, and that through conversations with people of all ages, we can comprehensively address the root causes of poverty and injustice in Uganda.

Through the Life Skills program, Manuella Ongyera has the opportunity to teach hundreds of students every week, helping them learn skills they will need as they grow up and become leaders in their community.
In April, Abraham Mulongo and I visited the village of Bulyabuita. It was my fifth visit to a Ugandan village. In my prior visits, I witnessed Kibo Group’s programs leading to village transformation, but this visit was clearly the capstone.

Kibo Group has been working with this village for about six years and has taken them through each of the programs including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Community Empowerment, and the Mvule Program.

The Mvule Program is economic development through tree planting, seedling sales, and agricultural business. What I witnessed in Bulyabuita represents the highest level of the program.

This village has established its own legally chartered savings and loan (S&L), which receives savings deposits from members in exchange for shares in the S&L, paying them dividends thereon and making microcredit loans to other residents.

Via the S&L, the group has raised the equivalent of $4,500 — a fortune for the villagers of Bulyabuita. They are lending the money to members who build homes and buy livestock. Teachers who are members are borrowing money and loaning it to parents for school fees and other expenses. The interest earnings are distributed to members as dividends to improve their lives, but the members are also using those earnings to fund a school lunch program and to pay tuition for orphans, improving their own community.

The S&L has a loan committee (bottom photo, left), which applies solid criteria for making the loans, and their financial results have been impressive. I actually wish I could invest!

The top photo shows an S&L member who has taken several loans (paying each back before borrowing again) to build a duplex. His plan is to live in half and rent out the other half.

If you want a picture of the potential end result of Kibo Group’s efforts in village transformation, Bulyabuita would be it. It is amazing.
Almost fifteen years ago our family was wrapping up more than five years of living and working in Jinja. Those years in Jinja changed us. We experienced God’s Kingdom in new and profound ways. We learned about deep, rich community from our Ugandan friends. We experienced deep wells of God’s love from Him and from so many new friends. We were transformed.

As we packed our bags and boarded the plane to move back to the U.S., we realized we were leaving one home for another. When we helped start Kibo Group, we vowed to return to our Ugandan home and to stay connected to our friends there. Specifically, we prayed, planned, and budgeted those next fourteen years for a family trip back to Jinja before our oldest child, Easton, left for college. God was faithful, and we made that trip in July 2017.

During our week in Jinja we found our family’s hearts collectively jumping at a place that shaped our lives so strongly. Seeing the sites of our old homes, picnic spots, and the sunset over the Nile River stirred our hearts deeply.

The deepest heart-stirring was the joy of being together again in unity with our Ugandan friends. We jumped and danced and clapped in worship to God with them during Kibo Group meetings. We listened to the amazing work they are doing and heard firsthand of how lives are being transformed in so many villages, just as ours were transformed in Uganda. We visited villages and admired the goats and latrines that are part of the progress and development that is occurring thanks to our friends who are carrying out Kibo Group’s work. Briley and McKensey danced and foot stomped in the mud with a community of women as they built a new fuel-efficient and safe stove. In all of it, our hearts connected deeply once again. We were transformed by the people of Uganda once again.

That is why Kibo Group is so important for our family. The creation of Kibo Group was a productive and useful way to keep connections to Uganda and continue to help those who suffer from systemic injustices. Living in Jinja fifteen years ago and then visiting again this year, we were able to participate and serve in a Kibo Group community that not only changed our hearts but blessed and transformed people and communities in Uganda. In all of the transformation, there is a deep connection with God and with each other that brings joy to all.

We’re thankful that we can participate in this community, and we are beyond thankful for all of you who give and join in our Kibo Group community. Lives are being transformed — yours, ours, and so many in Uganda whom we love so deeply. Thank you for making this possible and for being a part of the Kibo Group family!
Harriet Kefeza teaches people in Uganda how to build fuel-efficient stoves as part of Kibo Group’s Community Empowerment program. Learn more about Kibo Group’s work in Uganda inside this 2017 annual report.