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World Harvest Plans Africa Trip

By [Genoa Barrow](#) | OBSERVER SENIOR STAFF WRITER

William Kasirye considers himself a blessed man. He has a wife whom he loves, a home in North Highlands, and a career as a respected statistician with CalPERS, the nation's largest public pension fund.



William Kasirye of World Harvest Mission is planning a trip to Africa. For more photos from Ray Johnson, visit www.npaphoto.com.

Kasirye could rest on all that he has accomplished since coming to America in 1987, yet the Ugandan native has dedicated his life to helping the less fortunate.

An ordained minister, Kasirye operates the World Harvest Mission with his wife, Olivia, a physician. The faith-based non-profit conducts periodic mission trips to Africa.

"The vision of the World Harvest Mission is twofold; the vision is to respond to people's spiritual as well as physical needs," Kasirye said.

The next trip is scheduled for September. In addition to bringing much needed medical supplies, clothing, books and musical instruments, a group of volunteers will build a school in Kyaggwe, a fishing village near

Lake Victoria. The classrooms will be built on land owned by Uganda's Africa Renewal Ministries. When completed, the primary Christian school will occupy the equivalent of four city blocks. It will be the first school of its kind in the area.

Sacramento-area volunteers, who must each pay their own way to Africa, will team up with others to provide the early phases of construction - the foundation, frame, the roof and walls. Construction will continue after the World Harvest Mission returns home.

The group also supports a child sponsorship program. Sponsors donate \$25 a month for a child's tuition, meals, uniform and shoes, medical attention and a Bible.

"It's mobilizing people and making them understand that they make a difference in the world," he said.

Kasirye has received monetary support from his home church, the New Life Community Church in Fair Oaks. He said his pastor jumped at the chance to come on board.

"He said 'just tell me how and when.' He didn't even ask how much," Kasirye shared.

African Americans, he says, have been slower to get behind the effort, despite "claims of embracing their African roots." Not many have inquired about the trips to Africa or accepted his offer to speak to church congregations about them.

"There seems to be no interest and that disturbs me," Kasirye said.

The hesitancy, he surmises, stems from long-held misconceptions of the continent and its

people. Many African Americans, he said, receive most of their information from mainstream media outlets, which highlight images of war and widespread famine.

"Africa is not one small country," he said, urging people to seek out the truth.

"The opportunity is there to reach back to Africa and do good and it doesn't take much," he added.

Kasirye reaches back because his marriage, his house nor his career can erase the memories of a home stricken by widespread poverty, HIV/AIDS and the remnants of a violent civil war. While he came to America to study and has built a life here, he's never forgotten his roots.

"I'm in touch with them all the time," he said.

The World Mission team will head back to Uganda in December to help construct a clean water source on another school site. During previous trips, which includes ones to Rwanda, volunteers have brought more than 2,500 pairs of eyeglasses to children and adults who couldn't afford them and sewing machines that enabled women to generate revenue for their families.

To learn more about the mission to Africa, volunteer and donor opportunities call (916) 339-2684 or visit [www. worldharvestmission.org](http://www.worldharvestmission.org).