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Newsletter of the National Association of Retired Reform Rabbis

KULANU: Serving emerging Jewish communities

With Larry Hoffman's advice to attend to Diaspora Jewish communities, I thought it interesting to hear from an organization devoted to helping emerging communities worldwide. Pmc

Kulanu means "all of us" in Hebrew. We seek to create an inclusive Jewish world. Founded in 1994, we support isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities around the world. Some are discovering Judaism for the first time, others are reinvigorating a forgotten practice, but all have experienced some kind of disconnection from global Jewry. Kulanu raises awareness and support to assist these groups with their desire to learn more about Judaism and connect with Jews beyond their community.

Kulanu's relationship with the Abayudaya Jewish community of Uganda is one of its oldest. The community was founded in 1917, and Kulanu first visited in 1995. The Abayudaya community has an estimated 2,000 people living in Eastern Uganda. Kulanu supports the community through various projects related to Judaism and economic development.

This past December, Shoshana Nambi, a member of the Abayudaya Jewish community of Uganda and a rabbinical student at the Hebrew Union College Jewish-Institute of Religion in New York, shared how Kulanu has changed her community and impacted her life personally.

In a video she said, "Kulanu has had a long-standing relationship

with my community for over 26 years. Helping to support several women's empowerment programs through the Abayudaya Women's Association, funding the Yali women's conference, microfinance, and business trainings for farmers. Kulanu has sent several volunteers to my community, teaching Hebrew, Jewish studies, English in schools, some of whom have become my long-life friends. Kulanu has for many years supported the two Jewish schools in the community that see Jewish kids attend school along with their Christian and Muslim neighbors. Kulanu has worked to bring clean water to the Abayudaya community, and it has also connected the Abayudaya with other partners like Be'Chol Lashon, the conservative movement, Brandeis Collegiate Institute. It has helped young people from the community connect to several summer camps in the U.S. and so many more. Kulanu is so organized and brought the first bait dean to Uganda in 2002. For this and so much more the Abayudaya community is very grateful to Kulanu."

Shoshana hopes to return to Uganda as a spiritual leader once her studies are completed. To learn more about Kulanu and the Abayudaya, please visit kulanu.org.

-by Molly Levine / Deputy Director of Kulanu