

# Called to help orphans

By JANINE WATSON

AS she watched orphans suffering and dying in Uganda Helen Betz realised it was a turning point in her life.

Since returning she has spent the last few months setting up the not-for-profit organisation Heartfelt Hope with the vision of going back to Uganda to build an orphanage and community centre.

"We just cried and cried. I realised God was challenging me, and asking me to be a mother to them."

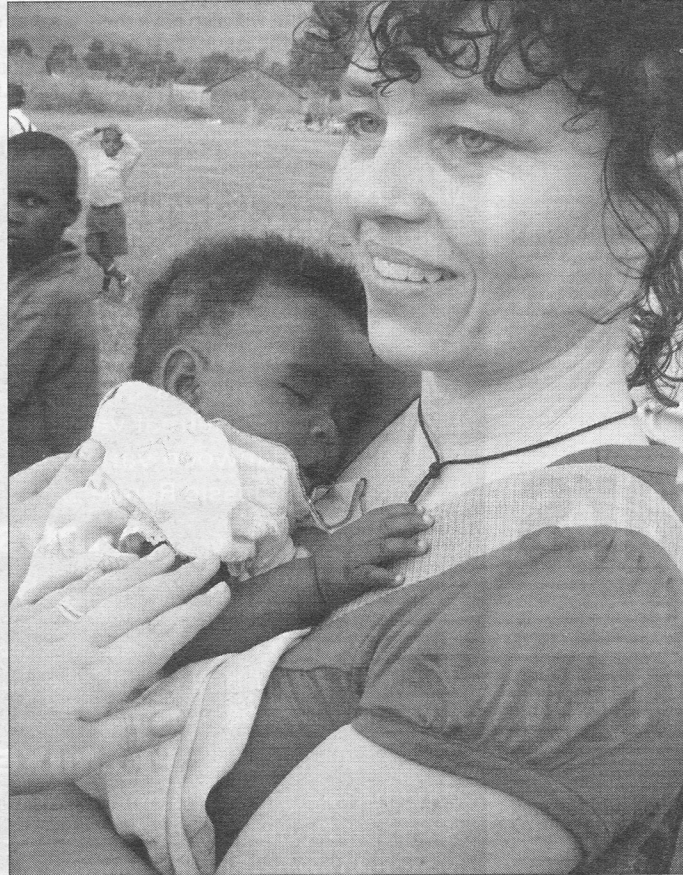
She was one of a group of ten locals from the Forster Tuncurry Church of Christ, who travelled to the poor African nation in July with medical supplies, sports gear and

"We just cried and cried. I realised God was challenging me, and asking me to be a mother to them."

- Helen Betz

children's clothing gathered thanks to the generous support of the wider community.

Under the leadership of Pastor Ben Betz they visited orphanages, hospitals and schools in the particu-



**HIGHER CALLING:** Forster's Helen Betz says God is calling her to return to Uganda to establish an orphanage and community centre. She travelled there in July as part of a ten-person team from Forster Tuncurry Church of Christ.

larly impoverished south east region.

Helen, a trained mothercraft nurse (working with children, babies and pregnant women) was shocked to see cannulas inserted

straight into the heads of babies.

"They were so dehydrated it was the quickest way (to replace fluid). It was very confronting."

According to Ben, the country's two biggest problems are AIDS and

corruption. Many of the orphans they encountered lost their parents to the AIDS epidemic gripping the landlocked country in East Africa, and government corruption means many of the basic services we take for granted like health and education are not provided.

"The churches are the welfare department," explained Helen.

Amongst the local delegation to visit Uganda in July were Helen and Ben's three children: Kirra (14), Joash (16) and Jessica (19).

Helen says they were all deeply moved by the experience and that Jessica and Kirra in particular are keen to return.

"My eldest daughter has changed her career path since returning. She wanted to go into the fashion industry but now she has completed her diploma of remedial massage so she can work nine months of the year over here and spend the other three in Uganda."

As to how the family will divide their time between Uganda and Australia in the future has not been decided.

"It's in God's hands," Ben said.

"At this stage we are doing a lot of praying and saving but there's a possibility of going back in April," said Helen.

Another member of the local delegation committed to returning to Uganda is Jaimi-Lee Kingsmill.

**To help them in their mission the new group Heartfelt Hope has produced a calendar and hard-bound coffee table book with images taken during their July trip. The calendars (\$18) and books (\$28) can be purchased from the shop Something Special in Manning St Tuncurry near Medicare or by contacting Helen on 0402 565 647.**



**FRIENDSHIPS FORMED:** Jamie Lee Kingsmill (left) Kirra Betz (centre) and Helen Betz (right) surrounded by a group of teenagers from the orphanage the Forster Tuncurry Church of Christ delegation worked in during their visit to Uganda.



**EYE-OPENER:** Under the leadership of Pastor Ben Betz the group visited orphanages, children's wards (pictured above) and schools in the particularly impoverished south east region of Uganda.