

## Food For Thought Brief Report on Visit to Uganda by Sue Errington, 3–12 May 2019.



Welcome to Uganda!

**Background.** The decision to make this visit to Uganda and to the FFT schools was triggered by the announcement of the wedding of Ronnie Kazibwe and his long term partner, Cissy, to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> May. A week provided enough time to carry out useful visits to schools and hold useful meetings – but only in Mubende, not Tororo. However, Beatrice Okumu, our national and Tororo District co-ordinator, accompanied me during the visit. (Beatrice usually visits Mubende once a term.) Godfrey Kisakye was ever present, efficiently making the arrangements and connections in Mubende.

### A. British Council Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning.

#### a. Workshop meeting of head teachers for the Mubende link schools with active UK partners.

Nine schools were represented. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce these schools to the CCGL programme, to discuss the UN Sustainable Development Goals and those identified by the Ugandan government for this programme (SDG2 zero hunger, SDG4 quality education, environmental SDGs, including SDG13 climate action).

We used newspaper articles to identify an easily accessible way to find global connections with pupils (although many teachers do not have access to newspapers, due to location and cost).

Everyone selected a person they admire and explained why. This led into a discussion about global citizenship qualities: knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes.

We went through the one-to-one school application form in detail and discussed suggestions for the joint pupil project, relating to SDGs.

As FFT, we are keen to promote SDGs 2 and 13, ie sustainable organic food growing (SOA) and actions to mitigate climate change, especially methods of soil and water conservation used in SOA; and significant tree planting. (Beatrice and Godfrey have decided to include a requirement for all schools to plant 150 trees this year, as part of the school gardening competition, to which 50% of marks will be allocated. The trees should be a mix of indigenous, fruit trees, woodlot (for fires) plus those valuable for other benefits, eg medicinal, nitrogen-fixing etc. Schools to understand this to be part of their contribution to the world-wide efforts to combat climate change. (We discussed Greta Thunberg, young people's climate strikes and the Extinction Rebellion).

Fredrick Ssegujja, head teacher of Biwanga P/S and chair of the FFT head teachers' group, had been invited by British Council to attend a 3 day CPD course, linked to the CCGL programme. There is more training to follow. The main focus was on child-centred teaching methods.

I had been unable to arrange a meeting at British Council, due to the short visit. However we wrote a letter to Emily Ikiriza listing the schools involved in active links, whom we expect to apply for grants, asking for these to be included in future training courses. Beatrice visited Emily after I departed. The 5 schools in Mubende will be invited to attend 3-day training in Mubende later in May. The remaining 4 in Kassanda District will be offered a trainer, if we can organise the venue etc – which we will do! 10 of the schools in Tororo will be included in the training courses in September! 7 of the Tororo

schools, linked to Cornish schools, have already been awarded a grant to make the teacher exchange. This is all very positive and very good news!



Kabuubu PS gardens and new classroom block from Learning 4 Life



Remnants of the old classrooms at Kabuubu PS



Kabuubu PS pupils revising at Kabuubu PS

We took the opportunity to meet the current Co-ordinator of Learning 4 Life programme, Emmanuel Tubihimaana, with Richard Ssensumbi, now head teacher of Kabuuba Primary School. Emma had attended Kabowa Primary School, with Richard as head teacher. Kabowa remains an active and successful FFT school. Emma picked interest in organic agriculture at school! We hope to involve some of the L4L schools in the British Council Connecting Classrooms programme.

We heard from Emma and Richard about underground water tanks which L4L is installing in schools, holding 80,000 litres and out of reach of vandals. They cost approx £2,800 to build.

#### **b. Visit to the Mubende District Education Officer (DEO), Mr Benson.**

We always try to make a courtesy call to the DEO's office. This time we wished to discuss the CCGL and name the schools involved in Mubende District. The DEO wrote a letter authorising this involvement, for the various levels of district administration.

On the DEO's wall was a large poster describing the Mubende District Adaptation to Climate Change Action Plan. However, the plan did not indicate what actions are planned!

We were referred to the Agriculture and Production Office to find out more, where we met Fred Kisaakye, the chief officer, and Esther Nakibuuka, one of his assistants. Esther had been a sub-county agricultural extension officer, but now promoted. The national government is re-introducing a structure of agricultural extension officers, replacing NAADS and Operation Create Wealth programme. We trust the officers will be **active!**

Esther told us about their climate adaptation work – much is about implementing SOA methods. Plus a technique of 'basins', where holes approx 20cms by 35cms are dug, manure added and then a few seeds planted in each, eg maize, beans or soya. Water should be more easily trapped in these holes rather than generally running off.

We decided to see this method in action, so visited Mr Kule, in Kifufu village, Kabyuma Parish. Unfortunately Mr Kule is not using that method this season. However he demonstrated it for us.



Mr Kule demonstrating the basin method

Esther and Fred told us that tree planting is part of the work of the District Natural Resources department, so we met the Senior Environment Officer, Ronald Lotet. He told us that Mubende has benefitted from programmes of the Global Climate Change Alliance and set up Farmer Field Schools (demonstration farms for 'look and learn' activities); an irrigation system; solar powered pumps to bring water to taps; small demonstration gardens with drought resistant pastures; and excavated 4 valley water tanks, benefitting 3000 people. These are lined with clay and last for 3-4 months. They are also trying to change the method of creating charcoal to reduce harmful gas emissions, eg of methane. They are also implementing Climate Smart Agriculture with 6 farmer groups (30 in each), with US\$10,000 awarded to each group. (!) This is from the Global

Environment Facility, via UNDP and the Ugandan Ministry of Energy.

On tree planting, the officer told us there is a district tree nursery, schools can access free tree seedlings when available AND he can offer free training to all teachers (30 at a time) on how to plant seeds and care for the tree seedlings! This is very good news. The small black plastic bags used for the seeds can be returned to his office or re-used. Bio-degradable bags are not in use.

There are tree planting days, usually during public holidays – 8<sup>th</sup> March International Women's' Day (but not always suitable due to the weather); 1<sup>st</sup> May, Labour Day, 9<sup>th</sup> October Uganda Independence Day.

The Officer has a system of registering schools if they meet various environmental standards – but many of the standards are too high for our FFT government schools to meet. However we like the idea of each class planting its own tree each year, so that there will be shade for each class over time.

These meetings took 4 hours!

### B. Katente West Hostel for Blind and Partially-sighted children.



Katente West PS at the hostel. Godfrey, Vincent and Haruna (deputy headteacher)



Robert's report after 2 terms using a Perkins Braille

Unfortunately the head teacher is sick and has been off school for 2 weeks. Sadly Peter passed away one week after my visit. I had no idea that he was so ill. We have sent condolences.

Vincent Ssendikwanawa had visited Peter and relayed his report and comments to us. We met Haruna, (deputy head), Jane, (P2 teacher) and the P1 teacher. Term 1 had just ended.

There are still only the 2 VI boys in the hostel. Robert started in P1, but had made such good progress, using Braille, that he was promoted to P2. But now all the Braille paper had been used up, so he is struggling with inferior paper. We were asked to help, so arranged for 4 reams of Braille paper to be purchased. It cost £100! (Subsequently we learned that this can be provided free to

schools by the ministry). More good news is that Robert's legs have strengthened and he is able to stand.

Nine Perkins Brailers had been mended, funded by FFT (at a cost of £20). Eight belong to Kasambya DAS Primary School. One has been promised to Katente West – but they have to go and request it!

Vincent has been very busy visiting 7 potential pupils. He expects 2 girls and 2 boys to begin next term. We met one of these, called Marven, who lives near Kyabalanzi School. The head teacher, Gertrude, had made contact with the family. Marven is so excited to be going to school. This was wonderful to see.

3 more VI children at Kaungera Primary School may transfer. Vincent has yet to meet these children and their parents. There are 3 other VI children in the school, who do not require to stay in the hostel. The bursaries left last September are still available for use. The hostel itself looks good. However there are a few issues to be resolved, eg doors dragging on floor.

Ravi Nathwani had given £50 for use by the hostel. With this very kind gift, we purchased 2 additional mattresses and mattress covers, plus the contents of a 1<sup>st</sup> Aid/medical Kit. There is already one new mattress and cover at the school. We purchased a 3<sup>rd</sup> set, so that the new pupils can have good mattresses when they move to the school. Thanks to Carolyn Hallett for her Christmas gift of the mattress and cover set. Carolyn is also providing a top-up to the salary of the matron, which is much appreciated by the school. Staff would like to have a talking clock, to ensure the children are on time for classes and sports equipment suitable for them to use.

### **C. Meeting with the Inspector for Special Needs, Cedrack Ighangura.**

Saturday morning dawned with heavy, unrelenting rain. However, Cedrack came on time (8am) to the farm for our meeting. He had been training in mending Perkins Brailers all week, with more to come! He intends to share his knowledge with others. I am strongly suggesting that Ronnie Kazibwe should be trained, as a technical person I'd expect him to be able to learn and use these skills more efficiently than a teacher. Cedrack told us that he needs a Perkins Brailier tool box, as none are available in Kampala.

The inspector is involved in various projects in the district. There are opportunities for Katente West to benefit BUT the school is NOT communicating with him, nor providing him with any reports. He needs a report **urgently** and then regular updates. (Could this be a role for Jane, P2 teacher and the hostel committee?). He needs evidence that the children are fully enrolled – THEN he can access more Brailers from a funder.

There are still issues with people's attitudes toward disabled children. Cedrack is part of a UNICEF project aiming to assist disabled children. First the project carried out research, a KAP study (knowledge, attitude and practices) with members of local communities. They have found lack of knowledge about the causes of disabilities and some attitudes remain very negative about prospects for these children.

### **D. Meeting with 5 schools which received the bee-keeping training in May 2018 and a few youth,** including the only young women who can use carpentry skills to make her own beehives.



Bee hives at Kirume Public PS



Boys with their own locally made bee hives

A meeting of the 5 schools had been held during term , where it was agreed that the distribution of honey should be 70% commercial/for sale with the funds going back to the school or school garden work; 20% for children who were active in bee-keeping; 10% for staff, KFTs etc. We met at Kirume Public Primary school (head teacher Jahlia was fasting for Ramadan). All 5 schools attended and gave their reports.

**1. Kirume, Garden Teacher Joshua.** All 8 KTB (Kenya Top Bar) bee-hives colonised. Between starting (May 2018) and now, they have harvested honey twice, collecting 9kg and then 6 kg of honey. 9kg distributed to pupils, 3kg to teachers and 3 kgs sold, for 20,000 UGX per kg. With that 60,000 UGX purchased more local bee hives, wood for bee hive house etc. They have not experienced many challenges, only a few people being stung. They plan to buy more bee-hives and expand.

**2. Biwanga CU Primary School. Garden Teacher Charles.** 8 KTB beehives, all colonised. March 2019, harvested 10 kgs of honey. 3kgs to children, 2kg to teachers, 5kgs sold at 20,000 UGX/kg. Challenges: intruders disturbed the bees, so now they employ a night watchman. Termites destroyed a beehive, so used medicine to kill them. They plan to extend the project and buy 5 extra local beehives.

**3. Kyamukona Primary School.** 8 KTB beehives, all colonised. Harvested in April, but that was too late, so only 2kgs obtained. 1kg to children and 1kg to staff, parents etc. They plan to add more local beehives. 2 have been made by the children. Challenges: termites, thieves and lack of protective suits. They will try to sensitize the community and employ a night watchman.

**4. Kasambya DAS Primary School.** 8 KTB beehives, one stolen, one disturbed by ants. No honey was harvested, as they delayed. They have shifted the bee-hives to nearer the staff quarters so they should be safer there. Bees might take a while to settle down. 4 traditional beehives purchased. 2 more will be bought. Currently 11 beehives. A Nightwatchman is there. Challenges: beehives need to be in the shade. More foliage and flowers needed. To avoid stings work with beehives when weather is cool.

**5. Kasaana Public Primary school.** Chris, Key Farmer Trainer. 8 KTB beehives. All now colonised. Harvested 20kgs from 4 beehives. 7kgs to children, 9kgs processed and sold at 20,000UGX per kg, 2 kgs sold as honey combs for 10,000 UGX per kg. Purchased 2 more local beehives. 4 beehives still to harvest. Challenges: children want to learn bee keeping and honey-harvesting but they lack equipment and processing materials, including where to keep honey safe, eg in buckets with lids; more skills needed, especially for teachers.

**Youth reports. 1. Obed.** Already owned 3 local beehives and added 2 KTB (Kenya Top Bar) from the training. Harvested 6kg from local and 4kg in KTB. Sold all and bought 3 more KTB. He wants to be rich. Honey is healthy and he has never been stung.

2. **Enosi.** He owns 10 beehives, including the 2 KTB. 1 KTB yielded 3kgs, 7 local 32kgs. Sold each at 10,000 UGX unprocessed. He used the money to pay school fees and for garden work.

3. **Nancy.** The only female youth interested in bees! 2 KTB and 3 local hives, all colonised. She harvested 5kgs and sold at 10,000 UGX per kg. She purchased wood and made 2 more KTB beehives, using the skills she learnt on the course! This is a ready source of money for her. She grows flowers and has everything near to her house.

4. **Ainea** (from Kyamukona). He was new to bee-keeping. Now has 2 KTB both colonised. He has made 4 local beehives, 2 are colonised. He has not yet harvested any honey.

5. **Chrisi** (from Kasaana Public). 2 local beehives, 2 KTB. Only 2 colonised so far. He harvested 6 kgs of honey, processed them and sold them for 20,000 UGX each. He has planted half an acre of bananas with the money. He will harvest again soon.

#### **Other points:**

- Distribution of honey: 70% commercial/for sale, 20% for children or those active in bee-keeping, 10% for staff, KFTs etc.
- When to harvest – early February and late July, every 6 months.
- Visit the beehives in a cool time, early morning, evening or on a dull day.
- They need flowers near the hives.
- Inspect the hives every month to check for disturbances (termites, geckos, snakes!)
- Harvest when the comb is sealed.
- Julius Tumwebaze: See this as a business, so extend the project to homes and neighbours. We could create a co-operative, which could be based round pupils who learn skills at school.
- Sensitize the community about bees. Bees will assist their crops by pollinating them.
- So, do not spray with chemicals. This will kill the bees. Make sure people know this.
- Beatrice Okumu: bees work for you for free! So help by providing flowers and trees for the bees.

**E. Other school visits.** We visited several other schools to check on progress. It was very kind of head teachers and garden teachers to receive us at their schools, during the school holidays.



Jahlia, HT at Kirume Public PS, showing how posters can be displayed



Jahlia with another type of display board

**Kabyuma Primary School** suffered the terrible lightening strike, which killed several pupils and put many in hospital. John Basaliza appealed for help and FFT provided a lightening conductor for the school – and for several others. Many parents removed their children from the school, but John has managed to build 2 permanent classrooms on that site, with almost no outside financial help. It is a wonderful demonstration of his leadership and determination, to which parents, teachers and the local community responded. Now just the outside of the building needs plastering, which will take 30 bags of cement, at £8 each. We are hoping to assist the community finish this work. Meanwhile, John has been transferred to Bulyana Primary School, which has been neglected for some years.



John Basaliza's new school

He found 130 pupils there but the number has already increased to 300, after one term! His reputation followed him.



Kassanda Boarding PS passion fruit garden



Kassanda Boarding PS with renovated classrooms

Travelling up from Kampala, we visited **Kassanda Boarding**, a Muslim-founded school, and found a rejuvenated head teacher, with 2 newly built teachers' houses (which house 4 teachers) and a renovated classroom block plus an active garden teacher with plans for a tree nursery. This was all very pleasing.



Garden teacher & Godfrey in Maria Mirembe amazing banan plantation



Maria Mirembe with extra bean plants funded by St Paul's Ps, Plymouth

At **Maria Mirembe**, the 2 garden teachers, showed us their very successful banana plantation, which ensures that the school always performs well in the FFT school gardens competition. The school has a new head teacher, following retirement of the previous head. The link school, St Pauls' RC in Plymouth had sent some funds, raised by selling the beans grown in their school garden. Maria Mirembe School had purchased bean seeds, planted, harvested and enjoyed eating those. Plus some further seeds had been planted – as shown in the photo! A great joint project!

**Kikandwa UMEA School** (Muslim founded) showed us the mango trees, planted with us last year and growing very well (apart from Beatrice Okumu's tree, but it was still just about alive!). Alison Derrick had sent a letter to the school from Keyham Barton School in Plymouth. We were delighted to see the gardens flourishing AND the girls' latrines and wash rooms restored to their former useful state, with doors mended etc.



Kikandwa PS in one of their school garden plots



Kikandwa UMEA PS Headteacher reading Alison Derrick's letter



Kikandwa PS rules

**Kyabalanzi School** was also a happy surprise. The classroom block with tumble-down walls has been rebuilt! It was very pleasing to see this. Unfortunately there is some uncertainty about the link school in Devon, but there is a good connection between the 2 teachers, so the link will continue.



Kyabalanzi PS gardens



Kyabalanzi renovated classrooms

**F. Visit to Jinja.** We included a visit to Jinja, to purchase some baskets and paper bead necklaces and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere in the town.



UWEAL group

On Saturday morning we were taken to the Jinja Farmers' Market, a weekly event, where local crafts' people can rent a stall and sell their goods. 3 of the UWEAL (Uganda Women's Enterprise And Livelihood Association) groups we know were there, selling bead necklaces, hand bags etc and ornaments made from cow horn. We met other groups selling herbal medicinal goods, developed from aloe vera, hibiscus, moringa, jack beans and others. The market was on a field next to a tree nursery and organised by an American couple, who ran the nursery. There were also refreshments. It was very good to see this initiative, which seems to be supported by tourists and locally-based foreigners, as well as local people.



Winnie Acio with knitting

Just outside of Jinja, Winnie Acio, a partially sighted young woman from Gulu, Northern Uganda, attends a vocational training centre. We paid her a visit and were pleased to hear her tutors praise her work, especially using the knitting machine. They have requested that she stays an extra term to perfect her skills – and then propose to offer her a paid post. Winnie was thrilled. We hope that will encourage her to stay focused and not miss out on this excellent opportunity to be independent, with income earning abilities.

And finally we attended the wedding, on Sunday, which was a wonderful event and most enjoyable. We trust Cissy and Ronnie will have a long and happy life together. *Sue Errington, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019.*



The day before the wedding



Our wedding party at the farm



The children



The bridegroom's party with Annabelle and Steve



The bride and groom Cissy and Ronnie



The wedding reception



The wedding