

Food For Thought Uganda Visit Report, Sept/Oct 2024

Background. This was the annual visit to FFT schools in Mubende, Kassanda and Tororo Districts, between 18th September and 6th October. Alison Derrick, Jean Harrison and Sue Errington formed the UK travellers, joined by Beatrice Okumu (national and Tororo FFT co-ordinator), Godfrey Kisakye (Mubende and Kassanda co-ordinator) and driver Vincent Bakka.

Aims of the visit.

- To support and encourage all FFT schools, especially on their teaching and learning, school gardens and pupil feeding.
- For schools with school links in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth, to encourage them and try to sort out any challenges, eg messages not getting through.
- But for all schools to provide some new ideas, to expand their pupils' and teachers' knowledge and understanding of the world. These can also be shared with link schools.
- For Tororo schools using phonics to extend their interest and enthusiasm in this method of teaching.
- In Mubende and Kassanda to provide a workshop for new Lead Teachers.
- To meet up with friends, see something new in Uganda and enjoy being in Uganda. Due to Mpox cases in East Africa, our plan to attend an event in Fort Portal was abandoned. Fortunately, only a very few cases of Mpox were reported during our visit – the health ministry seem to have this under control.

Tororo. Phonics. We first visited 'READ for Life', in 2019. READ for Life (RfL), based in Gulu, Northern Uganda, is the organisation focussed on teaching teachers to use phonics to teach reading. RfL has met and trained three Tororo teachers several times since 2020. Through RfL we met Cathy Kreutter, a Kampala-based children's author, teacher and librarian. Cathy offered to run a one-day workshop based around her books for phonics-trained teachers in Tororo, without charge – just the cost of overnight accommodation and/or fuel. This was held whilst we were in Tororo and we arranged a 2nd day, to build on Cathy's workshop.

FFT had purchased 50 copies of three of her titles. We also ordered extra copies of the RfL teachers' manual and some Readers which accompany the RfL manual. We hoped/assumed that one copy of the manual which FFT had previously purchased would be in each FFT phonics school. Sadly this was not the case. Only two schools had copies. Many teachers and head teachers have been transferred – teachers took the manuals with them. We just hope they are being used!

Cathy's workshop was excellent! She focused first on '*Something Old, Something New*' a story with many themes, detailed illustration, values, as well as an excellent story. Cathy also introduced a *Critical Thinking Framework*, four sections for *Connections* (your personal connections to the story); *Vocabulary* (new words for the pupils and teachers); *Notice* (ie what did you notice, eg about the structure of the story, the rhymes in it, repetition etc); *Wonder* (ie what did the story leave you wondering about eg why...? what about ...? how...? etc).

Cathy also used two other books: '*The Rock and Roll Rolex*' and '*I know an Old Mzee who swallowed a fly*'. We were able to provide one of Cathy's books to each school – in Tororo and also in Kassanda and Mubende, where Alison modelled reading aloud the books, explained the thinking behind that and introduced the critical thinking frame to all teachers and head teachers.

Cathy Kreutter's books are described on her website: <https://www.oldmzeebooks.com/> Illustrators and printers are all Ugandan.

We followed up Cathy's workshop by inviting teachers to write their own short stories. Alison introduced a story mountain: beginning, introduce main characters, develop a problem which gets worse, ask the readers/audience for help to find a solution, then a resolution of the problem and ending. Points when writing a short story:

- Short sentences
- It must make sense
- Keep it tight – a simple plot
- Focus on the main character
- Introduce humour
- Have an interesting opening sentence
- Make it interactive with the audience.

During the rest of Monday, all teachers created their own short stories.

The next day, the focus was on using the strategies from day one to write stories using phonics. So teachers decided if they wanted to use Set 1, Set 2 or Set 3 phonics sounds and tricky words to write their stories. Everyone had a small book, made from a sheet of A3 paper in which to write their finished stories. This activity was very successful. The hope is that these phonics teachers have gone away and have started writing more stories for their pupils to use. Enabling and encouraging teachers to write their own stories for pupils, so providing these new readers with reading materials, has long been an aim of Jean's. Perhaps we are now starting that process. Alison also plans to create some simple stories and send one sentence a day to teachers via Whatsapp, for them to write on their blackboards for children to practice reading each day. Then on a Friday, they will have a complete very short story!

Alison also wanted to speak to phonics teachers about assessing their pupils. She used the assessment sheets for reading and writing which are in RfL's manual. Unless we have evidence of pupils improving their reading and writing, hopes of persuading the government to take up and fund phonics seriously will not succeed. Alison will send the assessment sheets to the teachers via email.

Catherine Nyamere, one of the Tororo phonics trainers, led a session with 3 teachers illustrating using set 1, set 2 and set 3 phonics. 35 teachers attended day 1, and 44 day 2. FFT provided a pen and notebook each and made a contribution to their transport costs.

Tororo Head Teachers' Workshop, attended by 27 head teachers

As well as news, general updates and some discussion about the previous 2 days of workshops with their teachers, we had four activities to share with them. One was a more intellectual discussion about values: What is a value? What are examples of values? What values underpin their school? This was an interesting discussion. Alison spoke about the trend for UK schools to have three words to describe a school's values – and then these would be well-known by the pupils. For example: Ready (to learn), Respect (for selves, peers, teachers, all adults and the world around them), and Safe (in their activities, including on line, mind and body). Head teachers considered three words for their own schools. Respect was almost always included. After discussion with teaching staff, School Management Committee and PTA, schools could decide whether to adopt those three words or similar – and then share this with their link school where they have one.

We wanted to spend some of the workshop looking at maps. We started with the world map, continents etc. Then moved on to the outline map of the United Kingdom, first asking these head teachers to hold it up, as we would normally, pointing north. Unfortunately the teachers did not usually hold it the way we usually use! We then, together, labelled UK's 4 countries, plus the Republics of

Ireland and France; named the seas; added capital cities, Devon, Plymouth and Cornwall and located some of the link schools.

The Ugandan Primary School curriculum has a focus on East Africa and migration into Uganda. By P7, pupils also have studied the continent of Africa. But they do not go beyond Africa at primary school, and most, about 60%, of primary children do not progress to secondary, so perhaps never find out what is beyond Africa's borders. Part of the role of the school linking can be about providing a window on the world, and locating the UK and other countries on the globe. (Perhaps we can provide each FFT school with a world map).

DDE's designer, Viv Calderbank, created a beautiful poster of the four seasons we have in the UK, a copy of which we provided for every FFT school. This was an effort to help pupils and teachers understand our seasons. We discussed these and then invited head teachers to create their own poster of Uganda's 4 seasons: dry, wet, dry and wet. We have asked head teachers to work with their pupils to create such a poster, alongside the UK seasons poster – to share with their link schools. We will also ask Viv to create a poster, based on the work done during the workshops.

Our final activity was the Artefact Bag. We asked head teachers, in small groups, to draw up a list of ten objects which would explain Uganda to someone who had never visited Uganda nor met a Ugandan. We did not want paper drawings – we wanted objects!

Next we showed them the contents of the UK Artefact Bag which we had brought with us from UK. They quickly recognised the items and their relevance to describe the UK: a clock for good time management; a small model car, to represent toys and also our main mode of transport; a small tin of baked beans – we have to preserve food for the winter and so we do not always eat fresh food. The child's spade for digging in beach sand they found a little odd, but in Devon and Cornwall, we live near beaches!

Then the head teachers very quickly rewrote their own lists of objects. This is a good activity for pupils, which can be discussed and exchanged with their link school. Schools could create a real artefact bag to be exchanged. So, a busy, useful workshop.

We repeated this workshop with the head teachers in Kassanda and Mubende. Here we replaced discussion about phonics with an explanation of the Lead Teachers.

Mubende Headteachers have created an Executive Committee of 10 HTs. We were very disappointed not to be able to meet them and discuss their plans. Their focus included:

- Preparation for the PLE (Nov 2024) and other end of year exams
- Inter school competitions: debates, ball games, quizzes
- The FFT school gardens competition
- Building energy-saving stoves in all FFT schools
- Improving rubbish collection in school to keep schools clean
- Enabling Lead Teachers to train others/their colleagues.
- Providing a washroom/ changing room and emergency supplies for girls
- Organise a tour in Term 3
- Every school to contribute 10,000 UGX to a fund for unexpected events happening to schools in the network, eg funerals and deaths
- Making re-usable, washable sanitary towels

Kassanda and Mubende. Lead Teachers workshop.

FFT had introduced the idea of Lead Teachers some years before the pandemic of 2020, to provide support and refresher training about basic teaching and learning strategies, to 2 teachers in each FFT school, who would then share with colleagues, aiming to improve teaching and learning for all. We were extremely fortunate to be able to send 8 teachers to a 2 week Varkey Training programme on teaching and learning (in 2018/19). Also other teachers and head teachers to attend British Council training (under the Global Schools Partnership Programme) also in 2019. Sadly both of these opportunities are no longer available. During our visit in 2023, we were asked to provide some training for Lead Teachers. All but 2 or 3 Lead Teachers have been moved to other schools, or been promoted, following the pandemic, so we were keen to recruit new teachers as Lead Teachers.

We explained the role of the Lead Teachers to the head teachers and asked for their agreement and support – which was provided. We asked for 2 teachers from each FFT school – and held the workshop. 49 attended, from Kassanda as well as Mubende Districts – a very good number, although lunch, a pen and note pad and help with transport costs no doubt encouraged them to attend. The role of the Lead Teacher is attached as an appendix.

After welcome and introductions, we set the scene for the day and ran through the role of a Lead Teacher. Next we introduced the key ideas for the workshop:

- Child-centred learning
- Open questioning
- Critical thinking framework, using Cathy Kreutter's books
- Group work
- Interactive and participatory activities
- Different styles of learning (visual, audio, kinaesthetic)

And we tried to model these ideas throughout the workshop. We started with 'How children learn best' - 9 statements for teachers in groups to discuss, prioritise and organise using diamond ranking.

We used the 'Seasons in the UK' poster to ask teachers in groups to generate open-ended questions, using: what, when, why, where, how, who?

After a large lunch, on a hot, sunny afternoon, we held a Treasure Hunt, round Bulamu Farm compound (Godfrey Kisakye's compound), as an energizer activity. This was so easy to organise and yet it's good fun and encourages everyone to be inquisitive!

We were able to offer each school a copy of one of Cathy Kreutter's books, so held a 'Read Aloud' session, plus the critical thinking framework discussion.

Finally, we returned to the key tasks of the Lead Teacher. It was suggested that the group could set up its own Whatsapp group for Lead Teachers. We were pleased that one teacher Mustafah Ssekajja (mustafahssekajja97@gmail.com, from Biwanga PS) agreed to set this up and teachers provided their phone numbers.

Other visits and discussions

Kulika Uganda. We arranged a meeting with Magdalene, the CEO of Kulika. Kulika started working in zones of Arua, West Nile, during the pandemic and expects to be there for 10+ years. They are working with refugees and the local community on how to grow food sustainably. They are also working with 4 primary schools – first to repair some of the buildings so they are usable, as classrooms; then to educate the children on food growing and other matters. This area is very, very

poor with very little food for anyone, local or refugee. All work is hand done – no ox ploughs are being used. Very sadly a child from the local community when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. He or she said – a refugee, as they have food, shelter and access to schooling. (However, food rations for refugees have been cut as international donors have cut their contributions to the World Food Aid Programme. Uganda insists that local communities also benefit alongside refugees. Refugees are allowed to work and all children go to school alongside the local children.)

Kulika Training Centre at Lutisi, Waikiso District. We had a brief visit to the centre. The buildings look in good condition and well-maintained. There is a very large TV as a screen for the students taking part in the BOAT on line Management Training Course. (BOAT is Bicton Overseas Agricultural Trust). Before the pandemic, this course was held face to face in Devon. Since the pandemic, this on-line course is being created and piloted. We met an enthusiastic student at the centre.

We also saw: the demonstration small-scale vegetable gardens; the piggery with a lot of pigs and piglets; a new trial scheme to grow their own animal feed for their animals, using the larvae from a particular fly - a very interesting innovation; the honey department; the section for making brickettes made from the insides of maize cobs, to use instead of charcoal; and lots about sustainable pesticides and herbicides.

Food For Thought has funded two groups of Garden Teachers to visit the centre for a short course learning about sustainable agriculture. Altogether 26 teachers have visited from Tororo and 26 from Mubende/ Kassanda, each time staying 2 nights.

In consultation with Beatrice and Godfrey, we have decided to send one more group, 13 from Tororo and 13 from Mubende /Kassanda. This will replace the former annual Garden Teachers workshop for 2024, formerly held in December.

For the School Gardens Competition, it will focus on the teachers who have been fortunate enough to have already visited the centre - and their school gardens, plus any other teacher who especially asks to be included in the competition.

Courtesy Visits to DEOs (District Education Officers).

In Tororo, the DEO was not available so we met with the senior Schools Inspector (Ms Topistar Nydoi, toppiegal@gmail.com) and the Inspector for Special Needs (Okware Stephen). There are 164 government primary schools in Tororo District. About 50 are FFT schools. The inspectors knew about the phonics work and were keen to see it extended to all the schools – but FFT cannot fund that! The District needs to get involved. However, they would like to know when and which schools the trainers are visiting, so that they can join them. Also they requested details of READ for Life.

Unfortunately, the Inspector for Special Needs did not give the impression of being very active. We also discussed the district providing guttering for school buildings so that rain water can be collected, on site. We await progress on this.

In Kassanda, the DEO was absent but we met the deputy, called Namuyingo Mary Gorrettie, who was a head teacher in a FFT school some years ago.

In Mubende, we met the DEO, the Inspectors for Special Needs and for Sports. The DEO is kept informed of FFT activities by Godfrey Kisakye, who made a report to him after his visit to UK in June. Roberts, the Inspector for Sports, discussed sports resources for disabled and VI pupils. It seems the Paralympics 2024 have made an impact! However there is concern that teachers will not know how to use such resources, although Kyambogo University can provide training. A 'goalball' for VI pupils cost 500,000 UGX (2020 figure, ie approx £100).

We know the Inspector of Special Needs, Cedrack Ighangura Kantu, very well and were pleased that he came with us to visit Katente West PS.

Katente West Primary School and Hostel for Disabled Pupils. The Special Needs Inspector had organised a week's training for 8 teachers (4 from Katente West and 4 from Kasambya DAS), in the skills of repairing Perkins Brailers, funded by FFT. The Brailers are very complicated, no longer being manufactured, so it is very pleasing to know that teachers now have the knowledge.

Also, some interesting news is that Annet, a qualified blind nursery teacher has been employed at Katente West, at the insistence of the DEO, to work with the nursery children. Sadly, Annet will not be paid by the government – they do not pay nursery staff, so she is being paid a small sum by the school. She attended Kasambya DAS primary school, then attended secondary school until 'O' level. Next, she trained as a nursery teacher and was employed at Kasambya DAS – until their nursery class was closed earlier this year and she was made redundant. She would like to train to be a qualified teacher with a degree and then she will be paid by the government. This would be two years full time to obtain a diploma and 2 more for a degree, at Kyambogo University.

Otherwise, the school is progressing well – but is very popular, maybe because of the provision of daily porridge for all. Government policy is that pupils can change school at any time and schools have to accept them. So P1 has over 200 pupils and the school 1500 pupils! Meanwhile there are 2 local schools with only 200 pupils in each. It's not clear how this issue can be addressed.

Tree nurseries. A FFT supporter in Cornwall raised funds from a cream tea, which has been used to set up a tree nursery in both Tororo, at Kisoko Girls PS, and Mubende, at Kabowa PS, where Sarapio is overseeing this. Structures have been set up and tree seeds planted. These are tree seedlings for all FFT schools to share.

Homelands and Julius Tumwesige We paid a visit to see Julius and his leisure gardens. He had been involved in a car accident, when turning right into his gardens. His head injury was not too bad and he was resting in the garden but not as active as usual. However, the gardens and farm were all flourishing.

He was planning an event for World Food Day on 16th October, collaborating with many different groups, including Slow Food Uganda, Agro-Tourism Association of Uganda, Learning for Life Association of Youth and a heritage seed organisation. We heard about African black deadly nightshade (*Solanum Nigrum*) which is not poisonous apparently.

Conclusion: a busy trip with a focus on working with teachers and head teachers, including suggestions for activities for link schools. Currently there are no plans to invite a teacher to come to UK in 2025.

APPENDIX:

FOOD FOR THOUGHT SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME April 2018.

Overall aim of this programme is to improve learning and teaching in Food for Thought Schools

ROLE OF LEAD TEACHERS

A Lead Teacher is:

- A good teacher
- Aims to achieve best practice
- Intrinsically motivated
- A committed teacher
- Respected for their teaching skills
- Ideally nominated by other teachers in their school

- Not paid any additional salary

A Lead teacher will:

- Work with head teachers, Deputies and other senior staff in order to improve the learning and teaching in their school
- Seek to improve their own teaching
- In collaboration with colleagues, carry out classroom observations
- Seek to support colleagues in improving their teaching skills
- Disseminate best practice in learning and teaching wherever possible
- Liaise with the Lead Teacher colleagues and others, to share, receive support and keep updated.