

Food For Thought Visit to Uganda, Sue Errington, Sept 2014.

During this visit, I planned to:

- Meet with the headteachers in both Mubende and Tororo
- Check up on progress with fund-raising efforts at Rugot Primary School, Tororo.
- Attend the fund-raising day for the Special Needs Unit at Katente West Primary School, Mubende.
- Visit the 'New Build Uganda' British and Ugandan volunteers, plus other workers completing the building of a 3 classroom block at Kanyagoga Primary School, Mubende.
- Meet the FFT Young Farmers Groups in both Mubende and Tororo
- Research bee-keeping in Uganda, find out about its acceptability to schools and young people, prior to writing a funding application.
- Find out more about WWOOFing in Uganda.
- Meet Kulika staff to discuss possible joint funding applications.
- Meet up with friends and colleagues, including James Anywar, recently injured in a motorcycle accident.

1. Headteachers' meetings in Mubende and Tororo.

In **Mubende**, this was the half termly rotational meeting, held at Maaya Primary School. It was good to meet head teachers again, although it was very sad to mark the recent death of the headteacher of Kabyuma, after a long illness.

At every FFT headteachers rotational meeting, a physical activity takes place, so that a mark of the visit is left on the ground. So, on this occasion, we planted eucalyptus seedlings in the school garden.

Maaya Primary School, which is very distant from the town of Mubende, has started on a building project, planning to build a Vocational Training Centre at the school for young people who do not proceed to secondary school. The headteacher has been able to persuade the parents to contribute 5000 UGX (£1.25) each term and plans to have the building completed by the end of 2015.



During the headteachers' meeting, we agreed that the **main focus for FFT is still the teaching of Sustainable Organic Agriculture to the pupils**. A school gardening competition will be held in October (judged by Beatrice Okumu and Julius Tumwebaze) and the Garden Teachers Residential Workshop (in December) will be held in Mubende.

The headteachers have organised, for themselves, a tour to Kabale, in the south of Uganda, in October, visiting organic farms and primary schools, to learn from them.

There are now 26 FFT schools in Mubende, but only about 8 have active school links in Devon, which is a disappointment to them. We would like to encourage more school links.

Headteachers supported the idea of a beekeeping project.

All agreed to support the Special Needs building project at Katente West Primary School and agreed to contribute 20,000 Ugandan shillings (£5) per school.

In **Tororo**, the headteachers' meeting was held at Beatrice Okumu's home. A very heavy and long thunder storm interrupted us at lunchtime and delayed the avocado tree planting activity – an activity which Tororo copied from Mubende!

The headteacher of Pomede School, as chairperson of the group, reported that promises made in February have been kept. All 22 schools have school gardens



where the children are timetabled to work each week. Most schools are providing lunch for their pupils. Schools are planting trees, as woodlots, for fruit and as wind breaks. More experienced schools are helping beginners – and also sharing with non-FFT schools. Generally there is a big difference between FFT schools and others. Schools have organised their own Young Farmer clubs for pupils, and pupils are taking their new skills home and applying them.

However, there are road blocks: scarcity of water sources is a major problem for most schools; most schools have 600 or more pupils, yet lack enough classrooms or even seats; girls often outnumber boys in the early years, and they require more care.

Headteachers were asked to share any specific activities which have proved successful: in Kisoko Boys Primary School, to encourage 10 very reluctant gardeners, the headteacher discussed the issue with them, gave them sugarcane, and since then they all worked enthusiastically together. Kisoko Boys also has a very effective school council with president (seen in this photo), speaker, secretary etc.



Another headteacher recommended planting fruit trees, as these will never be cut down for firewood. Another uses assemblies to discuss SOA, with each class deciding what to grow. But one reported that thieves had stolen the ripe maize from the school garden the night before, so the school would harvest today.

Again all headteachers supported the idea of a beekeeping project.

Francesca Hanson, her parents (both teachers) and her brother had visited Tororo for 2 weeks in August and worked in the FFT schools. Fran introduced the 'Talk Maths' project in 2013, and was very pleased with the continued commitment and enthusiasm she found in the schools – see the physical shapes pupils created in Rugot School. I reported that we had not been successful with the funding application for this work. However, we will try to help it continue and expand.



Headteachers were 'ambushed' by Rugot School's fundraising efforts – Rugot are fund-raising to build



a 3-classroom block, so that all the pupils can study indoors and not be sitting, literally, on rocks under the trees! All schools agreed to give 30,000 shillings (UGX) (£7.50).

2 teachers are due to visit from Cornwall in October with return visits later this term, if the Ugandan teachers are granted visas.

Generally all headteachers were in good spirits, working hard with their Primary 7 pupils, who take their Primary Leaving Exam (PLE) in early November.

We agreed that funds from the district and government are very limited, so schools should make plans to find ways to generate their own funds for building or other school needs.

We asked everyone to vote on 'Why people are hungry in the world?', selecting their reasons from a list of 10. This is an exercise we used with members of the public at the Green Fair on Exeter in August, and we were interested to see if there would be any difference in their answers. There were. Whilst everyone agreed that there is enough food for everyone, it's just not shared out fairly, Ugandans voted strongly for lack of farmer skills and resources as major reasons. When asked for additional reasons, both headteachers' groups said 'People are hungry because they are lazy.'

(Full results will be on our website very soon: www.globalcentredeven.org.uk/food-for-thought) The photos shows the voting process.



2. Fundraising. Last April, **Rugot Primary School, in Tororo**, held a fundraising day to build a 3-classroom block (estimated cost 57m UGX, ie about £14,000), receiving 10m UGX (£2500) in gifts and pledges. I was keen to find out whether the pledges had been honoured and what other plans they had to raise the final amount required.



At Rugot, we found several parents working hard, smashing up rocks to be used aggregate; other

parents had been making bricks and bringing stones. Most of the pledges had been received – the bags of cement would be delivered once construction started. The MP had offered 10m UGX for the building – but this had not yet been honoured.



However, there the good news ended, as there was no obvious plan to raise the additional sum required. So, Beatrice persuaded all the FFT headteachers to contribute and we had a few items for sale. Parents have also agreed to contribute 3000UGX per child – but this had yet been collected. I committed FFT (UK) to match the parents' contributions, once they were paid. Beatrice 'press-ganged' Rugot's teachers into making their own contributions – a cockerel, a hen, a baby hen, 100 bricks, 10,000UGX, 3 bottles of fruit juice all for sale ... Altogether we raised 243,000UGX on that one afternoon.

The fine example of Rugot, persuaded **Katente West Primary School, Mubende**, to organise their own fund-raising, to raise funds to build a Special Needs Unit (estimated cost £8000). We had discussed having some sponsored activities with the children and then a fund-raising day. The day was chosen so that the New Build British and Ugandan volunteers would be available to attend!

When we visited the school before the fund-raising day, we were delighted to find that the teachers had organised the pupils into several groups to do a 'Sponsored Walk'. A teacher went with each group and they visited all the local homes, shops and other buildings to tell them about the fund-raising day, to ask for donations and to invite them to attend.

I had planned a sponsored 'Readathon', for Primary 6 and 7 classes and times table challenge for Primary 4 and 5, with UK people providing £1 sponsorship for each completed task. This yielded 700,000 UGX. (£175 approx). Teachers and a parent were keen to take part in these activities – and receive a reward for good work (a biro or pencil).



On the fund-raising day, there was a very generous quantity of goods to be sold or auctioned. Unfortunately the number of people who attended was not so great. However, 2.5m UGX was raised (about £600) – a very good start! The WESC Foundation (previously known as the West of England School for Partially Sighted), in Exeter, donated 2 Perkins Brailers for the new unit, plus some Braille paper and other equipment. (Two fundraising events had been held in Devon (at WESC school and a tea party in Ivybridge. We hope more funds will be raised in both countries.)



3. 'New Build Uganda' building work at Kanyagoga Primary School, Mubende. Six British volunteers and six Ugandan volunteers were working to complete the new 3 –classroom block. The volunteers all worked very hard for 2 weeks, most then had to leave, with the rest of the work to be completed by the Ugandan builders. The British had all fund-raised in the UK, including completing the Three-Peaks Challenge. Some repairs to the existing classrooms at Kanyagoga were also made, including re-cementing the floor and improving the door frames. We hope the district will renovate the teachers' housing. This school is **very** remote! Even with a good 4-wheel-drive vehicle, it takes over 2 hours to drive there from the nearby town of Mubende. However, we have seen an improvement in the road since FFT and New Build started at the school!

4. FFT Young Farmers' Groups and Beekeeping. For some time, we had discussed the possibility of setting up Young Farmer Groups, for young people who had dropped out of school, or left a FFT primary school for secondary school, but still wanted to learn more about SOA.



We tried various ways to raise the funds in the UK: funding applications (all rejected), crowd-funding through the internet (raised £800 when we aimed at £5000!), a raffle (raised £1000) and a concert (raised £770). So now we have enough to run 2 groups in each district for 12 months – meeting one day a month with £25 available each meeting. The young people have decided to spend their allocation on FFT Young Farmers T-shirts, hard-backed books to keep notes in (and also record their earnings and expenses), and seeds and seedlings. All members are required to pay a membership fee of 5000 UGX (£1.25), as we want a real commitment from these young people. It was also agreed that everyone will plant the same crops or at least one crop the same, so that they can experiment with joint marketing and selling of the produce.

We held a meeting with one group in both Mubende (pictured left) and Tororo (on the right). I was very pleased to meet several young women in the Mubende group (in February, only young men had attended), and to meet again Joel, a very sad young man who faced dropping out of secondary school, because his parents could not afford the school fees and had no land for him to practice his food growing. Joel and his father have been able to hire some land, rent payable when the crops are harvested.

During Julius's visit to the Devon in June, he spoke to the Kenn Valley Young Farmers Club. Now that club have decided to link with the Young Farmers in Uganda for one year, do some fund-raising and we hope an exchange visit might be possible too.

Young Farmers were very interested in the bee-keeping proposal. Warren came to Fort Portal to visit the Bunyangabu Beekeepers Co-operative Ltd (BBC), which he found very interesting, although he was stung on his cheek. In Tororo, we invited the District Entomologist to meet the group, which she did and explained the benefits of beekeeping.



There is a good local market for honey in rural Uganda, so beekeeping seems a good way to support the bees, and also for local people to earn an income. I hope we will be able to find funding for this project.

5. WWOOF-ing Uganda. (Willing Workers on Organic Farms). This is a very successful, world-wide movement, where people volunteer to work on an organic farm, unpaid, in exchange for bed and board, whilst also learning about organic growing and visiting a new place. There are several Key Farmer Trainers (FFT) whose farms would be very interesting for WWOOF-ers. So we arranged to visit the Ugandan organiser, whose farm is near Mukono. WWOOF-ing has been

operating successfully in Uganda for about 8 years, confirming our thoughts that this would be an interesting activity to pursue. However, our colleagues would need a financial contribution from visitors, probably £10 a head a night for bed and board, so this probably could not be called 'Wwoofing'. So we suggested to Kulika that they might set up a similar scheme.

6. Meeting friends and colleagues. I met lots of friends and colleagues, many making very good progress with their lives. The most impressive were: Olivia, a petite young woman, who is in her 2nd year training to be a doctor or medical officer, who has already safely delivered many, many babies, while working at a mission clinic during her holidays. Ronald, who is funding 50% of his university fees by working at a primary school when not at college. He is training to be an orthopaedic technician and performing very well. Brothers Rhonnie, Douglas and Denis, who lost their mother (a KFT) whilst very young, have been brought up by their aunt and after some very difficult times in their lives, are all now doing very well.



We met Ronnie and Cissy's little girl Precious Rhona - very cute as you can see in the photo. And a new baby, born to Godfrey (Elijah's nephew) and Sandra, whose name is Elijah!

Other young people still face many challenges and difficulties. One young farmer who wants to complete 6th form but whose parents will not help her; girls with sight problems, who could attend secondary school with support for VI, but there is no funding for school fees. The list is very long!

James Anywar, headteacher in Gulu and our main contact there, was badly injured in a motorcycle accident, but seems to be recovering. And sadly, the elderly father of Executive Director of Kulika, Christina Sempebwa, passed away during the visit.

So, overall, a very interesting and worthwhile visit. I hope more teachers will apply for grants to visit their link schools – and we can organise visits for other people, accompanied or not as required. Just let us know.

Sue Errington, Sept 2014.

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