

Katente West Primary School Special Needs Unit, Update – Oct 2014.

Background and context:

Uganda received debt cancellation in 1997 and decided to use funds now available because of this, to fund free Universal Primary Education (UPE). This was followed by a policy of inclusion, so that Special Needs pupils would be taught alongside everyone else in the primary school classroom. The effect of UPE was to find thousands of children not in school, who now take the opportunity to attend. Inclusive teaching is also operating in government schools, although often parents keep their special needs children at home. This is especially true in rural areas. And often schools do not have enough teachers or equipment to work with special needs pupils. Children with Visual Impairment (VI) need specialist help, to learn to read and write in Braille, and also find difficulties walking long distances to and from school, especially in rural areas.

My organisation, Devon Development Education, has been running the Food For Thought programme (FFT) since 2001. This is a school linking programme between primary schools mainly in Devon and Cornwall and very rural primary schools in two districts of Uganda (Tororo and Mubende). Through these links, we have become involved in VI issues. In Uganda, 3 link schools have VI children. Now, one of these schools, Katente West Primary School in Mubende, has been given permission to set up a Special Needs residential Unit, particularly for VI children. The headteacher, Peter Byanukama, was deputy head at a local school with such a unit (called Kasambya DAS Primary School), so has experience of running such a unit. Peter has been



trained by the Ugandan National Association of the Blind (UNAB) to repair Perkins Brailers, the main tool for writing in Braille used by these schools, where there is no electricity currently, so no access to computers. Katente West has been donated 2 Perkins Brailers by WESC Foundation (previously known as the West of England School for VI pupils).

Vincent Ssendikwanawa teaches at the school. He is himself VI, and is currently training part time at Kyambogo University in Special Needs Education. He will be the manager of the unit. Vincent has for several years been very active in seeking VI and special needs pupils in the surrounding area and encouraging parents to allow their children to come to school.

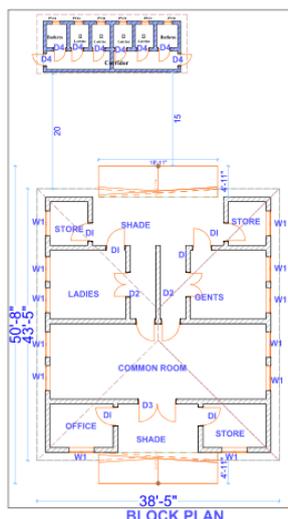


The current situation (October 2014)

Katente West is a Catholic primary school. In July 2013, our FFT team discussed the proposal to set up a Special Needs Unit at the school with the parish priest, who took it to the Bishop and Catholic Diocese. They have agreed to support the establishment of the unit, although have very little money to contribute to it.



The unit will be residential, either weekly, monthly or termly, because special needs and VI children find it very difficult to walk long distances to school each day.



The unit will be basically a classroom, approx size 33ft by 22ft. At the front of the building will be a veranda, with an office and store at each side. Inside will be a common room, where pupils can learn Braille and receive extra tuition in their other subjects, as required. They can also have meals here and socialise.

Behind the common room will be 2 dormitories, with 2 bathing areas and then outside, latrines and a water tank, just for their use.

The unit will also require furniture: beds, tables, cupboards, chairs; and ideally electricity.

The basic minimum cost of this unit is calculated as £8000.

Fund-raising up-date for the Katente West Special Needs Unit.

Katente West held a fund-raising day at their school on 12th September 2014. During my visit in February, we had discussed having some sponsored activities with the children and then a fund-raising day. The day was chosen so that a group of 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 years 6 and 7 classes and a Mathematics challenge for Primary 4 and 5, with UK people providing £1 sponsorship for each completed task. This yielded 700,000 UGX. (£175). Teachers 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 and auctioned, donated by parents, neighbours and members of the school management committee. Unfortunately the number of people who attended was not so great – and they tended not to be very wealthy! However, 2.5m Uganda shillings was raised (about £625, including the £175 sponsorship money) – a very good start!

All the 26 FFT schools in Mubende agreed to donate £5 each to the fund, now being collected. Another £130.00.



Two fundraising events were held in Devon in the summer. A July cream tea party in a garden, in the town of Ivybridge, on a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon. This raised £334.00

And at WESC school, the teachers organised a Farmers' Market and donated the proceeds of £65.00 to the fund.

So now £1154.00 has been raised so far – a good start, but still much work to be done.

We are expecting more funding raising activities during the next few months – planning to start building next July, with a few volunteers from both UK and Uganda.

Appeal to you.

We would be very grateful for any contribution towards this fund which you are able to make from your fundraising from the JCB challenge.

If you require any further information, please contact me. Thank you.

Sue Errington,
Co-ordinator of Food For Thought,
Devon Development Education,
17 St David's Hill,
Exeter, EX4 3RG
01392 438811
dde@globalcentred Devon.org.uk
www.globalcentred Devon.org.uk/food-for-thought