

AFRICAN VILLAGE SUPPORT HELPING VILLAGES IN RURAL UGANDA

Look at some of the girls our hostel is helping



Jackline is at university studying a Social Science degree. She stayed in our hostel and has spent time volunteering with the Red Cross. She is just about to undertake work experience as a Community Development Officer.



Cate another brilliant girl who is having a brilliant time training as a State enrolled Nurse. She also did volunteer work with the Red Cross whilst waiting for her course to begin.



Kharona Mary, whose mother died by walking into an illegally strung electricity cable, stays in our hostel so that she is not over-worked with domestic chores.

THE KEFA MUKOOTA HOSTEL FOR GIRLS....

.....a year on.....

It was really good to visit the girl's hostel as it opened for its second year and to be greeted by the matron, the staff and the girls. The original building has been well looked after and is in good condition and the new large building which will accommodate around eighty girls is almost complete. We were able to leave all of the money necessary to complete the last phase of this construction, the finishing and fittings. This will be completed before the beginning of the second term and the girls will be able to move into a larger dormitory which will accommodate the growing numbers.

The hostel has achieved a good local reputation and demand for places is increasing.

The staff are virtually unchanged which says much for the management of the hostel over the past year.

I went to the hostel when the girls had returned from their long holiday and we made arrangements for Olivia, (a



The new dormitory nearing completion

student who is spending three months over there) to visit the hostel a couple of times a week to spend time chatting to the girls and playing indoor and outdoor games with them. This opportunity to mix and interact is of great mutual benefit. Some of the girls are from different tribes and it was good to see them working and living together.

Even after a week they had formed a small choir and they were singing to us as well as for their own fun. They are hoping to perform at some local events before too long. It is important to remember that our hostel is giving these girls their opportunity to attend secondary school a chance that can change their lives.



Ezeza and Nasita both at university now have been provided with lap top to support their studies.

STUDENTS FROM HOME HELP US TO HELP FELLOW STUDENTS

An increasing number of students from the UK are staying in Uganda as part of their gap year and we are asking them to fund raise for us in return for this wonderful experience. Rosie and Thalia who are going with Jack and Tom in May raised £4,000 from the organization of a Ball!!!

WELL DONE AND THANK YOU!



OXEN AND PLOUGH FOR THE WOMEN'S GROUPS



of oxen and a ploughs for four of our biggest groups who are involved in agriculture. This isn't an easy option as the groups have to decide who is to look after the oxen, where the money is going to come from, how they are going to pay the vet's bills when necessary, and who they are going to hire to drive the plough. Not easy decisions! Initially I had thought that two groups would share one set but this proved impossible considering the decisions that had to be made within one group to look after their own animals. One of our trustees, Val North, decided to make a personal request

to some of her women friends, for donations towards some ox plough. Their response was tremendous and I was able to organise the purchase of two sets during my recent visit. The oxen were purchased at £200 each and together with the plough and harness, they cost us £1,000 each. We were able to buy two sets. The money will eventually be recovered as the groups will be able to hire out their oxen to plough other people's gardens. The groups agreed to set aside some income from their harvest and ploughing profits to enable them to become independent of AVS for the upkeep and eventual replacement of animals.

MORE STORM DAMAGE

We went to visit a small rural school where 400 children were left without a single latrine. We have just been able to send the money for our builder to build a latrine block for them.

One of our biggest expenditures for our women's groups is the cost of ploughing the land with a tractor. It was our intention to consider funding the purchase

GIFTS WHICH SPREAD JOY!

A cow, some goats as well as numerous hens were bought as presents for family and friends for Christmas and birthdays this year much to the delight and benefit of a few local groups and

individuals whom we have not helped before. We also bought some maize when I was in Muyembe last June and this was distributed to some really needy local

families who would have been without food of their own by now as they wait for planting time to come and have used their harvest from last season.



NABBONGO SCHOOL DAMAGE

Normally part of the long, dry season, February showed us again, that the climate here is also affected by change. We had a week of unexpected rains which included high winds that on one day destroyed many banana plantations and blew down iron sheeted roofs. This included a large section of the roof of Nabbongo Primary School which was

only recently refurbished by members of the congregation of St Michael and All Angels in Marden, Kent. The roof was blown off the two classrooms in the main block and has rendered the rooms unusable. This means that the oldest classes have to combine together with a total of over 120 pupils in each class. It is going to cost around £3,000 to repair the building and although this should be the responsibility of the

Education Department the reality of the matter is that if we wait for them it could mean a wait of perhaps two years or more. We shall try all ways to get some funding from the UK to help with this problem.



MAMA BAGS

We gave out over 160 Mama Bags last month and could have given more if the resources were there. We still struggle to get enough clothes transported to Uganda without a large cost being involved. The rest of the contents of the bags we buy in Uganda. The local mid wives, although having to work much harder, are full of praise for the project. It is impossible to know how many deaths are being prevented but figures show that from a norm of four births a month at the Health Centre numbers have risen to over forty. This means that not only are normal pre-natal checks given but also checks for HIV/AIDs and other conditions which can affect life expectancy of the mothers and children. Agnes, our Women's representative on our AVS

(UG) committee, spoke to me about the continuing anxiety and problem of infant mortality rate in Uganda. 'People from overseas don't understand that we still lose many of our babies and young children', she said. Agnes herself had only the month before delivered a baby girl herself, although born very healthy to two educated people who both have an income, became very ill with sickness, diarrhoea and dehydration. I went to check on her the day I was leaving for home and found the ladies of the village sitting outside her mud house surrounding the baby who looked inert and almost lifeless. They were sitting with Agnes to watch through the death. Agnes has since told me that she had 'given



up', she 'knew her baby was going to die'. Agnes and her husband had taken the baby to the local clinics but had run out of money and didn't have the resources for transport to Mbale and treatment at a town clinic. Their impotency in the situation was horrifying. It was simple for me to say 'get ready we'll go to Mbale, don't worry about the money' but not an option for many. In the case of Agnes help was at hand but for many help will never be there.

Agnes' baby is now discharged from hospital and she is thriving again but it was a close call and one that could have had such a different ending. So, anything we can do to help to save a child's life is invaluable. Your help with Mama Bags is one in which we are trying to save lives.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

JOAN CAMP BURSARY

Joan Camp lives in Great Missenden and although she has now long retired was the first head teacher of Aylesbury High School. Immediately prior to that appointment she worked in Uganda for HM Inspectors of School. She retained a firm affection for Uganda and decided to set up a bursary, in collaboration with AVS, for a girl from Aylesbury High School to spend three months working in Uganda

during their gap year. The first girl to succeed in her application for the bursary was Olivia House who is in Uganda, staying in Muyembe as I write. Olivia arrived in Uganda whilst I was there on my recent visit and was quickly involved in working in schools and nurseries as well as helping out in the computer shop undertaking secretarial duties and volunteering with the Red

Cross. I am sure that her time there will be a life changing experience for her. We can look forward to hearing from Olivia in the next news letter.



OUR STUDENTS IN UGANDA

So many of our students in Uganda are taking advantage of the opportunity which they are being offered. Inevitably there are a few who have fallen by the wayside but the big majority are really benefitting from their good fortune. We have some students at university, some on technical training courses, nurses in training, both girls and boys, as well as plumbers and IT technicians. One young man is to be trained



in photography by a UK volunteer. This will support development of his small business. An unplanned benefit of our computer training was the employment of

many of our students by the Electoral Commission during the recent National and local elections. We are also employing some of our students locally in our secretarial and computer offices as well as planning to employ another local man as the Community Centre manager when it is up and running. So there are many beneficial effects for AVS as well as for the students and their families.

There are many ways in which you can help us to continue our support of the people in the area of Muyembe..

The most fundamental way is by a **regular donation to the charity**. This gives us the confidence to know that we have the funds to maintain the projects that we have undertaken. Or You could:-

- Fund transport costs
- Sponsor a student
- Support our work with the women's groups.
- Pay for some Mama Bags

OR the following items would be gratefully received.

For Secondary school students

- Lap tops
- Strong black shoes
- White shirts
- School bags

For the computer services

- Flat screen monitors
- Lap tops

For the nurseries

- Tennis balls
- Skipping ropes
- Dressing up clothes
- Baby dolls

For the Mama Bags

- Baby clothes
- Small blankets/shawls
- Vaseline & soap
- Medical rubber gloves

For the knitting and sewing group

- Zig zag sewing machine
- Material (for clothing)
- Double knitting wool

For the builders

- Basic tools

Life is tough for most people in Uganda. An existence where you eat what you grow and try to sell or barter excess food for luxury items like paraffin, washing powder or a little soap. This is a place of mud huts with bare earth or cow dung floors. There is no running water; you collect that from the borehole or the river every day. The toilet is a hole in the ground. Cooking is done outdoors on an open fire so gathering firewood is a regular chore.

Each family has a compound with several dwellings and adjoining land for cultivation. Some of the land is worked co-operatively by members of women's empowerment groups. These are set up, by African Village Support, (who hosted our visit) to enable the women to have at least some income to provide for their children.

Ploughing by ox is as common a sight as the ancient, battered tractor. And here, people walk great distances – we met one of many school teachers who walk more than three miles to work each day. Public transport is predominantly the matatu, the ubiquitous African taxi – we would call it a mini bus. On one journey I was one of 24 people inside the 14 seater vehicle, with at least one other clinging to the outside! Motorbike taxis are everywhere. I saw many carrying three people, and one carrying an 8 foot table. Then four on a bike, two or three with five on a bike and one with an unbelievable six people on one machine! The other taxi is the boda-boda, a bicycle with a parcel rack on the back, on which the passenger sits, side saddle if you are a lady!

There is no petrol station for 30 miles or more so the few who own a vehicle (typically very old and battered affairs) have to buy fuel from local dealers who sell it from a jerry can at inflated prices. Much of it is diluted with paraffin causing engines to knock and breakdown, adding misery to an already difficult journey over pot-holed, dusty earth roads.

The situation is not unlike 19th century Europe, where the poor were in rags and the families were large and death came early. Families typically contain seven or more children. This is understandable where one in five does not reach the age of five. In the absence of any welfare children are a guarantee that parents will be looked after in old age and before that they contribute to the economy of the household by performing domestic duties. And yet this is a society which is trying to embrace the 21st Century. I have an iconic photograph of a young woman, obviously educated (probably in provincial administration) carrying a jerry can of water on her head, with a lap top slung over her shoulder!

This was a step into the unknown for us. There is a lot more to tell. What made the greatest impression? The stoicism and practicality of these inherently religious, resourceful, kind and friendly people.

A week in Uganda Barbara and Brian Hatton

Our main fundraising focus is for the Community and Youth Development Centre in Muyembe. We need lots of donations and fundraisers!

Welcome to our new group of volunteers, Jan Colton, Sylvie Hughes and Tracy Purser. It's great to have you!

Not to forget Lucy Wood who has been the driving force behind organising and packing our goods for Uganda.

Many thanks to Jan Colton one of our new volunteers who organised a really successful Coffee and massage fundraising morning!



PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED US RECENTLY

Storage Solution at Last, Thank You Big Yellow Self Storage Company!

After a bit of searching and a few false starts we have at last managed to find a great place to sort and store all the fantastic things that we are donated. Having struggled with cellars and garages over the last few years we now have a fantastic room in a purpose built storage facility and the best bit is that it has been donated for free. Help with our storage has come from a local business The Big Yellow Self Storage Company, on the London Road in High Wycombe. In response to a letter sent by Sylvie Hughes, one of our volunteers, I was rung by Keeran, the deputy branch manager who arranged for us to go down and see the storage facility. We were offered a 75 square foot room. We have now received the key or rather padlock, to the door of a fantastic storage room. Thank you so much to everyone at The Big Yellow Self Storage Company, especially Keeran, we are extremely grateful for all your help and assistance. Also a great big thank you to Trish and David Lewis who threw caution to the wind and have allowed AVS to use their garage as the charities store for the last 6 months.



Computer and printing services supported by Annodata



Contents of Mama Bags, science equipment, books, computers for schools, items for women's groups all need to be stored

Annodata Business Communications

We really do want to thank Tim Harman from Annodata again for the superb help they have given over the years in providing us, not only with hardware in the form of a photocopier and duplicator and transport, but in printing our newsletter and other publications completely free of charge. This removes a big cost from our out goings each year. Just before my last visit to Uganda I received a plea for help as the two photocopiers had broken down and quite specific parts were needed. Tim not only gave me these parts to take out but also provided other parts as well as ink cartridges which saved the business lots of expense and got the machines up and running again during the really busy period of the General Election in Uganda.



Focal Point have been supporting us with regular monthly donations which make a tremendous difference to the range of things we are able to do. They are also helping us to develop a fundraising database which will save so much time! **Thank you!**