



Report to Trustees 29.11.2015

Jon and I have just returned from our trip to Jinja. We had Stella Roberts who is a retired Primary school teacher with experience in teaching in the third world, and David Jackson who wrote the Patricia books. Stella and I went out for 10 days with David and Jon joining us for the last 5 days of our trip.

This time we travelled on KLM via Amsterdam and it worked very well despite a very early start from Heathrow! The luggage allowance is generous at 2 bags each and the change at Amsterdam only an hour so no hanging around in between flights.

We tried Nile Village Resort and were very pleasantly surprised to find it was very quiet despite the hotel being full, decent Wi-Fi, working bathrooms and good facilities.

The first three days we spent with Stella making sure that the primary schools were using the supplies and teaching aids that Sally took out in the summer. She did teacher training with Nelly at St Patrick's and Great Hopes but when she went to Buyala none of the teachers were there. It was end of term but the headmaster had asked them to come in. She also did Son Rise homework club for the children, and the baby class that will be going into school next year.

Great Hopes

Great Hopes continues to be one of the most successful of our projects. The school is well kept, they use everything we give them and are keen to attend all meetings and training.

The new classroom looks good and the school have decorated it with homemade posters, we bought some plastic floor covering for one side which is used for nursery. The new latrines will go in this holiday as will the improvements to the existing classrooms such as plastering the walls and securing the roof.



We managed to get some good reading books in Jinja this time and bought a selection for them. Stella noticed on her first visit that the reception teacher was teaching one group while the others just sat waiting for her so she suggested that looking at books while waiting was a better idea, and of course the children loved it! The new drainage has improved the site dramatically and the school have grassed over an area they have flattened so the children have a better play area. Dave has approached East Africa Playgrounds about putting in some decent playground equipment in once we have finished working there.

St Patricks

Again another success! The school is thriving and increasing in popularity due to the improved facilities. We were warmly welcomed as always. Stella and Nelly did a teacher training morning, which incidentally the head of Great Hopes came to having met the head of St Patrick's the day before. All infant teachers attended including the head who spoke to reinforce what Stella and Nelly were saying. It is clear that they make good use of all the resources that Sally gave them in the summer.



Teacher training



David reading Patricia

There will be another staff training day for all our primary schools in January which will be hosted by St Patrick's.

Buyala

We all visited Buyala and the site is in good order. The head is committed to helping the school go forward but he clearly has many challenges. The old head, who was sacked by Amina when we couldn't work with him, is making trouble by keeping in touch with the staff and causing unrest. On hearing this Amina has been in touch with him and told him to stay away. I think this is only a temporary problem as the head came to our meeting, spoke very well and is trying very hard to improve things.

The meeting of all the head teachers of our schools.

After learning of the issues at Buyala Emma got all the heads to agree to a meeting with us and Amina. The purpose of this was to make sure that they got to meet each other and we could talk through what we expected from them, and them from us. All arrived on time except for the head of Mutai who didn't arrive at all, he apparently turned up 2 hours late

when we had all gone home! Amina led the meeting and started by saying that the schools all had a responsibility to us for our support and to the children who rely on them for a good education. She told them they couldn't just wait for us to fix problems they had to work with us and each other to resolve any issues. Jon spoke on our behalf to reassure them we were committed to helping them now and in the future. All the heads spoke very well and then stayed behind to get to know each other.

Mutai

We have had many issues with Mutai in the last 6 months, they are deeply in debt, school results are not good and the staff are poor and underpaid.

We called a meeting with the head, governors, Deputy head and director of studies.

There were many excuses as to their poor results mostly blaming the students from a peasant background, however other local schools are doing better. We made it clear that the school must get better results if they are to attract more students which in turn will reduce the debt. They need to implement a strategy to improve results slowly but surely of 72M, which is just not acceptable. The Governors all spoke well, it seems this amount of debt was a shock to them too and they agreed that they would be working with the school to see what could be done to reduce this.

It was good to get everyone together and it had to be done in order to have any chance of moving forward. We have left them with several options of ways to decrease the debt, passion fruit growing, breeding the pigs and cows etc. However they have to manage this and be proactive for it to work. Improvements will not happen overnight and we have suggested a three year target with steady, if slow, improvement each year.

We will stop the 6th form as it costs much more in teachers than the five 6th form pupils bring in fees. We may have to move to a vocational school set up in the future as the nearby government school is lower fees and better results so many students go there.

We will give them more pigs to help with the breeding program, enlarge the pig pen and provide the passion fruit plants.

We made it clear we support them and want to help them succeed but we will not pay staff wages or debts.

We left after 2 hours, the Governors, teachers and Head stayed to have a further meeting.

Dave and Emma will monitor the progress and we await the school exam results.

As with all schools in Jinja, especially the rural ones, the ability to pay fees and therefore staff wages hinges on the success of the crops. If it is a bad year or the rains are late, fees are late.

We now have a clear operating template with three main objectives:

1. A true partnership between JET, the school and local community
2. Rewarding increase in pupil numbers and better results

3. Establishing financial sustainability.

Dave and the team will articulate this in more detail and have a template ready for the schools when they start the new year in February.

Son Rise

Now for some good news! The children in both homes are well and happy.

Stella spent time with the children and helped Brenda and Nelly to organise activities for the children that were fun but would enhance their learning. Both groups of children were using the supplies taken over in the summer, they were generally on task and enjoying the club.

School exams have just happened and we were pleased to see that someone from Son Rise went with them to support them on these days. Miko has had a tutor and is improving but we think St Patrick's will be a better environment for her next term. The children are unlikely to move into their new home next year but the year after.



Homework



Patricia Story



Brian and Junior

The older children now do rugby training with Dave, although they preferred rolling the tyres about the field! They loved being out of Son Rise and this will be continued during the holidays. The children are encouraged to do household chores to help out and to learn skills they will need in the future.



The very young ones at baby home are doing well, there is some concern for the youngest one Betty who is 9 months old she is well but clearly not developing as she should be. She will be assessed at the clinic this week. Rose had had a back operation but I did meet with her, she has no medical concerns for the other children and babies. We have made sure all the beds have mosquito nets and blankets as it was the rainy season and cold at night.



Katie, Cindy and Nicolette who had given cause for concern last visit were all happy and well.

Mama Jane

Agnes was very pleased to see us and especially pleased to have a new person in Stella to show around! Clearly they have very little but the school is very successful and full in the mornings. Agnes was very grateful for the food we now provide monthly and this in turn has improved the general health of the children. However when I asked about a little boy who was sitting silently in her office she told me he was possessed by evil spirits! I did my best to reassure him that he was a good boy and didn't have evil spirits in him but it does go to show that the tribal ways are still there. The new kitchen is working well but HYT are to go in and sort out the chimney as there is a problem with the smoke not getting away properly.

General

It is clear that we did not really understand the workings of the secondary school system when we joined Mutai, it is much more complex than we had thought. We will continue to work alongside Mutai, and may think it is worth looking into guiding them towards being a vocational school. However we will now concentrate on Primary schools for the foreseeable future. We intend to add two more schools to our portfolio, one being New Horizons as we already know them and the head Sarah, we will work with Amina to find one other.

The team is working well under Dave's leadership. Nelly is growing in confidence and has agreed to do the teacher training once she finds a course that suits her. She was a little uncertain on some things but spent a lot of time with Stella going over teacher training and classroom practice which has really helped. Emma does an amazing job getting everything organised, making sure meetings happen with all the right people and always making sure we have all we need. Dave has done a marvellous job and really grown into the role of Country Manager, the educational content in the schools is much better now and we have a better idea of the needs of all the projects. He will be a hard act to follow but as he will leave this summer we must look for a replacement soon. Dave suggested the Idealist website as they are set up to provide work placements abroad and apparently many NGO's in Jinja have used them and it has worked well.



Emma and Michael



Us all at Kikira

Jon, Stella, David and I were invited by Mayur Mahdvani to his home for supper. It was a sumptuous evening in his beautiful home with his family. He was very pleased to meet Jon which is why we got to go there! He did invite all the team to the Kakira hilltop for lunch as well, which was wonderful too. He has commissioned more of our sugar bags to be used by his office when they give out gifts to visitors. He is a great ally for us and has pledged his support if we need him. He asked why we didn't build our own school and I gave him the potted version! He has already been on to Robert Okalang (the lawyer who did the disastrous deal for the original Bujagali Trust land) to find out what went wrong! I doubt anything we come of it but it will put the wind up Robert!!!

Finally I thought you would smile to see the advertisement for the new 'recreation center' at Source of the Nile.



All the best to all. Sue

