

Horace and Beth

Update from Uganda

June 2023

Dear friends,

Halfway through another year already!

Last year's national exam results were released early in the year. Candidates who pass are graded from Division One (the highest grade) to Division Four. At JJ Community Transformation (JJ) we were particularly pleased to get a record nine students in Division One at Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) or O level and that the vast majority of the 38 primary school candidates gained at least Division Two (33 pupils), with two in Division One and three in Division Three. A level students did well too with eight out of the ten students gaining two or more principal passes and qualifying to enrol for degree level courses.



Primary pupils enjoying the day at the area sports competition

Many new children and young people applied for places at JJ's institutions at the beginning of the new academic year in February. There are now around 320 pupils at primary, over 400 at secondary and 102 at the college. Thankfully there has been a significant increase at the college (66 were enrolled in 2022), so that a bigger proportion of its running costs can be covered by tuition fees. Some of the new students applied for places after hearing a local radio programme discussing tertiary education. Horace, two college tutors and a student participated in the discussion and took time to explain the new government directives relating to teaching qualifications as well as talking about the availability and future prospects of different courses at the college.

In 2019 the government introduced a new policy stating that all teachers (from early years to A level) need to be degree qualified, and gave current teachers ten years to upgrade their qualifications. Most early years and primary school teachers in Uganda have a certificate qualification, attained by studying for two years after UCE (O level). Understandably, the new policy discouraged some from enrolling for a course in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at the college (to teach at nursery level), yet there are jobs available. College staff have been receiving requests for nursery teachers but have no unemployed ECD graduates to recommend. So participants on the talk show explained how to upgrade to a degree qualification after completing a certificate, which led in part to more enrolment at the college.

This year at JJ has so far been something of a continuation of last year in terms of finances and developments: prioritising running costs, with modest improvements to facilities. As mentioned in the last newsletter, the increase in prices has affected not only JJ's expenditure, but also its income, with parents (not to mention potential donors) feeling the effects of price

increases too. Although there have been no bigger building projects over the past year, there are some changes. At the college, building construction students made their own bricks, and built a boys bathing area. Previously they had been using a temporary structure made of iron sheets. During the recent school holiday, specialists demolished the old kitchen stove at the secondary school (it was deteriorating from rather heavy use), and replaced it with a more specialised/upgraded energy-saving stove, similar to one installed at the college last year. We are looking forward to less costs on firewood.



Agriculture students at the college helping a neighbour whose cow was giving birth

Secondary school kitchen stove before, during and after construction of a new one



There are still more building needs though! Our current priorities for larger construction projects are:

1. A four classroom block at the secondary school

The third large room in the girls dormitory is currently used as a classroom, but the room is needed to accommodate more girls. Due to the lack of space, four girls are sleeping at our home in term time, as well as the school's Assistant Cook (an extended family member).

2. A purpose-built girls' dormitory at the college.

At the college, girls are using two classrooms as dormitories, but the rooms are needed as classrooms(!) and more space is needed for beds.

Aside from facilities, this year there was a lot of excitement as primary and secondary schools participated in district sports competitions for the first time. A primary school boy was selected to represent the district in athletics at the national level. Secondary students competed in district football competitions and were a credit to the school, gaining confidence through competing against much more experienced and established schools. The girls did especially well, with two good wins and some close games, finishing in the middle of their group.

In March, Mike, from Reconxile (UK), made a second visit to train tutors and college students in his short course in "setting up a Bible based business". He had previously done so a few days before the first Covid lockdown in Uganda, and we hoped that tutors would be able to deliver the course in future years. However, with a change in some staff members, and a long (Covid related) time lapse before implementation for others, it was helpful to repeat the training again to refresh "old" tutors, and introduce the material to newer members of staff. Staff plan to integrate the material into courses at the college so that each student gains a practical understanding, during real-life project work, of setting up a business.

On a more personal level it has been a strange time for us over the past months with our car spending more time with a mechanic than with us(!). To cut a long story short, it has been frustrating at times, but I believe God has been telling us to "relax, be patient, – here is some money for the mechanic!" We are very thankful for more than one unexpected and very generous personal gift which has enabled us to pay for parts and labour.

As a result of not having a reliable car, we have spent less time at our Bushenyi home "in the village," near the schools. However, with the introduction of additional time-consuming online processes, spending more time working from our home near Kampala, with mains electricity (albeit not always on!) and a better internet connection than at the schools, has been helpful in many ways.

Thank you for your interest and support,
With love, *Horace and Bethan*



Receiving a certificate at Bushenyi district Women's Day celebrations last month, in recognition of our efforts to help girls stay in school

Girls football team members wearing kit kindly passed on from a school in Shropshire, and the boys football squad about to go for "screening" (registration) to make sure all the players are eligible and enrolled at the school (star players are sometimes smuggled in!)

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Working in Uganda with:

JJ Community Transformation (U),
Uganda NGO no: INDR1057118NB, www.jjctuganda.org

In partnership with: Hand in Hand,
UK Charity no: 1069976, www.hihand.org

For personal support: We receive no pay/personal income from JJ but rely on personal support and Horace's employment income. Bethan is a registered recipient with Stewardship, who have set up a support fund for our ministry. You can support us by making a gift to Stewardship for our fund. Please ask for a form, or visit www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20135200.