

Horace and Beth Update from Uganda

May 2022

Dear friends,

May already!

The full reopening of educational institutions in Uganda went ahead at the beginning of this year. Term one ended on 14th April and Term 2 began on 9th May. The typical "cramming" for exams in Uganda has increased with teachers hurrying to cover curriculum missed during the lockdowns. On a more positive note, a new curriculum has been introduced for senior one and two students which involves more practical work and project activities to develop understanding.



Primary Two pupils eager to be back at school for the first time since March 2020.

A level results in 2021 were very encouraging and JJ helped seven of its graduates to enrol for university degrees. Three girls were granted government loans to cover tuition fees (to be paid back in a flexible manner after securing employment). Another four, including one young man who graduated in 2019 (Owen), secured sponsorship to study at a relatively new university in Kampala. Horace read an advert on a Bushenyi leaders' Watsap group offering ten sponsored university places for deserving A Level graduates from within the constituency and lost no time in recommending four of JJ's A Level graduates. Apparently only one other person made enquiries on behalf of potential beneficiaries (a councillor in a neighbouring sub-county), and Owen and three girls are all now benefitting from the bursaries. Their parents/guardians are struggling to cover accommodation costs and other basic requirements, which is very challenging, but they are determined to make the most of the opportunity.

At the start of the year JJ Excel College introduced electrical installation as a new course, which has proven to be popular. Yesterday (28th May) the students and their tutor installed solar electricity and equipment in a private home. No young people have enrolled this year, however, for the previously popular early childhood development (nursery teaching) course. Potential students have been deterred by the government announcing that all nursery and primary teachers will need degree qualifications within the next 10 years. The college continues to receive requests for certificate-qualified graduates, but we have no students to meet the demand!



*Putting it into practice:
Electrical installation*

Improvements made in preparation for the reopening of schools include an extension of the solar lighting at the primary and secondary to extra classrooms, and to the kitchen at the secondary school and college. The lack of mains electricity continues to be a challenge, especially in providing computer lessons at the secondary. Three laptops are used for student lessons, and a fourth for office work, but on rainy days the solar is rarely sufficient to charge the batteries. Other developments include painting work at the primary school, and at the secondary: fixing a metal gate and clearing some land near the entrance to provide some parking space (although vehicles accessing the school are very few!), as recommended by the school's Board of Governors.



Painted primary school—new admissions day.

The new kitchen (built by students) and energy-saving stove at JJ Excel College are much appreciated, especially by the cook! Despite some challenges in reaching the water level, the generator-run water pump is now operating at JJ Vocational Secondary School, and students are very happy not to have to walk down a rather steep hill to collect water.

We are very thankful for the generous donations which enabled these developments.

Outstanding building work that we would like to complete includes the third room at the boys dorm (windows, doors, flooring), constructing the dorm verandah and purchasing a water tank.

The first secondary classroom block and administration block need finishing (some plastering of walls and cementing the floor in one classroom), although they are both fully operational already. We would also like to purchase three or four individual solar lights, at about £70 each, which can be fixed on roofs to improve the external lighting at the primary and secondary. Bigger development projects for which we are praying for funding include another classroom block at the secondary school (to include science laboratories) and a dormitory for girls at the college, to free up the two rooms currently used for girls' accommodation.

A record number of new staff members have been recruited since schools reopened: 6 at primary, 12 at secondary, and 9 at the college. These include new headteachers at the primary and secondary school who started in term 1 and 2 respectively. In total JJ now employs 69 staff members.



New headteacher, Board of Governors' Chair and Beth at the secondary compound

Secondary student numbers have dropped from over 400 at the end of 2019 to 350. This means covering the running costs from school fees is more challenging. The college and primary continue to need significant provision towards salaries from donations too. Their enrolment is similar to before the lockdowns with 61 at the college and 350 at primary. Although the overall total is lower, this year we have registered the highest number of students (82) to sit Senior Four (O Level) exams at the end of the year.

We continue to share our time between Bushenyi and Namagoma/Kampala, with an occasional journey east to Hope Missionary Hospital. Horace travelled to Bushenyi this weekend for a meeting at the sacco and discussions with JJ's headteachers and various other staff members. He also used the opportunity to collect some paperwork for me (Beth) to work on back in Kampala.

At home in Namagoma, earlier in the year, we hosted the wedding celebration for Deus, Horace's cousin/brother. Every possible bedcover, bedsheet and blanket was made available (including two borrowed from Horace's boss), for extended family, neighbours and friends, mainly from Bushenyi District. We are not quite sure where everyone slept, there were certainly more people staying than we had beds, mattresses and sofa cushions...over 25 stayed at our home for up to three nights before and after the wedding to show their support and to help make the function a success. Thankfully hired caterers were responsible for cooking on the wedding day, but they had lots of help in preparing and serving food from various friends and family members.

We are looking forward to a visit to Wales in July-August to celebrate my parents golden wedding anniversary. It is three years since we have set foot in the UK, and even longer since a visit in August—we are looking forward to some summer activities!

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



Deus' wedding: The cooks, the dining area (guests at a Runyankore wedding traditionally eat on arrival, in shifts) and preparing the garden.



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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.