

Turning Leaves Uganda

Newsletter 18, August 2021

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Uganda! I realise that the number of Covid cases in the UK have become higher recently and hope that you are all keeping well. Here in Uganda, an initial 42 day lockdown came to an end on Friday, and a number of restrictions have been lifted, most notably concerning movement both within and between districts. However, schools are remaining closed, I believe for another 60 days, so that the situation can be monitored more carefully. More vaccines are coming into the country, which is very welcome news. Around 1 million people out of the eligible 27 million people, have been vaccinated so far (Uganda has a very young demographic, with a total population of 45 million people, excluding foreign nationals and refugees). The government has decided that all teachers must be vaccinated before returning to work. This is good, but I wonder how long it will take to achieve this goal. Schools have not been fully open to all classes since March 2020. Nonetheless, the lockdown was successful in terms of lowering the infection rates and the numbers of people in hospital. This is a great encouragement. There is a lot in the news about Ugandan scientists working to find local treatments for Covid. It would be great if some of these were successful.

As is the case across the world, the various lockdowns have had a significant impact on the economy, and poverty levels have risen over the last year or so. Many people who would normally be employed, including teachers, have suddenly found themselves without an income. To make matters worse, climate change has had a detrimental effect on agriculture. Food prices have also gone up. So many people are really struggling. The government provided some financial relief of about £20 to those households that were identified as being particularly needy. While this was good, it was a bit of a drop in the ocean, with many people in need of help missing out.

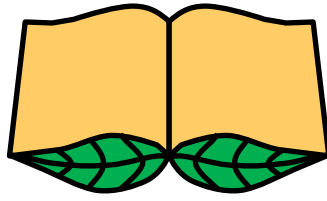
1. Appreciation

I think I mentioned in my last newsletter that we were able to distribute some more food, mostly in Namabasa. This was much appreciated by the community. Thank you also to all who support our work on a monthly basis. This enables us to run our regular activities such as keeping the office going as well as giving additional funding for some community activities. For example, we have a small weekly fund of about £4, which is given to a person or family in the community who is in particular need. It is often used to buy food for a family facing financial difficulties. We are grateful for this on-going support, which is coming in despite the fact that we are unable to do our usual work in schools. Thank you so much.

2. Food Aid and Malnutrition Projects

As I mentioned above, we were able to distribute food to some families in Namabasa and around where I currently live at the end of June. If you are interested in contributing towards another food distribution, please let Dad know!





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3. Schools Work

We are currently unable to do much regarding schools and early years' education, but a few opportunities have just come our way. One is an opportunity to share our resources for Baby Class (the youngest of the three nursery classes) with a project in Namatala. It is run by a British lady and normally works with children aged 0-3 years. They have been given permission to operate and are keen to give their older children (who should be in nursery) some more challenging activities so that they are better prepared for school. I am looking forward to working with the two Ugandan teachers who look after this group of children.

We also started the process of putting some lessons together for a small education outreach in Namabasa. The idea was that we would select 25 children and divide them into 5 groups of 5, according to age. Each group would have a teacher (we found 5 teachers who live in Namabasa) and meet for a couple of hours a day to do some work on language and phonics skills. I have put the programmes together, and Joseph did quite a bit of the administration...but we now have to wait until teachers are vaccinated and permission is given to run the programme. We would be allowed to distribute learning resources to nursery children in Namabasa but this would be expensive, and I am not sure how effective it would be without some input from a teacher.

4. Demonstration Farm

Life at the farm is going on well. William continues to look after the animals with some help from the children of Namabasa! As I mentioned in my last newsletter, we lost the two bulls that were intended to be used for ploughing services for local farmers, but the rest of the herd is healthy. William manages to support himself by selling fried pork at his 'pork joint' on the farm land. We are also employing someone to look after the cows that need to graze (some are zero grazing cows). The office managed to cover his wage last month.

5. School Land

We have received a further £5000 towards paying for the final plot of land purchased (in part) a few months ago. This is fantastic! We now need £4000, so we are getting there. Thank you so much to all who have contributed towards land. It is much appreciated.

It has finally started to rain, so hopefully the seeds will soon germinate and grow. Anna, Dinah, William and Loumo did a great job with the digging, planting and weeding. It would be really good if we could have a decent harvest so that we can distribute some more food to local families who are struggling.

Office

Yesterday, I decided to start organising the office, as it had become a bit (well, actually, very) messy. Before I knew it, we had decided to paint the walls and floor (and the paint had been bought) and Joseph had organised a new bookshelf! We have an old chair which Joseph is keen to upholster, and a baby's cot, which he would like to turn into a chair for the office. We need around £200 to do this. If you are interested in contributing, please let Dad know.

Conclusion

Once again, thank you so much for all you do to support my life here in Uganda. I very much appreciate it. I have heard that Kenya may be getting moved to the UK's 'amber' list, and am hopeful Uganda will follow as the cases here have gone down. If this happens (and I can get a second vaccine), it would be great to come to the UK a little before Christmas. I very much hope to see you all soon!

With love and best wishes,

Emma