

Turning Leaves Uganda

Newsletter 24 September 2023

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Mbale! I trust you are all well. Apologies for the long period of time that has elapsed since the last newsletter. Since Dad's visit in May, a number of administrative and practical changes have been made (or are in the process of being made) in terms of how Turning Leaves is governed and administrated. This includes the appointment of a new board, amendment of the articles, and appointment of an accountant/administrator. This process is not yet fully constituted as we await some documents in order to make all the necessary changes formally with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), with which we are re-registering as a Limited Company. We are currently also registered as a Community Based Organisation (CBO). Additionally, we are waiting to receive our land title certificate for the model school land, which will mean that the land is owned under statutory (as well as customary) law by Turning Leaves Limited (the limited company, which can operate anywhere in Uganda and own land/property, rather than Turning Leaves Uganda, the CBO, which can only operate in Mbale District and cannot own land/property). We have been advised that we actually do not need to be registered as a CBO, and that the Limited Company is sufficient for the work we would like to carry out, including the establishment of a model school. It is all a little confusing, but we'll get there in the end!

I am personally greatly appreciating having a functioning Board, of which Betty Kituyi, an experienced science teacher and manager of the Ugandan Eastern region office of an NGO, is the chair. It is great to get outside advice and insight into how we can better manage and run Turning Leaves. Philip Lotimong (a pastor who lives and works in Namabasa, and has experience with being on the boards of other NGOs), Priscilla Iroku (an accountant, who has additionally agreed to work for us in the dual role of accountancy and administration – much to my relief), and Joseph Ekure (who oversees the social work side of the project in Namabasa) and myself are now the board members (although we are still in the process of registering these changes).

On top of all of these administrative happenings, we have been continuing to do work in schools, although again much has changed since I last wrote in April! I shall outline how our various education projects are unfolding below.

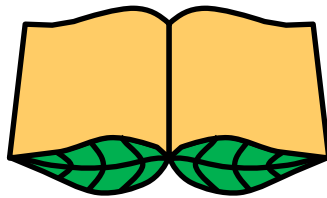
Musoto Christian School, Musoto

Although Musoto Christian School has been doing very well, we have had to temporarily step back in order to allow them to address some of their own administrative challenges. However, before we made this decision, we were able to introduce the use of round (as opposed to rectangular) tables with chairs to the youngest of the three nursery classes. This was a bit of an experiment, but turned out to be highly successful! The round tables give the children more space and generally seem to enable them to share and enjoy calmly working in groups. It also enables the teachers to more effectively implement the Turning Leaves Programmes, in particular the use of rotating practical activities and play-based learning. Spotlight on Africa (the NGO that oversees the school) have agreed to provide the finances to enable round tables with chairs to be made for and introduced to Middle Class as well, which will be great and enable a much better learning experience for the children.

For now, while the administrative challenges within the school are being addressed, I have agreed to make occasional visits for the remainder of this year, and to work one day per week in the first term of next year. I look forward to continuing to support and work with this school.

Nabuyonga Primary School, Mbale City

I continue to work with Nabuyonga Primary School on a weekly basis. At the beginning of the second term, I held an informal workshop with the nursery teachers, which led to us identifying several challenges facing the teachers in terms of effectively implementing the Turning Leaves Programmes. The outcome of this discussion is that I have made a comprehensive set of daily written activities for Baby Class, as well as the first term of Middle Class. We agreed that after this point, children need to be introduced to writing in an exercise book rather than on a



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worksheet (this is because children in Uganda have to learn, at a relatively early stage, to neatly copy work from the blackboard; there are, of course, both advantages and disadvantages to this).

The main success of Term 2 was that the Top Class teacher got to grips with the Language and Phonics Programme, and is doing a great job of teaching the children to read and write using phonics, and the available resources. She also begun the work of teaching key numeracy skills in an interactive and conceptual way. In the coming term, I hope to equip the Middle Class teachers with the necessary skills for implementing the programmes in their classes. I look forward to my continued work with Nabuyonga Primary School.

Overcomers Special Needs School, Kamonkoli

Again, due to some unforeseen administrative challenges, we have stepped back from visiting this school on a weekly basis. However, I continue to meet up with and support the nursery class teacher on an occasional basis. I greatly hope this school does well as there are so few schools of its kind in Uganda.

Loved Children's Centre, Namatala

I have now started visiting Loved Children's Centre on a weekly basis. Their oldest group of children (aged 2-3 years) are doing a very good job of utilising the Baby Class Turning Leaves Programmes. The children are being introduced to a variety of reading and writing, as well as numeracy, concepts and skills through hands-on, practical activities. The two teachers do a great job of engaging these very young learners in meaningful activities. Coming from very vulnerable beginnings, play-based learning provides a strong foundation for the children when they go onto other local nursery schools.

Education Outreach, Namabasa

The Education Outreach is going very well. We are extremely happy with the progress of the children. Despite most of them only receiving a couple of hours of schooling a week, the children are learning to confidently read and write, as well as to work with numbers. Some of our children have been able to join other schools, skipping one, two or even three classes because of what they are able to do.

We use a range of practical activities, as well as written activities, to teach the children and engage them in the learning process. As an experiment, the outreach has provided us with a good idea of how we would like the model school to operate. In addition to teaching, we have been able to provide the children with both porridge and lunch. Many thanks for making this possible. Joseph also does a great job of making sure the children get home safely, and paying home visits when children are sick. Following a couple of road accidents involving children in Namabasa, Joseph did a very good road safety lesson with the children. We hope this will keep them safe when they are walking along the road both with and without adult supervision. At the end of Term 2, we had a small party with soda, rice and beans. Please see photos below!

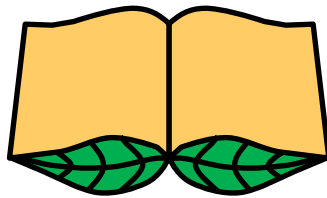
We are now thinking of recruiting up to another 20 children to take part on our education outreach programme (on a separate day). This may be with a mind to then giving some or all of these children a place in the model school, which I hope we can open at the beginning of Term 2 next year. I have to stress, however, that this plan is very much an act of faith as there is currently so much to get in place (including buildings!) before we can even think of opening a school.

Shammah Junior School, Soroti

Because of time, distance and money, we have had to step back from visiting this school for now. We may be able to provide some support to them in the future, however.

Model School, Namabasa

As I wrote above, we currently hope to open the model school next year. However, there is first much to get in place both administratively and practically. We have the funds to put up the buildings and structures necessary to open one class. A model school would, I am increasingly convinced, provide the best way of demonstrating how the



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Turning Leaves Programmes can be implemented in a simple way. It would, thus, provide an opportunity for the hands-on training of nursery teachers, as well as being a useful asset for the Namabasa community. To see an initial masterplan for the school, please visit the website.

Conclusion

Although the year has not progressed as I expected, progress is being made (albeit slowly). We seem to be now focussing more attention on the work in Namabasa and Namatala, which is interesting. I am a little apprehensive about what it would be good to achieve by the end of the year in terms of the governance and administration of Turning Leaves, but am cautiously optimistic! Many thanks, as always, for your ongoing support and interest.

With love and best wishes,

Emma.

Education and Schools Work



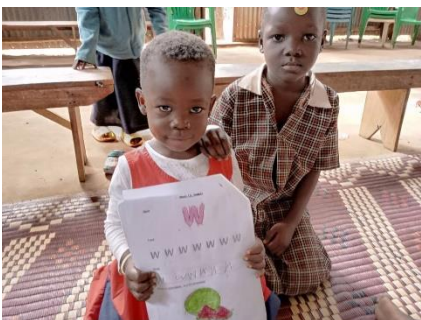
Baby Class, Musoto Christian School



Baby Class, Musoto Christian School



Baby Class, Musoto Christian School



Written Work, Education Outreach



Practical Work, Education Outreach



Written Work, Education Outreach



Road Safety, Education Outreach



Term 2 Party, Education Outreach



Practical Learning, Loved