

## Turning Leaves Uganda

### Newsletter 14, January 2021

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Uganda and Happy New Year! I hope you all had a good and relaxing Christmas break, despite all the very tight Covid restrictions. Mum and Dad, as always, keep me updated on what is happening in the UK. I have been very sorry to hear about the new variant that is now causing so many problems. However, it is encouraging that vaccinations have started to be rolled out. My sister, Ruth, has just received her first vaccination, which is a relief as she is coming into contact with Covid patients daily. Here, there is still no sign of the vaccine, but the rates in Mbale are not as high as in many parts of the UK. I am just careful to wear a mask when out and to wash my hands as much as possible. I hope the rates do not get any worse as hospitals are already at maximum capacity for Covid patients, especially in Kampala.

Christmas passed well and we all had a good, if busy, time! We had several 'celebrations' over the holiday period involving, as is the case in the UK, a lot of good food. There has then been a slow start to the year, due in part to Covid and in part to the General Elections, which are almost finished. I am very relieved to say that they all took place very peacefully. So, we can now begin to look forward and think about what to focus on this year.

#### **1. Appreciation**

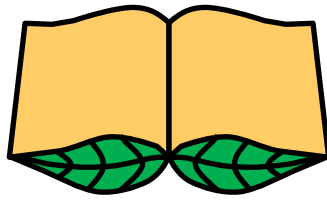
The Christmas Bonanza was a great success, providing many families locally and in Namabasa with a delicious Christmas meal! Thank you so much to everyone who made it possible. We had some more donations for land, which is also much appreciated. I would also like to appreciate all who make the general running of Turning Leaves possible, through regular giving. It is a huge help and we are very grateful.



#### **2. Food Aid and Malnutrition Projects**

We have not had any food distributions this year. I have just been talking with Joseph about the need for food aid and the best way forward in terms of supporting people sustainably. When Joseph went to collect our CBO (Community Based Organisation) certificate today, he spoke to the town clerk, who shared his concerns about the acute food shortage in the region. This food shortage has come about because of climatic changes, and has then been compounded by Covid lockdowns last year meaning that people were unable to buy seeds and plant crops.

While there remains an immediate need for emergency food aid, we would like to take an additional approach to supporting subsistence farmers in Namabasa. This is the plan! Giving families 25kg of maize seeds, 25kg of bean seeds, fertilisers and pesticides (not the long term and organic solution, but for now the easiest way to generate a harvest) would be enough to plant around 1 acre of land. This would cost around £70. The harvest generated from this planting (the plant to harvest duration being 3 months) would not only provide a good supply of food, but would also provide some extra, 'cash crops,' as well as seeds for the next season. If all went according to plan, this



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approach would provide a more sustainable solution to the food crisis. If you would be interested in supporting this, any donation, no matter big or small, would be greatly appreciated.

There is also the possibility that we could resume the malnutrition project, providing milk and eggs to malnourished children under the age of 12 years.

### **3. Schools Work**

The Ministry of Health is yet to state when schools will be reopening. This means that we are not yet sure when we will be able to resume our involvement with the two 'seed schools' we have been working with. In the meantime, I am doing some home schooling with Joseph and Irene's two young children. I hope we will be able to pick up our schools work at some time soon.

### **4. Demonstration Farm**

Our demonstration farm is growing! It is home to a range of animals including 4 cows, 10 goats, 10 turkeys, 30 rabbits, 20 ducks, 20 chickens and 10 pigs. Some crops are also been grown. Some of the longer term aims of the farm are: to teach organic, sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry; to teach farm management and marketing, and to model use of appropriate technology. We would like to develop all of this as a part of the education remit of Turning Leaves, focussing on children and young people who are unable to access mainstream education because of having significant learning difficulties. This has actually started, with two teenage boys (Patrick and Simon) already involved in helping William with the running of the farm. The idea is that by providing trainee-farmers with a practical education in managing and developing a farm, young people will be able to earn a living and gain some level of independence. Another 'arm' of the farm is the 'pork joint.' This is a small, takeaway kiosk providing freshly fried pork served with fried cabbage to hungry customers! It is very popular and provides the farm (and William) with some additional income.

We are currently looking to upgrade the animal shelters, with 5 new shelters needed to accommodate all the animals. To do this, we need around £100 per shelter. These will be constructed locally, using local materials and technology. If you are interested in supporting this project, please contact Dad!

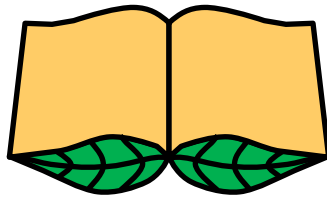


### **5. Community Support**

Teddy is currently in her home village, where she has been celebrating Christmas and New Year. Hellen is well. Hellen's business has slowed down a little over the elections period, but it should now pick up again. She is now self-sustaining, which is a great success!

### **6. School Land**

We have been offered an alternative plot of land by the land owners of the original plots we were interested in buying. This plot of land is big enough for a school and is being offered at UGX 30,000,000 (around £6500), which is what we currently have for land purchase. In fact, since writing this newsletter a few days ago, the owners have



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agreed to sell the land to us at the above cost so we are going to go ahead and buy it! We still have the original plot we bought, next to the farm, which we are thinking of using to develop the demonstration farm. We could then, in future, buy the current farm plot (which we are currently renting).

### **7. Financial Report for 2020**

If you are interested in seeing the financial report for 2020, please contact Dad.

### **Conclusion**

This year has got off to an interesting start! It seems, so far, to be a case of 'going with the flow,' especially as the Covid pandemic continues to make it difficult to plan anything! It is looking like Turning Leaves is developing two major strands: the seed schools work (which was the initial objective) and the work in Namabasa (which is becoming a bit of a base). As we all wait to see how things unfold this year regarding, well, just about everything, it is good to focus on the little successes! Thank you for helping to make the little successes we enjoy here in Mbale possible.

With love and best wishes,

Emma

