

Turning Leaves Uganda

Newsletter 16, June 2021

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Uganda! I trust all are well. It has been great to hear how the vaccination programme is being successfully rolled out in the UK, with some people (including both Mum and Dad) even receiving their second dose of the vaccine. It is also encouraging to hear that many of the restrictions are being lifted, with many parts of Scotland now on a 'level two.' I am very much hoping to visit the UK at Christmas, at which point I will have a new niece or nephew! It would be lovely to visit and catch up with family and friends in various parts of the UK, if that is possible by that stage. Here in Uganda, some people have been vaccinated, but it seems that vaccines are beginning to run out. I was able to receive my first vaccine in April as teachers were being vaccinated, but the second one has been delayed until July. Nonetheless, I am relieved and grateful that I have managed to have one at all! Otherwise, although there has been some covid in the community (and I think I have had it!), because Uganda has a very young population, it seems likely that many people catch it, experience only mild symptoms, and do not even realise that their 'cough and flu' is something else entirely! For these reasons, there is a lot more freedom in terms of movement and the activities you can do than elsewhere in the world. In the last few days, however, there are rumours that there might be another lockdown, or at least a tightening of restrictions. Apparently there will be some news by the end of the week. We will just have to wait and see what happens.

I have been very busy for the last few months, having enrolled on a University degree programme at a local university. This is something I started a few years ago and had to delay for a while. However, when the universities opened in March, I was able to take it up again! I have completed two of the three years, although am now waiting for exam results. It has been a little hectic trying to catch up, do all the course work and prepare for and sit exams in a relatively short period of time, but am glad I have done it. I am particularly enjoying the research component of the course.

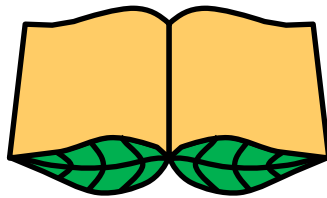
Turning Leaves work has continued although it has been a little quiet over the last few months, particularly in terms of education work. Nonetheless, the demonstration farm continues to be busy and we are yet again in the process of acquiring some more land! Yesterday, I had a very interesting conversation with Joseph about plans for the model school and ideas for developing the farm, as well as possible ways of generating income for Turning Leaves so that we become more sustainable. I thought it would be good to share these.

1. Appreciation

Many thanks to all for your continued interest and support of Turning Leaves. We, as always, appreciate your encouragement, prayers, as well as financial contributions to our work. I would like especially to thank those who have contributed towards the purchase of land. We are very excited about the land as it is a very good plot, with a lot of potential for building a wonderful model school. We are also grateful to those who have sold us the land as they have been generous in terms of keeping the price as low as possible, especially on realising that it will be used for a community school.

2. Food Aid and Malnutrition Projects

The farmers who received seeds had good crops, but unfortunately much was lost in a flash flood a few weeks ago. This is very frustrating. Joseph has an idea of creating a food store hub in order to both support farmers in the community, and to generate some funding for Turning Leaves. The idea would be that farmers could both store and/or sell food to Turning Leaves. If storing, a small fee could be requested and if selling, the food could be bought at a fair price, stored and then sold at a fair price to both benefit the community and generate some revenue to support the model school and other community projects. This would be of particular benefit during droughts and other adverse weather situations. Foods that could be bought, processed, stored and sold are beans, maize, rice, ground nuts, soya beans and possibly sunflower seeds (which can be processed to produce cooking oil). We are going to look into this idea as Namabasa is predominantly an agricultural community with many smallholder farmers (agriculture in Uganda employs over eighty percent of the workforce). Via the demonstration farm, Joseph would



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also like to train local farmers in modern farming methods, as well as to provide better quality seeds for planting. All of this would, hopefully, help to raise the standard of living in the community.

3. Schools Work

We remain unable to do any schools work, as nurseries are still closed, with no date given yet on when they can reopen. However, classes for Primaries 1-3 are due to open next month, which may mean we can begin some work with those classes.

4. Demonstration Farm

The demonstration farm continues to be busy. The male goat (used for impregnating community goats to produce good quality offspring) is currently receiving treatment and enjoying the abundant fresh green grass around home! He appears to be enjoying his holiday. William and Simon, along with Patrick (a young man with learning difficulties) and a group of local children, are busy each day collecting grass to feed the animals, cleaning the animal enclosures, fetching water and other tasks. Every day, William cooks for a number of children who help out at the farm! The farm is currently on rented ground but we have a small plot nearby (the first plot of land we bought, a little distance away from the school land). Joseph is thinking of moving the farm to this plot at the end of the year.

5. School Land

We have now acquired around 3 acres of land, which is the amount required to register and build a school (we found this information out recently). The final plot, which Joseph managed to acquire on Saturday, was offered abruptly, but was good value given the size and the location. He, therefore, made a quick decision and put down a deposit (selling two cows from the demonstration farm in order to make up the required amount!). We still need around £9000 in order to pay off the remaining money due (which we can pay in instalments over the next year) but the land is ours! With the help of a local school inspector the entire plot was measured and it was confirmed that we now have the amount legally required in order to register a Nursery and Primary school. We obviously now have a considerable amount of land, which will provide a lot of interesting possibilities for the design and layout of the school. Currently, we are looking at the idea of developing a 'learning village,' whereby we would have a collection of semi-outdoor buildings/classrooms in which the children can learn, possibly in the traditional circular shape (or something similar) rather than the normal rectangular shape most schools are built in. We are still very much in the ideas phase! But it is exciting to think around all the various possibilities. Dad is thinking of coming out next year, at which point we may be able to make more concrete plans.

Conclusion

It has been a busy couple of months with studying, but things are continuing to tick over with Turning Leaves work. I think that I will most likely continue to be busy with university for the next twelve months or so, but that is working out well as nursery classes are still shut. I have been so encouraged to hear how things have been improving in the UK, and that it is now possible to travel a bit more and visit friends and family. I trust that that will continue.

With love and best wishes,
Emma

