

News from the Lakeshore

Bbale Village, Nabugabo, Uganda



August 23rd, 2019

Jebbale ko, Jambo, Sawubona, Greetings,

Sincere apologies for this tardy newsletter, this has been a busy year with much news to share. Firstly, after seven years living and working with NCLC it's time for Judy and I to gently move on. With the years piling on and an ever-growing family, the decision has been made to hand-over the reins to enable us to spend more time with our family and in our home in Spain.

We are delighted to announce that The HUGE Partnership (HUGE: Helping Uganda Educate) have stepped up to the mark and will be taking over the role of administrators at the end of this academic year. The HUGE Partnership is a UK based charity registered with the Charities Commission. It operates under the Commission's rules and guidelines and has supported NCLC since it opened financially, with mountains of resources, and countless visits over the years.



HUGE is governed by a dedicated team of trustees, including three members of our family, Mel and Richard Batten alongside brother Marc and Bridget O'Callaghan who all bring a wealth of experience to the project. To learn more, please visit the HUGE Web site: www.thehugepartnership.org

Next term we will continue working through policies and procedures with the HUGE trustees in preparation for seamlessly handing over the running of NCLC to HUGE at the end of term three. All staff, children, parents/guardians and community members at Nabugabo and across the wider community are aware of these changes and confident that The HUGE Partnership will continue to give utmost support and guidance to the NCLC project.



NCLC Trustees, family and friends

We thank all of you for your encouragement, advice and wonderful support in a myriad of ways. Without you the project would not exist and over one hundred children from Nabugabo would never have been given the opportunity for a better future through education. As part of the hand-over we would like to pass on your email contact details to The HUGE Partnership. If you would prefer that we did not do this, please contact us directly and we will look at alternative routes for HUGE to get in touch with you.

Naturally, we will remain in close touch with all our colleagues, students, staff, neighbours and good friends at Nabugabo and beyond and, of course, with HUGE and all the remarkable, wonderful schools, groups and individuals who have shared this amazing journey ... the adventure continues!

Sotogrande International School Uganda Expedition, July 7th – 20th,

Seventeen students capably led by Kerry Wickersham, Eliza Cherry, Phil Berry and Anne Adamson hit Uganda running on their whirlwind expedition after arriving at Entebbe airport, in the very early morning, laden with mountains of bags.

After arrival at Nabugabo and getting installed at Sand Beach, the contents of the bags were revealed ... simply mind-boggling in terms of the range and spread of resources: from four iPads to art supplies, sports kit, backpacks (for all 125 children) and much, much more. NCLC staff were simply stunned! Thank you to all at SIS who helped to make these kind donations possible; rest assured they have found a very appreciative and eager home!

Special thanks must be extended to Lisa Kearney and all the staff at the SIS Science Department for the truly incredible spread of practical, hands-on resources. Your science fair and fund-raising efforts were clearly a massive success! Thanks also Lisa for the thorough visual revision guides you created to match the Uganda PLE science syllabus for P6 and P7 ... and the experiment explanations to support the use of all the equipment. Throughout the visit, Phil demonstrated the application of all the equipment to all the staff and children with hands-on, practical workshops every morning and afternoon - enthusiastically and knowledgeably assisted by colleagues and, notably, sessions often led by SIS students. These events made a significant impact school-wide. Thank you so, so much ... 'simply' phenomenal!

After a community orientation visit with NCLC staff and planning discussions, Team SIS carved out a work plan focusing on school activities (science, reading, P.E., language, etc.) in the mornings and community work in the afternoons. Work was swiftly underway. This is SIS's fifth visit to Nabugabo organised by the Kindred Project (KP) at SIS. The KP is a unique student-led Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) set up in 2010 by SIS with the goal of enabling and empowering students to use education as a force for good. Go to: <https://www.sis.ac/community/the-kindred-project/> for details on the remarkable work of SIS and the KP.



Ssunga Clinic Restored. Ssunga clinic, led by Sister Magdalena Nalubega, lies just seven kms. from school and serves the surrounding population of some 12,000 people. The work of this Health Centre III is simply remarkable dealing with malaria, malnutrition, typhoid, HIV/AIDS, child birth and countless day-to-day accidents with limited resources. Over the past year we have recorded more than 55 clinic visits for NCLC children and staff for malaria alone.

SIS made an impact at Ssunga Clinic, in significant ways, thanks to an array of phenomenal fund-raising ventures. Firstly, SIS provided a plethora of life-saving equipment, including: an ante-natal blood gauge monitor, resuscitator, oxygen gas cannister with regulator and an ultra-sound trolley alongside a myriad of essential smaller, vital, medical equipment for the maternity ward.

Prior to SIS's visit, the clinic's ceiling in the reception area and main corridor were non-existent and the veranda awning ceilings were in dire condition. The ceilings have now all been repaired and painted. The walls of the reception area, main corridor and outside have also all been totally repainted.

Team SIS, swiftly mastered brick-laying and construction skills, with the assistance of Superman Manswet, constructing a new six stall latrine for men and women – a much needed facility for the clinic.

In short, the work at Ssunga clinic was blisteringly swift and efficient while also offering gifts and changes which will benefit the entire surrounding community. Moreover, a most generous donation cleared the debt owed by the clinic for medicines at Masaka Diocesan Medical Services Ltd. Collectively, SIS's work at the clinic was positively staggering and impactful in terms of breadth, depth and impact.



SSUNGA HEALTH CENTRE III
P.O BOX 1606 MASAKA
Tel: 0772 441109

Email: ssunga.health@yahoo.com

To all who worked on the ground and all who helped to make these changes possible, thank you so, so much. We are so grateful that you love Ssunga Health Centre III so much. Sister Magdalena



Muzee Sempa's House, July 7th, 2019



House Construction. Land Rights issues are often 'a bone of contention' in Uganda. On day one, Team SIS met Muzee Sempa on the community walk with NCLC staff. His shack was about to be reclaimed by the landowner to grow coffee; thankfully, a kind neighbour offered a corner of her garden for the construction of a new temporary home for Muzee Sempa. SIS set to work ...

Within just eight days, SIS staff & students cut several loads of eucalyptus boughs, created a mud pit (*also very useful for mud-swimming!*), sourced a door and built a wattle and daub new home with the help of two local experts. Once dry, this dwelling will offer many years of rain-proof accommodation. Sleep well Muzee!



Muzee Sempa's New Home, July 17th

Gayaza Government Primary School

welcomed SIS for two-days where class visits, dances, music, songs and games were exchanged. The netball and football matches were a highlight with all teams playing at break-neck speed and skill. We were also starkly reminded of the harsh realities of most schools in Uganda with up to 85 children in one classroom supported by little or no resources.

Alongside playground maintenance, the SIS team also constructed five benches for the school. These were varnished to provide a weather and termite proof asset for many years to come. Many thanks to Headmistress Olivia and all the staff and children for making us so welcome.



The notes above barely touch on the range of activities that the SIS team initiated or engaged in throughout their visit. Kerry's five-minute video, "Uganda Expedition, 2019. A Glimpse" offers further insights:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgqAG2CHbLM>

This trip was busy by any measure - from monkey walks, weaving, dancing and cooking sessions to classroom activities and construction projects at three sites. NCLC children extend big thanks also to the entire SIS team for voluntarily digging into their pockets to purchase shoes at the market for those in need. These acts of individual and group kindness and respect were ongoing. Inspirational!

The Nabugabo visit culminated in a celebration with the entire school and SIS team presenting their dramatised version of a traditional story to parents/guardians and VIPs. This was a cultural 'first' which was an enormous success; as can be seen by the smiles on the audience to the right.

The SIS team prepared and served up a veritable feast of pork and chicken (dispatched in traditional fashion) alongside mountains of matoke, beans, rice, etc. The event closed with more dancing and a final award ceremony with 'Bags of Smiles' (backpacks with gifts) for all the children and certificates of appreciation and participation. In short, a joyful, wonderful, inclusive community event!

The SIS trip ended with a two-day visit to Jinja for some extreme whitewater rafting, quad biking and chilling out on the banks of the Nile.

Eliza, thanks for so much for the many wonderful photos used within this newsletter. To the entire team and all at SIS, webbale nyo, nyo, nyo - thank you so, so much for visiting us once again. "Our home is your home. See you soon".



Primary 7 and the PLE (Primary Leaving Examination)

This year the first cohort of ten P7 children will graduate after the PLE. In 2020, twenty-five children will take the PLE. examination. The first round of P7 mock exams took place from Monday to Wednesday, last week, at Kiyumba Primary School Examination Centre; hence the super-smart Kiyumba pink school uniforms. With only ten P7 students we currently do not qualify for examination centre status. Many thanks to Teachers Annet and Ssali who supervised P7 at this three-day event away from home and school. **Great news.** We have literally just learned that everyone passed the exam alongside some encouraging results; congratulations to all students and their teachers!

The 2019 National PLE will take place, across Uganda, in early November ... after a second set of three-day mocks in September. This is a massively intense time for P7 students (and their parents/guardians and teachers) across the country. The pressure to pass the PLE and gain a place in secondary education is simply enormous. NCLC children are very fortunate indeed; SIS and HUGE have ensured that sponsored secondary education will be made available to all children who pass the exam; 'safety nets' will, somehow be put in place for those who miss the mark. This opportunity to pursue secondary education is life-changing. 'In a nutshell', none of the P7 children's parents/guardians would ever have been able to cover these costs. A "thank you" falls far short of expressing the gratitude both students and parents/guardians extend to all who have driven this initiative forward over the past two years and in the years to come.



Entebbe Zoo visits Masaka. Representatives from the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (Entebbe Zoo) are currently travelling around the country to educate schools and the wider public on the importance of wildlife conservation. Representatives include: a male lion, camel, ostrich, leopard, tortoise and a python – *please excuse the poetic license with the photos to the right!*

The entire school closed down on Thursday, August 15, to enable all staff and children to spend a day with the animals and keepers. Two coaches were hired, posho and beans loaded on board for lunch, alongside oodles of water and miscellaneous supplies. The highlight of the trip for many/most children was seeing Masaka with its tarmac roads, busy shops and two/three storey buildings. As one teacher reflected ... "It was miraculous; a massive, massive adventure for everyone!"

All had a wonderful time, with camel rides, face painting, picnics, encounters with wild animals and fun with friends. The question of the role of zoos and animal welfare will be explored at a different time! This was a wonderful opportunity for the children to enjoy a day away from the classroom and gain a sense of their enviable heritage. Uganda really is the 'Pearl of Africa' with a vast range of truly diverse wildlife.



The Nabugabo Community Nkima (Monkey) Project

is a two year “Primates & People” collaborative research project between Toronto and York (Canada) Universities based at the Nabugabo Research Centre on the shores of the lake. “The objective of this research is to examine the nature of human-wildlife interaction using a bio-geo-cultural approach to understand the causes and consequences of perceived differences in the benefits and costs of human-wildlife interaction”.

The local biodiversity along the lakeshore has become increasingly threatened as significant areas of forest have been lost in recent years due to a growing population that depends on farming for food security and wood for cooking. Inevitably, this has led to increased shared use of resources between humans and the three main troupes of vervet monkeys. The vervets, once restricted to the lakeshore, now move up to a kilometer inland in search of food; they are shrewd crop raiders and currently significantly impact upon harvests of maize, sweet potato and many other staples which all families depend upon. On the other hand ... monkeys and other wildlife lived here way, way before humans descended upon the area.

Thankfully, the only other monkey species in the area - the Black and White Angolan Colobus - do not raid crops. The school was pleased to host the first community-researcher open meeting and dialogue in early July; more meetings are scheduled. Well done Ronald (P7) for designing the Nkima logo.

A group of researchers studying cichlids (small fish species) have also worked with children at the school on a variety of activities concerning water use and conservation. We have all thoroughly enjoyed and benefitted from this interaction; many thanks to all the visiting scientists at the research centre for making time to share time and ideas.

The Friday Community Clean-Up. On the last Friday of each month, we all continue to venture out into the community for a quick sweep and tidy-up along the main road that passes by the school. This is the third year of this campaign and we are often joined by neighbours and friends who help out - the scourge of plastic bottles and plastic bags clearly affects all of us across the planet.

Sadly, there is no rubbish collection service or community-wide recycling programme within Nabugabo so, along with everyone else across rural Uganda, we burn all our rubbish. However, as we write, the Uganda Marathon team are establishing a plastic recycling centre in Masaka, some 26 kms distant.

Brilliant! Change is afoot!





Masaka, July 5, 2019

NCLC joined the inaugural race in May 2015 and since then has participated in this event every year. The Uganda Marathon has become the largest public fundraiser in Ugandan history and the total money raised for local charities, which includes Ssunga Clinic, is now well over two billion Uganda shillings / \$750,000!

This year, four NCLC staff and eight children took part in the 10 Km run after a massive dance/warm-up event at the starting point. Once again, the young NCLC runners left most adults in their tracks, but much more importantly, 'everyone was a winner' and a great time was had by one and all.

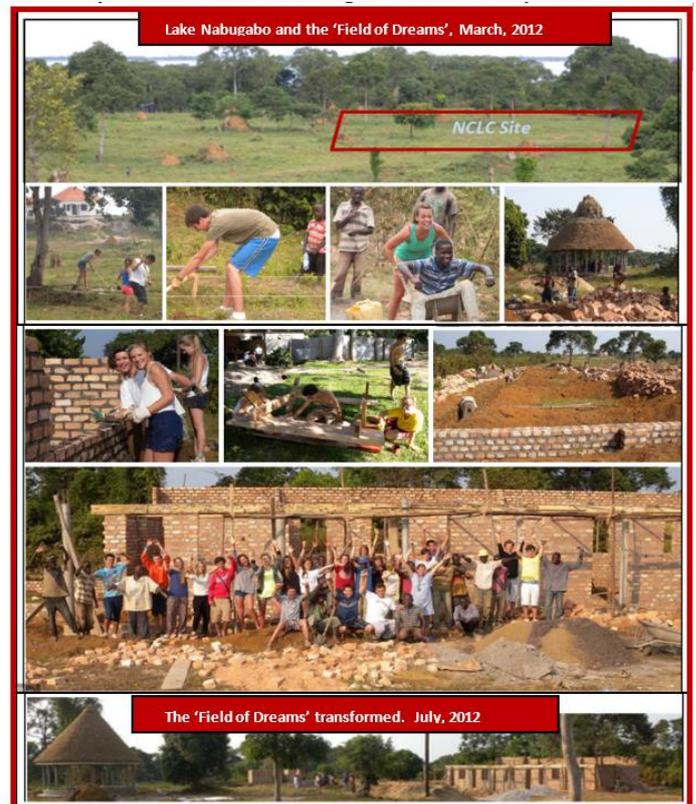


A final 'See you soon'

Looking back over almost eight years in Uganda, we take stock and are grateful for so many adventures far and wide alongside many, many happy memories. Thanks, essentially, to SIS, HUGE the Jasani Foundation and Iain Roache – alongside many young builders and other supporters - the school now houses eight classrooms, a reception, office & infirmary, accommodation for eight staff, The Ark (a 'safe house' for five young girls), roundhouse, kitchen, three stores, separate latrine blocks for boys and girls and a urinal. The school now serves 125 children supported by 13 staff. The store is now, momentarily well stocked thanks to the generosity of numerous generous visitors. All is good.

Beyond the school gate, the community zero-grazing project, aided by the Jasani Foundation in 2014 with 45 cows, now supports almost 90 cows and families from Nabugabo up to Ssunga village. Visitors have helped fund and build three kitchens, five safe and secure small houses for various community members in need of help and three communal latrine blocks. The drummers and dancers are thriving and one day we'll see a member of the Nabugabo runners represent Uganda in the Olympics! Nabugabo now has a small bank and a Police station alongside electricity and running water for those who can afford it. 'Nabugabo is rising'!

As this is our final news letter from NCLC, we would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all those who have made such a difference to our seven years in Uganda. First and foremost a massive, heartfelt thank you to all the children, staff, neighbours and friends at Nabugabo and across Uganda for making us feel so welcome and for



their kindness and smiles at all times. We have made many life-long friends to whom we are indebted. Our most sincere thanks go to each and every one of you for your friendship and trust, especially our neighbour and brother, Kasozi Herman and his entire family.

Overseas, we must lead by thanking all at SIS who have supported the 'field of dreams' especially to the Kindred Project, the visionary late Paul Templeton and, consistently, Valentina Sterling, the KP Coordinator who has always been there to offer help, support, encouragement, advice and massive organisational skills in running expeditions, gathering resources, packing, and ensuring that students and staff are safe and well-prepared. Your friendship has been phenomenal and love of Nabugabo deeply appreciated. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you at SIS on fund-raising and future expeditions to Uganda.

Sponsors have been fundamental to the success of the project, without you none of it would have been possible - over 125 children deserving children would have been denied a primary education. We thank you most sincerely, on their behalf, for your belief in this project and participating so actively in this remarkable, shared journey.

We have all been very fortunate and indebted to the massive work and support of The HUGE Partnership who have reached out on so many occasions to support, advise, encourage and visit NCLC since its inception. We are indebted to HUGE and are confident that the project will be in very safe hands when you assume management and leadership at the end of Term 3 on November 30th.

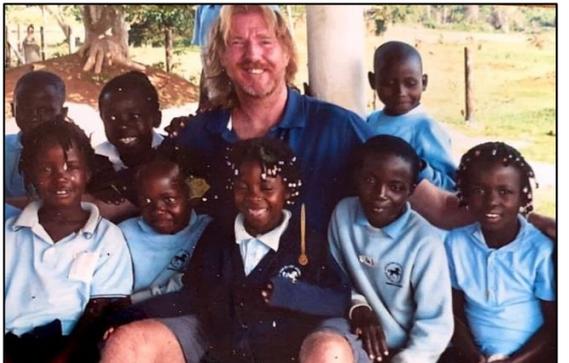
There are so many people to thank, please forgive us if any of you may have been overlooked. Massive thanks to Dr. Michael Soutar and family, the Jasani family and Foundation, Acorns International School, Kathy and John Swindley, Karen Teal and Simon Pierce, Colin Hearn and all at Pangbourne College, Headington School, Pete Lawrence and family, Iain Roache and Professor Di Gibb.

And last but no means least a massive thank you goes out to our own families, who have always been there, supported us, loved us, cared for us, rescued David and encouraged us to keep going. We are now looking forward to spending more time with you and all our wonderful grandchildren.

Meanwhile, Nabugabo moves on, Pete Lawrence joins NCLC for three months beginning early September, to support P7 students in their PLE studies – this is Pete's 5th visit. HUGE trustees visit Nabugabo in late October. On November 18th, 'The Field of Dreams' reaches maturity as we travel 'full-circle and celebrate the Graduation of our P7 students. HUGE trustees, Pete, VIPs and the entire Nabugabo community will join in this historic moment.

So, this is not 'goodbye'; it's just one more, "See you soon".

With love, David and Judy





Nyendu and Masaka Markets



Nabugabo Snapshots Past and Present

