

Supporting poor and vulnerable children in Uganda

Liz and Alistair McIntosh

This report describes the organisation we worked with, and how we supported it during our inspiring visit to Uganda in September 2008. It also sets out how we spent the funds we raised, including donations from many of you, in support of the organisation's work.

Children's Rights Advocacy Lobby Mission (CALM)

We worked with CALM during our visit. This is the new name for a Ugandan Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), formerly known as the Rakai Children's Trust, established in the mid 1990s in the Rakai district in south-west Uganda which was an early hotspot for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Rakai is still suffering from HIV/AIDS and the consequences of the loss of many adults to the disease, and in particular the many orphans and child-headed households that have been left behind. These children have had no parental guidance in looking after themselves. They do not know how to feed themselves, how to grow crops nor to look after livestock in a country where subsistence agriculture prevails. Most critically these children do not go to school as they do not have the awareness that education is important, nor can they pay the fees (about £ 7 per term in a primary school). This sows the seeds of disadvantage later in life.



A child-headed household of 15 children



Sign in primary school grounds

CALM's Purpose

CALM is fighting for the rights of these children and the disadvantaged young adults they become. They operate to meet children's rights to education, to food and to clothing but very much on the basis of promoting sustainability rather than simply meeting immediate needs. CALM's approach is based on conviction, to build a sustainable future for Uganda: this is absolutely right. They are not operating on the basis of emotion which only leads to meeting the short term needs of communities (e.g. food aid) and is not sustainable. Their philosophy is that educating and training children and young adults to look after themselves, and especially to learn how to farm, to trade their produce, to become tradesmen and women, are the keys to empowerment, prosperity and national development.

CALM is very ambitious for its Ugandan projects and ultimately would like to establish its operations more widely in the Great Lakes region of East Africa – Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda.

Staffing and funding

CALM has only a few staff – *James Ssekiwanuka* is the founder/director and is the driving force behind CALM and its strategy. He has a substantial track record in international development and capacity building gained with Save The Children, and a range of projects in Uganda, Tanzania and Sudan. He also has a Masters degree in International Development from Cambridge University. *Joseph Luganda* is the Programme Coordinator who has a degree in education and manages the operational aspects. Both hosted our visit. They are passionate and inspirational advocates of sustainable development. Their focus is on Uganda's lost generation of children. CALM also employs a farm manager, a driver, a housekeeper and a number of part-time teachers.

We organised our visit through Real Gap, which is a UK-based travel company for gap year-style activities for younger and older adults, and which provides CALM with volunteers who are its main source of funding. Volunteers pay a fee to Real Gap to join the project for between 3 weeks and several months and also provide funds they have raised for CALM's projects both before and after their visit: but funds are scarce and CALM struggle to finance all their various current projects.

CALM's current projects at Kyotera (a small town about 100 miles south-west of Kampala, 35 miles north of the Tanzanian border)

1. **Local outreach** work to visit and assist destitute families who have lost one or both parents from HIV/AIDS. CALM provides basic needs such as jerry cans for carrying water (which is very scarce) from the local well which can be several miles away, mosquito nets and sometimes food to help families find their feet. CALM recognizes that this is not sustainable in the long term but is necessary for the family to reach a 'tipping-point' of self-reliance and also to enable the children to go to school. We visited 8 families during our stay.

2. Kiganda Vocational School (about 10 miles south of Kyotera, the town where we stayed). This currently provides vocational training for around 15-20 youths in carpentry, sewing, bricklaying, home economics and farming (which costs pupils £5 per term). Day care/nursery is also provided for 200 children ranging from 5 to 12 years old, many of whom have only been able to attend periodically as their parents cannot always afford the fees which cost £2 per term. These children do not yet speak English and so the main purpose of nursery is to prepare them for primary school where classes are taught in English. Classrooms are under

construction to also provide primary education. We interacted with the children by organizing painting, drawing, football and showing a scrapbook from the UK. We also painted blackboards in all the classrooms.



Children queuing for their morning porridge ('Posho' -maize flour and water)

3. Kiganda Farm which is about 1 mile from the school and has about 30 acres. It keeps poultry, pigs, goats, sheep and cows plus crops such as coffee, cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas – all organic. It is staffed by a farm manager (who is also manager of the vocational school) and 16 boys who are being trained in farming. The farm supplies milk and bananas to the school and occasionally eggs and meat. It also operates a 'give a goat or a pig' scheme whereby they give a female animal to a local family, teach them how to look after it, and in return receive a kid or a piglet from that animal which they then pass on to other local families and so on. The farm also has access to a further 100 acres which is not being worked at present (in fact much of the land south of Kyotera to the Tanzanian border 35 miles south is fertile but largely uncultivated. James believes that if this land was cultivated it could feed the whole of Uganda and more). We helped feed animals and collect water.

4. St James Secondary School – day and boarding - in Kyotera co-founded by James in 2004 and teaching around 200 children up to A level with around 25 part-time teachers. Some pay fees (£30 for day pupils per term and £70 for boarders) but others are free, identified from CALM's outreach work in the community. Agriculture is compulsory for years 1 to 4. There is also a day care centre at the school. The school struggles to make ends meet even with the fees it receives. It is very short of teaching materials. We ran a class on 'tips for exam and career successes'.



Alistair teaching 'tips for exam and career success' at St James'.



Liz with Joseph Luganda (right) and the foreman, Salongo (centre) during a 'Posho' break from building at Jolly Mercy

CALM's projects near Kampala

5. Nangabo Jolly Mercy Vocational Centre, in a rural area about 10 miles north of Kampala, is currently under construction and will operate by day as a primary school, daycare and vocational centre (similar to Kiganda, teaching building, farming and home skills). By night it will be a community learning centre, for adult education, including a computing room. The centre, which still requires additional funding for fitting-out classrooms and for equipment (such as desks and computers), is nearly complete and it is hoped that Nangabo can partially open in January 2009. We painted two classrooms.

6. Lifestyle workshops for the local community which are free and offer practical advice about the benefits of, for example, good nutrition, exercise, stress management, counselling and personal development. This is important to local people so that they understand the benefits of the crops they grow, what supplementary nutrition they require and, most importantly, so that they can pass these principles onto their children. We taught sessions on stress management, personal development and beekeeping on a four-day pilot workshop which was much appreciated by the 40 adults who attended. We also put CALM in touch with TUNADO, Uganda's bee-keeping association at the request of participants who wish to be trained in bee-keeping. Workshops will be offered at the Nangabo vocational centre and more widely across Nangabo sub-county.



James translating for Liz during her session on Beekeeping

Future plans

Unlike its name, CALM never rests. In the future it is considering two projects with another NGO, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR).

1. **Bicycle scheme** - By which CALM would fund 50% of the cost of bicycles for young, disadvantaged adults (who may have had limited schooling) so that they could earn a living by transporting goods and water, providing a taxi service or getting themselves to work. The young adults pay the remaining 50% of the cost by installments from the money they earn, which teaches responsibility and enables CALM to buy further bikes. Bicycles are cheap (£50 each), require no fuel and little maintenance. They are a very sustainable form of support.
2. **Farm Schools** – CALM and IIRR want to extend the concept of Farm Schools, a concept initially developed by the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation), and then by IIRR for adults in Asia, to children in Africa who have had no farm education because they are orphans. Farm schools would major in basic agriculture but also offer mainstream education and life-skills.

In addition we arranged a meeting between Send-a-Cow (Uganda) Kyotera office (another NGO which provides livestock and other support to vulnerable orphans) and CALM to explore how they could collaborate in the future. This was a positive first meeting and we hope - and are optimistic - that a joint venture will emerge.

Current priorities

CALM has three pressing priorities:

1. Completion of the Jolly Mercy School near Kampala so that it can open in early 2009.
2. Completion and continued operation of the Kiganda vocational school.
3. Purchase of a house close to Kiganda School so that the school can offer board to children from further away. CALM has £200 already but needs an additional £800 to buy it.

How we spent the money we raised

We had £940 to spend on the projects, thanks to many of you who donated a large chunk of this pot. After 2 weeks into our visit, we had seen and/or worked at all the current projects and decided to spend that money as follows:

1. £550 to kit out one the classrooms at Kiganda school – including putting in a concrete floor, 4 steel windows, a steel door and 15 desks (made by the boys training in carpentry and enough for 45 kids).
2. £160 to make 6 desks and 6 chairs for each of the 6 classrooms at Nangabo School.
3. £60 to buy an additional bike for the Kiganda Farm for



The classroom we kitted out: concrete floor and windows completed, door awaiting fitting at Kiganda School

transporting water from the well during the dry season and goods to market (they have no other transport)

4. £110 on a sewing machine for the Kiganda vocational centre to add to the mere two they have already.
5. £60 for maize flour for porridge for feeding the children at Kiganda School from now until Christmas.

What can be bought for £ in support of CALM's projects

£	Resources
2	a hoe or daycare/nursery school fees for one child for a term
5	vocational training fees for a youth for one term
7	primary school fees for one child for a term
27	a wheelbarrow or a desk for three kids
30	secondary school fees for one child for a term (as a day pupil)
33	a steel window for a classroom
60	a bike or sufficient maize flour/porridge for 200 kids for a term
110	a sewing machine

We would both like to thank you all for your support and interest in our trip.