

Concepta writes: Here is an overview of last year's activities:

Last Summer, we built a home for 22 orphans and fixed up a mud house for another group of orphans at Kakiri. We built a roadside market at Kisubi, trained over 60 elementary and pre-school teachers, conducted business management seminars at Mpala, Kisubi and Kakiri, trained farmers, crafters and community health workers. We also conducted a detailed evaluation of our program activities for the dual purpose of checking to ensure that we are on the right track toward fulfilling our stated objectives and to generate ideas for future development. A high percentage of the businesses started in January 1999 are still operating and some are doing very well.



**Florence showing
off her patchwork**

**She now has orders
for more**

During the last nine months our Ugandan staff has been busy managing training sessions at Kisubi, Mpala, Gerenge, Katabi and Kakiri. Workshop topics (as requested by participants) include business management, organic farming, animal husbandry, food preparation and food preservation. This series of workshops has been extremely popular and often drew three times the number of participants anticipated. One session at Mpala had been planned for about 40 people but more than 170 turned up for the daylong workshop. It was standing room only with crowds outside peering in through windows for over 10 hours - with no lunch! All trainers for this series were Ugandans

**JANE WITH HER
STOVE.**

**She now has a
business in the
local botanical
gardens, a popular
tourist attraction.**



Bega kwa Bega has also been involved in food distribution to some orphans who have absolutely no food and are either too young or sickly to fend for themselves. Many of these children live alone or live with very old grandparents. We are contracting to place 24 orphans in elementary and preschools in exchange for training teachers and providing them with some school supplies.

Plans for the summer 2000 tour are in full swing. We have 25 volunteers registered to go to Uganda at the end of July for two weeks of work in several villages. Once again we have been asked to focus on training farmers, community health workers and crafters. Our largest group of trainers will be involved

in professional development for elementary and preschool teachers - how to teach Maths, English, Science, Sports and how to make teaching aids using ordinary materials. Teachers will also learn how to use oral literature to write stories/books for children. Mental health workers from London and US will research ways to help children cope with loss of so many relatives and friends. We shall build latrines, install water tanks on orphans' homes, build solar cookers and solar water sterilizers. Good nutrition will be discussed and linked to organic farming and some food processing techniques will be taught. A full and exciting program!

Water shortage is a huge problem for all the communities we are visiting. Many villages are spending as much as one fourth of their daily income on purchasing one bucket of water. We are hoping to get funding to drill and build a community borehole at Kisubi and another at Kakiri.

Several months ago the County Executive of Katibi County told our managers how impressed he and his colleagues were by BkB's work in the county. Apparently people in the surrounding villages have demanded that they too should be trained. It is gratifying to know that our work is relevant and that it does make a dramatic improvement to poor people's lives. Unfortunately the government is not offering us any financial support and since our resources are so limited we shall have to postpone expanding into new territories.

and from England and Scotland:

Last October, two women from Uganda were invited by the Headmistress of a nursery school in High Wycombe to gain experience in nursery education in this country, and receive some formal training. One of the women had great difficulty in obtaining a visa and at the last minute a substitute was found. Josephine Gariyo, Concepta's younger sister, happened to be the only person available with a valid passport. Although she had no experience in teaching young children and at that time had no thought of changing her work which was tailoring, she found herself on her way to England, her first visit anywhere out of Africa. Susan Muwanga already ran a nursery school. There was some surprise this end when the women arrived as they had expected young women. Both Josephine and Susan have 5 children, the older ones now having completed their university education. When Josephine's children were young they lived in a flat in Kampala where her husband was butchered to death in front of them all. They then moved back to the village where they felt safer. Every day since then Josephine has travelled into Kampala very early and returned very late in order to run her business so that her children could get a good education. 18 months ago the eldest two graduated from Makerere with 1st class degrees. Most of Susan's relatives, apart from her mother, have died of AIDS. Here is what the local paper has to say:

JOSEPHINE AND SUSAN GO TO PLAY SCHOOL

Orphans in Uganda are getting the chance of a better future thanks to the parish of Our Lady of Grace in High Wycombe. Parishioners there have helped to pay for two Ugandan Women to come England to learn about child care and play schools.

For more than a year the parish has been supporting a small charity working to improve the lot of some of the 1.5 million Ugandan children orphaned through war and AIDS. Bega kwa Bega, Swahili for Shoulder to Shoulder, sends out materials for schools and medical centres. It also recruits volunteers for short periods to work alongside the Ugandans in building houses, improving water supplies and training teachers and health workers.

Last year Lin Smith, who runs the play school in the parish hall, had a brain wave. She offered to provide a month's training in child care and hands-on experience in the play school. It took a lot of planning, but eventually Josephine Gariyo and Susan Muwanga arrived. They are both widows with grown up families and are former pupils of parish sister, Sr. Mary Inchbald, who taught in Uganda.

They stayed with parishioner Marguerite Farbrother; spent each morning at the play school and had sessions on child care in the afternoons. "Their enthusiasm was tremendous

and they were quite amazed by all the materials and apparatus used for young children in this country” said Sr. Mary. “They returned home loaded with useful things for the children. Susan already runs a school and has several orphaned pupils. But Josephine had no previous experience so it was encouraging for us when she announced that she would build a school for orphans in her area. It was a great joy to have them with us and know that, through them, some orphaned children would have a better future.”

Josephine had, in fact, phoned Concepta on her return and told her she was going to build a school and have it ready for the new school year. Concepta thought she meant February 2001. Not a bit of it. Four months later, having borrowed money here there and everywhere for the bricks and mortar, the building was ready. She writes: “The school opened on 7th February. On the first day we got only 3 children but as the days went by the number of children also increased. Now we have 28 of whom 5 are orphans. There are two qualified teachers to help me and a lady to prepare the children’s break-time meal and help them to the bathroom. It’s all an exciting experience and I really enjoy it. I spend the whole morning with the children then I do the tailoring in the afternoons.” I would guess they must be the only nursery school in the country to feed the children.



**Josephine's
new
school
in the
making**

Susan is rebuilding her school. The parish in High Wycombe is providing some money to help her and Josephine and a large parcel of Play School materials has been sent. They visited London while they were here and also went up to Scotland and were feted everywhere. They visited different schools, spent a while in the hospice where Cathy Jordan works (Cathy was one of the volunteers who went to Uganda) and were given both money and materials by some very generous people around that area. The parish in High Wycombe is now organising a “cushion” sale to help with the schools.

This Summer a group from Britain is joining those from the States. Anna Parmiter (who went out last Summer), Anne Shea and her partner, Mary Walby and two of her friends who are both teachers. Pat Gill who lives in the States, is also going out. Concepta will be travelling ahead of them taking her eldest son Michael with her. He is half way through an MA course (in computers) and he will be making use of his skills by handing these on to his cousins. He is at the moment creating a web site for Bega kwa Bega. I remember saying to Concepta many years ago that I hoped she was talking to her sons in Luganda. She admitted she wasn’t. They are now both furious with her for not having done so! Martina is also going out and will be staying longer than the fortnight. The group preparing to go out in January have been asked to teach nutrition to teachers, nurses and the women in the villages, which means some research needs to be done into what is eaten in the villages and how much is eaten; so Martina will be going round with scales and a note book!

