

# BEGA KWA BEGA

meaning 'shoulder to shoulder' in Swahili grew from work begun by Conche McGarr (Nalunga Jjengo) who married an American and lived in the States. When her two sons were old enough she would return to Uganda from time to time and work with the village

women to help them to become more independent. Her aim was EDUCATION in its widest sense. Her idea was to give them the skills needed to run a small 'business' so they could earn money for themselves and thereby put their families on a more stable footing. Traditionally it is the men in Uganda who have the say and the women who do the work. Women are positively discouraged from thinking creatively. These businesses grow from what the women already know: keeping an extra animal on their small piece of land known as a 'shamba', growing an extra crop for selling, using their craft skills in a different way or learning new skills. They are first taught how to draw up a business plan then how to evaluate this every few months.

This work has continued and is now on a permanent footing, though still operates 'on the ground' rather than from 'on high' as is common in aid work. It is the women themselves who are invited to express their needs (an alien concept for the village women) and Bega kwa Bega identifies those needs which the project can help *them* to meet. It enables the women to earn their own money. The means to earn this money is given them either in training or in kind.

The project's headquarters is in the village of Kitale, between Entebbe, the airport town by Lake Victoria, and Kampala, the capital. It is run by a full-time paid leader (David Ssagala) and his assistant who both live in the village.



**THE OFFICE converted from  
a disused shop**

1998-1999 Some of the work carried out over this year: 60 elementary and pre-school teachers received training sessions; homes inhabited by some 32 orphans were rebuilt or fixed up; (these children often live with very old grandparents,) a roadside market was initiated; workshops were held in food preparation, food preservation, animal husbandry and organic farming. These proved extremely popular and often drew many times the number of participants anticipated. One session had been planned for about 40 people but more than 170 came for the day. It was standing room only with crowds outside the school peering in through windows for over 10 hours – with no food. All trainers were Ugandans.

In October 1999, two women were invited by the headmistress of a nursery school in High Wycombe to gain experience in nursery school education in this country and receive some formal training. One woman had great difficulty in obtaining a visa and was replaced at the last minute by the only woman around with a valid passport though she was not a teacher. Susan Muanga already



**Josephines school in the making**

ran a nursery school taking in several orphans. Josephine Gariyo is a dress-maker. Both women are widows. (Josephine's husband was butchered to death in front of herself and 4 of their 5 children). They both have 5 children, the older ones having now graduated from Makerere University. While in High Wycombe, they stayed with a parishioner. They returned home loaded with useful things for the children. On her return, Josephine set about planning to open a school at the beginning of the school year. (February). We thought she meant in the year 2001. Not a bit of

it. She opened in 2000! She writes: '*. . . we have 28 children of whom 5 are orphans (Feb 2000) There are two qualified teachers to help me and a lady to prepare the children's break-time meal .It's all an exciting experience. I spend the morning with the children and do my tailoring in the afternoons.*'

1999-2000: One of the highlights of this year was the sinking of a well in Kitale. Water shortage is a huge problem for the majority of the villages. Many spend as much as one fourth of their income on purchasing a bucket of water. Much time and energy is spent by both women and children in fetching water, time which could be spent on developmental work and education. This well was donated by a family in Scotland in memory of their mother. Wells cost between £4,000 and £5,000. Bega kwa Bega



**Containers waiting to be filled**

charges 50 Ugandan shillings (about 2p) for a 22 litre container where most will charge 200 shillings. The money is for maintaining the well and paying someone to man the pump (and it is manning it, for the pump is hard work.



**Teachers quarters**

In September a group of 22 volunteers arrived from Britain and the States to work for just over two weeks.

The main task was again teaching the teachers: nursery and primary one and two. Children will not be accepted for primary education

unless they are able to understand and speak some English, so nursery education is all in English. Since some of the teachers' English is not brilliant this can be difficult to accomplish. In addition, classes at Infant and Primary levels are somewhat over subscribed. In Kitale, a volunteer spent a day in a nursery school where 68 children from 3 to 12 were somehow squashed into a very small room. Not unusually, classes have between 50 and 140 children with primary teachers paid £75 - £100 a month and Secondary £100 - £150. Primary education is of a higher standard than nursery; the teachers have been trained, but there are few books and even less equipment.



**preparing school breakfast**



**Adult Education Class 2000**

For the first time, some of the volunteers were engaged in adult education. This was an enormous success. The volunteers had been told to expect around 8 - 12 people. Up to a hundred attended. Local volunteers were used to translate and classes were held in both Luganda and English. Many of the participants were Boda-Boda drivers. Boda-Boda are motorbikes used to transport people who perch behind the driver. They became a popular

mode of transport during the time that Kenya closed its borders with Uganda. People were forced to get off public transport and find their own way. The other largest group who attended these classes was women who wished to help their children by becoming literate in both languages.

2000-2001 Extracts from the Manager's Report:

*'In order to raise the standard of living of both the guardians and the orphans BkB carried out training workshops in a variety of areas. Development workshops have mainly been dealing with small business management, animal husbandry and subsistence farming, basic nutrition and hygiene, rural development, self sustenance and processing, plus preservation of various foods. A total of 1,150 people have benefited as direct beneficiary participants with 98% of these as orphans' providers.*





2,234 orphans have been indirect beneficiaries. Indeed these workshops have been of great impact to the participants in that, for example, the training in disease identification in animals and birds and treatment using local herbs. This has saved many of the purchasing of expensive and costly drugs which can be substituted with many local herbs which in many cases are even stronger, more effective and readily available in almost every one's back yard. Also it's quite important to mention the training in processing methods many participants mentioned, when asked what they used with foods that could not be eaten or marketed because of surplus reasons, almost all said that such would be disposed of. At the end of the lectures the participants learnt, for example, not to dispose of tomatoes, but make tomato sauce, chilli sauce and also surplus milk which can be stored.

BkB has directly sponsored 63 very needy orphans with school sponsorship enabling them to carry on their education ambitions. This for sure is an outstanding investment for the orphans as they will be equipped with skills and knowledge, which they will utilize at maturity.

BkB started a heifer project. The organization acquired 10 in calf heifers, which were distributed to the very needy and burdened orphaned families. Five of the in calf heifers were given to 5 families at Kisubi while the remaining 5 to Kakiri families. Prior to handing over the heifers, basic training in the care and breeding of the animals was offered. Once the heifers produce, the first calf produced will be handed over to another qualifying and needy family. This is meant to be a revolving scheme so that more orphans are availed with the enough milk plus additional income from the surplus produced.'



**knitting machine lesson**

In January 2001, a small group from Britain, 4 from Scotland and 1 from London, spent 17 days working for the project. Preparations had begun many months beforehand, raising money through cleaning, sponsored walks, raffles, dances etc... One woman took out £1,600, which was spent on packages for schools: Maths and English Text books used in the national curriculum being

the major ingredient. Another woman took out 7 knitting machines with her. In only 4 days 47 women (in two villages, working in groups) were taught the basics of how to use these machines. Later, one group wrote: 'We, the members of Kuteesa women's group from Kabaale parish who have participated in the just concluded workshop on knitting wish to convey our appreciation to Bega kwa Bega for organising that workshop. The workshop has given us skills which will be very useful in strengthening our economical power. We are also very grateful for having allocated a knitting machine to Kabaale Group. We assure you that through our group Leader Mrs Juliet Mukinda who has given us a tender of making sweaters for her Nursery pupils, it will properly be used for development of our group and families.'



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