

Uganda Orphans

BEGA kwa BEGA

with the

Banana Tree Project

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2007

Over the past three months Angelina Campbell and Sr Martina have covered some 1,500 miles in Uganda working with groups of women, helping them extend their expertise with their knitting machines.

There are now around 190 machines distributed around the country, donated by people in Scotland. 124 women and girls, the youngest 13 years old, and 2 men, benefit from their newfound skills, many of them now able to improve their living standards from the sale of their wares.

There were extraordinary weather conditions over the time of their stay, from the inevitable heat to quite cold even during the day; a severe earth tremor accompanied by deafening rumbling and one strange hail storm with the hail stones piling up around them in heaps which took a good half hour to melt away. The rains came to Kampala and its surrounds in the first 3 months of the year and brought with them vicious mosquitoes.

They began their teaching around HOIMA (see map over) 130 miles from Kampala. Here the rains came unexpectedly in February. Everyone was forced into their shambas (piece of land) to cultivate and plant as fast as they could. The first workshop lasting 5 days was held in a private school at KARUGUUZA (1). A number of the 14 women taking part (there are 25 in the group and more wanting to join) travelled 15 miles to attend. This group is planning to put a small part of their earnings into a bank to help them save in order to buy more wool. The local parish has 20 'registered' orphans and a large number not registered. They are saving to buy two piglets for each orphan so they can continue their schooling. Martina writes: "The Primary Leaving Exam results have just come out: 100% passes with 13 1st grades.

As the Headmaster went through the list he remarked that the girls had done better than the boys. He was obviously touched by one young girl's results. She came from a desperately poor family. Her father, a farmer, was regularly late with the school fees but always paid up when the harvest came in".

A week's training took place at KITOBA (2) with another group of 14. Martina: "Here we feasted on the hen that laid an egg in Angelina's room last year so she would get some peace. I had a pig and 2 goats my first night, but they did sleep outside my room. At this moment Angelina is teaching in 'St. Anne's Vocational Institute', a 3 room mud house with no windows, mud floor and walls, and light only through the back and front doors. The Head of this 'Institute' has done wonders and is training orphans to use the knitting machines. They have made pullovers for a school in Hoima. She has just cooked us a very good meal of matoke, rice, beans and groundnut sauce. The Primary school here has 800 pupils. During the holidays the pit latrines collapsed, literally. If it had been in term time the accident that could have happened is too terrible to think about. Rebuilding will be very expensive: £1,500. The depth will be 50' and will be lined with bricks. All building materials are expensive."

They then spent 2 days at KYAKABALE (3) 45 minutes away, with 7 women. There were two more groups in Kibale district, one in HOIMA town itself (4) with 6 women over 2 days, and the last with a group of 10, naming itself

'MARTIANGELINA' (5). Here they spent their last 2 days in central-west Uganda. The 'Old Man' who rules this area and lives on this compound is 90 year old, still tall and straight. He has 2 wives who each have 10 children. He fought in the Second World War, knows a little English and demands respect not only from his children, but others who are in the village. In 2003-2004 this area was a war zone. 5 people were killed, many more maimed. A number of these can be seen around minus an ear, an eye or limbs.

Last night the women welcomed us in song



and drama, miming and singing about the time when they were in camps, a displaced people. When the village was burnt and ransacked there was great poverty - no cultivating - no food. They are a courageous people, coming back to the village that has so many tragic memories for them."

Masaka, just south of the equator and not far from the Tanzanian and Rwandan borders has two centres within short distances of the town. This is 90 miles from Kampala and takes around 3 hours by car as the roads are to a comparatively good standard. (The president comes from this area). MASAKA REHABILITATION CENTRE (7) is two miles away. The young people taking part on the course there are very disabled. Over the past 3 years, mastering the use of the knitting machines has changed the lives of several of them, including a number who have little power in their arms or legs. One young woman, wheelchair bound, now has a job in Rwanda teaching knitting in a training school. A young man, a spastic, has been given a machine of his own so he can work at his own speed in his own time in his village nearby.

2 days were spent with the NKONI WOMEN'S EFFORT GROUP (8) which had 12 participants.

A further 2 days were taken up with a group of 7 near Port Bell, JANE'S BINA GROUP (9) and 1 day with 9 women in KIJANGUZO (10) near Luwero, 50 miles from Kampala.

Some students need to correct mistakes. Angelina is adamant about standards, which means undoing and starting again. This pays dividends as the finished article can then be sold (for about £1, a day's work) and help pay for school fees and medical expenses which are out of most people's reach. (It was the rainy season when they were out there and malaria was rife).

Angelina: "At KABALI (11) and KITALI / KISUBI (12) we visited 'old pupils'. These groups work to a high standard, the 'inside' being as good as the 'outer'. 'This is important as there is a lot of competition now. They have contracts of up to 400 school sweaters. These women are now so skilled that they are producing fashionable garments and baby's clothes from observation and memory rather than patterns.

At BUYEGE (13) we had one student, a grandmother, whose eyesight was so bad we spent extra hours guiding her hands so she had a feel of the tools and got to know the basics. We gave her money to have her eyes tested and buy glasses. She invited us to her home and wanted to give us a live rabbit which we politely refused and accepted nuts and potatoes from her garden. On leaving we caught sight of her grandchildren running after a chicken which she pressed upon us. This is the highest honour that can be bestowed on anyone. We made our excuses as best we could and left - without the chicken."



The last two centres visited were at KASANGARTI (14) and KAKIRI (15), both over an hour from Kampala. Angelina: "Sometimes when I think back, I realise that deep inside I was always scared that we might actually be giving people more problems. Maybe they would not get contracts or afford to buy the wool. What about repairs to the machines? This year has finally

made me realise that it is all coming together. I never dreamed it could have been so successful.”

BITS AND PIECES

For those who know Conce (Concepta) she now has a house being slowly completed, on the Kampala – Entebbe road . It is becoming a ‘centre’ for many of her numerous young relatives who come for food, talk, advice and general fun.

Heartfelt thanks to the patients at Monklands Hospital, Scotland, and their chaplain Fr Owen Ness for their generous donation of over £1,000 enabling more knitting machines to be sent out. There are three ‘knitting groups’ waiting anxiously for the arrival of these machines.

At one time the knitting machines went out courtesy of BA. Now that is not the case. The machines are heavy and therefore expensive to send .

Ssagala David was married to Betty towards the end of January. He wished to have a small event but his bride to be had other ideas. The wedding took place in Rubaga Cathedral (David’s parish Church) and there was a large reception to follow.

He invited many people connected to Bega kwa Bega to enjoy the celebration.

His brothers and cousins planned the event and were determined to show everyone how highly they thought of their brother and cousin, who had brought up his 7 younger brothers and sisters after their parents died of Aids, and has shown dedication, resolve, initiative and generosity in carrying out his work as Manager of Bega kwa Bega

President: [Conche McGarr Jjengo](#)
PO Box 2809 Kampala Uganda
(00256)782225787
conchemcgarr@yahoo.com

UK Treasurer: [Mike Spain](#)
2 Haglis Drive Wendover Bucks
(44)0129 662 2678 HP22 6L7 UK
mjp.spain@btopenworld.com

UK Coordinator: [Camilla Broadbent](#)
41 Goldhawk Rd London W12 8QP
(44)0208 743 0655 UK
ccbroadbent@fiscali.com

MANAGER: [SSAGALA DAVID](#)
PO Box 28009 Kampala Uganda
(00256) 77519 570
begakwabega99@hotmail.com

UK Secretary: [Marguerite Spain](#)
2 Haglis Drive Wendover Bucks
(44)0129 662 2678 HP22 6IZ UK
mjpspain@btopenworld.com

Scotland Coordinator: [Martina Boylan](#)
18-19 Stewarton Terrace Wishaw
(44)0169 837 2278 ML2 8AJ
martina@wishaw101freeserve.co.uk