

# BEGA KWA BEGA

## Banana Tree Project

REPORT FROM SSAGALA DAVID,  
MANAGER OF BEGA KWA BEGA (2000-2001)

Greetings from Uganda BkB Office. Thank you very much for all that you are doing for the organisation. There follows a report on the activities carried out.

It is important to note that BKB discourages orphanages because these militate against the idea of belonging and togetherness with one's kin. In African society children are raised by their relatives. If parents are away or have died, then a grandmother or aunt will act in 'loco parentis'. BkB helps orphans often to maturity. In many cases the orphans are too young to be given assistance directly and it is their guardians who are given financial support for schooling for example. In many cases the guardians are heavily burdened by the tasks of caring for these orphaned children. Most guardians are elderly grand parents. It is also of great importance to bear in mind that BkB uses a 'from the grass roots' system of identifying needs. The organisation works hand in hand with the community who selects volunteer coordinators. It is the community that best knows those who are genuine and trustworthy. It is the coordinator who assists the beneficiaries in identifying their needs.

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, growing food plus preservation of various foods. A total of 1,150 people took part in these workshops, with 98% looking after orphans. 2,234 orphans have been indirect beneficiaries. These workshops have also saved people money. For example, the training in disease identification in animals and birds, and treatment using local herbs has rendered the buying of expensive drugs unnecessary. Local herbs, which in many cases are stronger and more effective are readily available in almost every one's back yard. Also it is important to mention training in processing methods with surplus foods which were often thrown out. At the end of the lectures the participants learnt, for example, to make tomato and chilli sauce.

In a bid to raise the income levels and welfare of orphans and their providers a number of businesses were started. Grants were given to a family with orphans. Business Plan Forms were filled out and a training session on book keeping and business skills was carried out. Summing up all the businesses BkB has sponsored: there are 100 in all. These have mainly been animal rearing businesses, as these do not need too much attention. 80% of the participants have registered increased levels of income.

An Adult Literacy Training programme was started with the aim of giving the elderly help with reading and writing. Right now 140 adults attend classes. 15 of them will be sitting for their GED final Test before the end of April 2001.

A large portion of women's and children's time and energy is spent walking long distances to fetch water. The construction of a borehole at Kisubi - Kitala has enabled the children to spend more time on their education, and the women more time in generating an income.

BKB also hosted 23 volunteers from the USA, England and Scotland who worked on: constructing Water Tanks, Teacher training, Medical training, Solar ovens and the Usage and Administration of local herbs on both animal and humans. Many farmers have come to realize that most imported drugs are manufactured from local herbs which are only a few metres from their homes, and that these herbs are exported, and made into syrups and tablets, and then imported back to Uganda at an exorbitant price.



BkB has directly sponsored 63 orphans with school sponsorship, enabling them to carry on their education.

A total of 7 water tanks have been distributed to 7 families helping elderly guardians who can't walk long distances carrying heavy loads of water.

BkB now has a craft hut along Entebbe road displaying goods made by the BkB community. This has increased income levels and provided employment. The selling of crafts in the market has even boosted the sale of food stuffs and fruit as the customers who come to inquire about crafts will end up buying other goods. Even neighbouring teenagers have shown a keen interest in learning crafts.

23 Primary schools received books, bought and distributed by the volunteers, that are recommended on the curriculum/syllabus. This is the first time text books have been available in these rural schools and yet exams are set on what is in the textbooks.

A volunteer from Scotland bought with her 6 knitting machines. A group of women had barely spent 2 weeks working on the machines when they had an order to knit school uniform sweaters. This project has really proved to be an invaluable income generator.

BkB started a heifer project. The organization acquired 10 heifers in calf, which were distributed to orphaned families. Five of the 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 will be handed over to another family.

BkB has constructed a toilet for a school at Kakiri. Originally the school had a latrine dug, then logs had begun rotting due to the rains. The latrine was very unhygienic and posed a serious threat to the children's health. With a permanent structure in place, the health and lives of the children is no longer at risk.

BkB appreciates the help given by all well-wishers: volunteers, donor agencies and any participating agency. The challenges and needs are still many. Thank you very much for all your efforts to make life better for the orphaned children.

David Ssagala  
Project Manager