

# Friends of ACET Newsletter

## Open Day!

Welcome to this edition!

Friday March 7<sup>th</sup> was a big day for Nakulabye Junior School – the New School was finally opened.

ACET Uganda, on behalf of Nakulabye Junior School wants to thank all the people that contributed to the construction and re-location of Nakulabye Junior School. It has been an interesting journey to which Robert Mortimer and a few of you can testify. Most notable is the pace at which things move in Uganda. It was a lot slower than many of you are accustomed to. It was tough on you – almost frustrating, we appreciate that we have completed the journey together!

Editor

### The first days...

The children would come and play on the veranda – both the school and community children. It was frustrating for the school authorities and actually a nightmare to keep the school clean. “*Everybody*” thought it was their school and felt they had a right to sit there and enjoy it.

The youth also felt that this was the perfect place to play football... so they came in droves every evening. A few others would just want to ‘hang out’ yes.... stand there on the bridge and look.... look at nothing really but just look.

The first critical lesson for the pupils was how to keep the classrooms clean. They would sweep and feel that the class was clean... to you and me the class was still looking filthy, but in comparison to what they were accustomed to – the earth floor - the class was spotless!

They are getting better by the day. Hurray!

### NakJus School.. Open at last!....

#### The Open Day ....

The open day came with such anticipation, the community volunteered a few of its members to come and scrub the floors. They wanted the place neat and tidy, they wanted the visitors – fellow parents to enjoy the day.

- The Rianna Fund team arrived and walked through an arch of brightly coloured flowers;
- The music blared and people got ready to give their speeches following the national anthem;
- A bit of the down side – the children were nowhere to be seen.... they were in their classes from where they were to watch the entire event!!!
- Speeches were given, and appreciation given to Rianna Fund, Friends of ACET Uganda and all others that had donated to the school construction.
- The kids finally came out – had various performances, danced and sang.
- When the entire event was over, the Rianna Fund team spent time with the kids – it was difficult to separate the kids and the Rianna Fund team, yet, we had to leave.

We had shared with the school authorities that for our friends in the UK, children ARE important – Very Important. It was a hassle to repeatedly tell them NOT to call the area MP and that this was an event to say thank you to Friends of ACET and Rianna – even the programme layout was a testimony to the difficulty. As I stood with the Headmaster and he watched the team from Rianna play and interact with the children, the point got home. These folk actually **LIKE** children!!

Rianna Fund will support 10 orphans as ongoing support. Friends of ACET Uganda supports 100 and Friends of Nakulabye supports 60 children. This is a big boost to the number of children in the community that are receiving help

### Tumaini Children’s Home: ACET Uganda’s new project

ACET Uganda has taken on a new project. Tumaini Children’s Home located in Kakira close to Uganda’s large sugar estate. There is a high problem of vulnerable children and orphans. A local Pastor took up the initiative to help these children in a manner he knew best – an Orphanage. Despite all odds the centre has been operating.

ACET has partnered with this orphanage with the basic aim of linking this Pastor and institution to sources of professional and financial support. Training workshops have already been conducted for his skeleton staff, a salary paid for a Matron and exposure visits conducted for them to understand other models of child care.

We are keen to interest a few of the Friends of ACET to get acquainted with this institution.

A worrying issue is the “*contract marriages*”. Men marry women for the duration of their employment contracts. When the contracts end (expire) more often than not, the men *ran away/abandon* the women and children. Sadly, most women find out too late – when they are being evicted from the houses! This has left many hurting women, hurting children and we are seeking ways to address the root problem. A team of staff have already gone to the area to carry out a survey/study about predisposing factors as a tool for advocacy.

ACET Uganda has linked Tumaini to St James Church for some immediate repair and infrastructure needs (roof, underground tank and some support for children). Another team is coming to fence the area to secure it and provide safer surroundings through contacts solicited by Pastor Nicholas himself.

We see this year bringing a smile to many faces!

## ACET News Snippets:

### Daudi in Addis ...

Daudi Talima the Senior Training officer has been to Ethiopia a couple of times for a course that shall see his skills sharpened and be a major boost to ACET work among its partners. The course is run by the University of Manchester for the Tearfund partners in Africa.

### Tumaini Gets a New Roof...

The children would sing and pray and wish that the roof would not come crushing down. They did this for a couple of years, and... God heard their prayer. On June 10<sup>th</sup> Daudi Talima of ACET was able to celebrate with the children. "we used to sit here and pray that the roof does not fly off" one child narrated.

### Silver Innocent soon to tie the Knot!

Silver Innocent the Manager at Mbale is soon to tie the knot. He has come of age... as the elders in the community would say. He gets married to Cleopatra on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2008. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Following all the work he has done among the youth we wish him well at his "graduation".

### Rianna's Fund to build new school block

ACET has identified a worthy cause in the village of Masuulitia. A small project ran by Action for Children is in dire need of school block. Rianna's Fund executive were able to visit with ACET. Following a recent board meeting the Rianna Fund will fund a 4 classroom block for the school! This has been a source of joy to the community.

### Food Prices hit some sections of the population

Fuel prices have shot up in the past 3-6 months to levels unheard of before. For the first time in Uganda, Diesel fuel has cost more than petrol. The impact of these increases on the general population has been varied.

Food prices, costs of basic commodities, have tripled in a few areas like Mbale and Kakira where we have certain partners. In other areas, it's the cost of a certain calibre of foodstuffs that has gone up and not the other. There have been mixed reactions in the population. Some farmers have loved the outcome feeling like they are getting better prices, others have felt the pinch as they go to buy other commodities.

With no end in sight, we foresee a bigger impact on other work related stuff. As prices go up the general cost of living goes up and it's bound to affect everybody. In the recent budget speech the government proposed a few tax deductions, in some situations total elimination of taxes so as to alleviate the impact of the escalating world fuel prices on the average Ugandan citizen. We are yet to see whether this Macro policy will have the desired effect/impact at the grassroots level.

## The AIDS Conflict Continuum

Richard Opio, Kitgum

While recent forums and reports (i.e. those stemming from the June UNGASS meeting) have rightly pointed to poverty, the lack of education, and gender inequality as important factors in the AIDS pandemic, few have linked AIDS in Africa to violent conflict.

In the light of these two disturbing trends - the spread of HIV and AIDS and increases in violent conflict - which are dominant features of today's Africa, the United States Institute of Peace brought together a panel of specialists in May 2001 to examine an often overlooked aspect of the pandemic: the nexus between conflict and AIDS.

The Institute event explored the multiple and cross-cutting connections between the incidence of HIV and AIDS and violent conflict on the continent. The panel also attempted to develop a set of broad policy recommendations for the U.S. government and the international community.

The panellists were in agreement that the relationship of the AIDS pandemic to violent conflict in Africa was far too complex to be expressed in simple cause-and-effect terms. Instead the panel addressed the "AIDS-conflict continuum" in discussing:

- (1) how the explosion of HIV & AIDS may contribute to further instability and conflict on the continent in coming years, and
- (2) how instability and violence encourages conditions favourable to the spread of the HIV virus.

The impact of this report to Kitgum work is immense – from the stress levels, the speed at which interventions should be designed while taking into account all the salient points – the social and psychological status of the community members, all calls for wisdom to say the least.

Please pray for Richard Opio and his team for wisdom, resilience and speed as they respond to the needs of these communities in this 'revival' phase.

## Partnership Box

### Monitoring and Support Visits:

**Tim Raby**, is the new Tearfund Country Representative for Uganda. Tim visited Uganda in May to meet and get acquainted with the Uganda partners. He succeeds **Christiana Brown** and **Froduald Munyankiko**. We take this space to appreciate the work of both Christiana and Froduald and to wish them well in the next stage of their lives/careers.

### Changes in Tearfund Holland:

**Hilde Van Hulst**, a long serving Desk Officer in Tearfund Holland moved on to a new job. Hilde will be missed for her frank talk, and detailed analysis and warm friendship - an interesting and pleasant combination in a donor partner. **Jolien Glashouwer**, her replacement is due to visit Uganda in July this year. We welcome her to Uganda and trust she will be put on the mailing list soon.