

Update from Uganda - News in Pictures



Sign language training is an ongoing activity at the school, which benefits not only the children but also parents and guardians, support staff and the local community.



VSO donated mosquito nets which were distributed to all the children.

The pupils continue to make good progress academically, and to enjoy participating in inter-scholastic sports events. During the last term, three deaf pupils took part in a football competition, their team defeating two other local schools, whilst the girls took part in a volleyball event. The children enjoyed sporting success in athletics too, with one deaf pupil winning a triple jump competition at district level.

View from a VSO Volunteer

Over the past few years, several volunteers from the UK and USA have worked with PET Uganda in Kisoro under the auspices of VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas). Craig Mathieson, who has recently returned from his time in Kisoro, tells of his experiences.



In September 2008 I boarded a plane for Africa, sure footed in the knowledge that I was doing something good with my life, about to make a difference. I was leaving the UK to spend a year working through Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) as a fundraiser for PET Uganda - a small local charity in Kisoro, in rural Uganda. The decision to do this with my life was the culmination of much disillusionment with standard charity practices here in the UK: why donate money for a goat when it will be used to buy a shiny new 4x4 truck, I thought. I would go to Africa, work 'hands on' for a small organisation and create real change.

But two months into my placement in Kisoro, this illusion was shattered into pieces around my lonely feet in a dark, wet Ugandan village. I had done very little fundraising and what felt like very little else. I felt disenfranchised by the amount of money a small organisation spends on admin, wages and transport; was this not the very reason I was here, to avoid all these 'extravagances'? Then something clicked and I realised that I had been working from a deluded, naively altruistic notion of reality. It became clear that the situation was not about me and how the local circumstances

didn't fit the skills I had to offer. It wasn't about PET Uganda spending money on transport and facilitation; reality meant the organisation had to operate within the local institutions that existed, not the ones I was used to. I would have to change to fit the 'way things work' in Kisoro.

After this realisation, work became much more productive and rewarding. I was able to work together with staff to develop ideas they had to strengthen the organisation. This resulted in several successes such as the start of a poultry project to provide eggs and poultry production skills to children with special needs, a successful mosquito net distribution campaign across the district and a funding award from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for PET Uganda to carry out a 6 month project aiming to strengthen links between charities in Kisoro and local government.

These achievements were the product of cooperation and collaboration - of sharing skills. They allowed me to contribute to the great work that PET Uganda has been carrying out. While what I achieved pales in significance in comparison with the vast contribution PET Uganda provides to the deaf and disadvantaged in Kisoro, I boarded the plane returning to the UK not quite sure footed, but confident that I had achieved some good and had a better understanding of how to do so.



The poultry project which Craig mentions is called 'What a Difference an Egg Makes'. It began with 60 laying chickens, but this number is expected to rise to 200 in a year's time. The project aims to educate children in poultry production as a vocational skill which will be useful to them when they leave school; it helps to improve the children's diet; and will contribute to PET Uganda becoming more self-sustainable in the future.

Christmas Fundraising for Kisoro



Members of the Kisoro Trust and their families got their hands dirty at Christmas making cards to raise funds for the deaf children. After many hours of folding, potato-printing, and label sticking, 500 cards had been hand-crafted. And thanks to the willingness of the staff at St Paul's and St George's Church, Edinburgh, to allow a sales table after the Sunday services, all the cards had been sold two weeks later, raising £250 for the Trust.

Rebecca Humble, aged 8, decided to hold a carol service in her home on Christmas Day to raise funds for Kisoro. Donations from people who attended the carol service totalled £40.00. Well done, Rebecca!

To Make a Donation

I would like to make a donation to the Kisoro Trust. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Please send me a standing order form.

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your gift by nearly a third, at no extra cost to yourself, by completing the Gift Aid Declaration below:

Please treat as Gift Aid Donations all donations made by me to the Kisoro Trust from 6th April 2001. I understand that I must pay sufficient tax each year to cover the amount to be reclaimed.

Signed:.....