



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Update on the Mustard Seed School, Busota from the School's Director, Moses Kamyá

16 April 2012

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENTS

The 2011 achievements have put the Mustard Seed Secondary School a step ahead.

Purchase of text books, science lab equipment and computers, packed with educational software, have enabled us to shine in the Uganda National Examination Board results of 2011. Three students gained first grades, putting them in the top 8% of students in Uganda. Sixteen gained very creditable second grades and five were awarded third grades. We had no students on fourth grade, the lowest level of pass, and no failures.



The three first grade students all came from Karamoja, the poorest region of Uganda. They were allowed into the school on the basis of their academic potential and their fees were waived by the school. All three students are now enrolled for senior five and are studying for their A-levels. Although the results in 2011 were very good by the standards of many other schools, we expect even better results in 2012. This year we have students who have come through the school with access to books for most of their secondary education.

Improvements in school facilities, due to the assistance we have received from UHST, have contributed to the above good grades. The science laboratory and equipment have enabled students to conduct experiments and learn what it is to do science. Our growing library of books has enabled students to check things they did not understand in class and to supplement their notes. Electric power has enabled us to extend the school day, especially for those classes approaching their exams. It also allows the small number of boarding students to study in the evenings and at weekends and allowed them to play music and DVDs in their leisure time. The bore-hole and water pump have provided drinking water, helped with food preparation and improvement hygiene standards. The computer

laboratory has provided a huge amount of non-fiction support materials, e-books, DVDs and made available pictures and illustrations of many of the things that students study, but do not normally see e.g. glaciers, the circulation of blood in the body.

Better facilities and the steady growth in student numbers have allowed our school to employ more competent and enthusiastic staff. Since the introduction of 'A' level courses we have an attractive teaching programme that has enabled us to recruit two graduate teachers and three diploma science teachers, all on a full time basis.

Since the acquisition of the nearby Moslem primary school in August 2011, following a public appeal for funds by UHST, we are operating on two sites, separated by 100 yards. The upper (i.e. original) site of the school is now surrounded with a chain link fence with a gate facilitating students' safety, control and discipline.



OUTCOMES

The response to our excellent examination results has swelled school recruitment. This has put us under pressure in a number of ways, not least the problem of catering for larger numbers at meal times. We had been cooking with a single pot supported on three stones over an open fire. As this was in the confines of a building it created very unhealthy working conditions for our cook. A recent grant from UHST has enabled us to construct a new kitchen with fuel saving stoves and external chimneys. This will relieve the cook of too much heat and smoke during preparation of meals and enable us to prepare more food in a fuel efficient way.

Improved facilities at school have attracted new students to the school. Our enrolment in February 2012 was as follows, and still more students are arriving as news of our exam success is spreading:

Classes	Boys	Girls	Total
Senior 1	42	42	84
Senior 2	27	18	45
Senior 3	27	21	48
Senior 4	30	20	50
Senior 5	14	6	20
Senior 6	7	3	10
TOTAL	147	110	257

As the number of day and boarding students increases and we get more staff it has been possible to widen the curriculum and to offer a range of extra-curricular activities. Football is popular among the boys and our school team has done well in local competitions. We are

grateful to our friends from Stoke City who donated their football strip to our team last year. The school now has three teams. On 13th March, 2012 our first team reached the quarter finals of the district Coca-Cola post primary football competition. What we need now is money to hire diggers to grade our playground to give the sports area more impetus.

The girls' netball and volley ball teams are training to take part in inter-school competitions next term. Other popular new out-of-school clubs include; the choir, music and drama. We also have thriving Scout and Girl Guide groups.

Following the improvements to the school hall (see picture), additional classrooms on the lower site and fencing of the upper site Uganda National Examination Board has designated the Mustard Seed School as a recognised examination centre. This will make a huge difference to the school as final year students will be able to take their examinations on the school site. It will also reduce examination costs for the school and for students as well as allowing us to earn some money acting as a centre for external students.



CHALLENGES

School expansion and development has however come with new challenges. Many students enrolled in the boarding section yet, to start with, we had no beds so some students slept on the floor. Thanks to UHST's timely intervention, all our boarding students now have bunk beds and mosquito nets.

There is a shortage of classrooms. One classroom on the upper site is being used as a girls' dormitory while, on the lower site, two classrooms have been turned into boy's dormitories. The demand for places in boarding is overwhelming, and yet we are mindful of the dangers of overcrowding. So we have turned away many students who were seeking boarding places until we have more facilities to house them properly. Specifically, we need to put up a purpose built girls' dormitory and a boys' dormitory to meet the challenge.

The lower site lacks electric power, so boys currently move to the upper site for night preps. We are currently improvising torches for boys to make their beds, but the cost of batteries is high. We also need light in the early hours because boys have to wake up at 4:30 to move to the upper site for morning preps.

Following our large increase in numbers, educational resources like books and science equipment are now insufficient to go round.

A single computer lab is also insufficient to support the current enrolment. Computers too are now few. Yet the government now requires A-Level students, not offering Mathematics or Economics, to offer compulsory subsidiary computer studies. Expanding the facility has become a necessity. Increasing medical bills for students now necessitate a school sick bay to adequately cater for students' health.

Fire extinguishers are required in dormitories in case of fire outbreak. However, we are

careful to avoid overcrowding to protect students health. Subjects like Agriculture, Entrepreneurship and Geography require students to make study strips. The school would benefit from having a minibus to assist in taking students long distances and to reduce transport costs. The lower site needs a chain link fence and a gate to provide security.

The above and other challenges have to be grappled with as the school continues to grow. We are suffering from the problems brought by success, but we shall slowly get there.

CURRENT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

- Extension of electricity to the lower site.
- Fire extinguishers.
- Levelling and surfacing the school playing field.
- Construction of a school clinic and sick bay.
- More books, science and other learning materials.
- Fencing the lower school site.
- A dedicated boarding house for girls (followed by one for boys).
- Increase in the number of computers.

If you feel you or your group would like to contribute to meeting any of these needs then please contact us at info@uhst.org or download a supporter form from our website: www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org.

Sleeping on the floor at start of term



Old smoky kitchen with internal fire



Dormitory with new bunk beds



New kitchen with externally vented stoves under construction

