



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Visit to Isaac Newton High School, Katera January/February 2013



Peter Kisirinya (centre) with Moses Kanya and Hilary Hurd

School Hosts Conference

This visit was timed to take place before the start of the new school year, in the first week of February. With no students present, it provided an opportunity to bring teachers together for the first Humanist Schools Conference. Isaac Newton High School hosted the conference, using its new girls and staff hostels to accommodate over 50 teachers from the three secondary schools; Mustard Seed at Busota, Isaac Newton High School at the original Katera site near Masaka and the new school managed by Isaac Newton High School at Mbuta (the former Humanist Academy/Fair View School). Kasese Humanist Primary School was represented by Robert Bwambale and a colleague.

Peter Kisirinya and his staff were excellent hosts. Visitors felt very welcome, catering was good and the conference programme well managed. All speakers, both internal to the schools and from outside, put a considerable amount of effort into their presentations, which were well chosen and of interest and

highly relevant to the audience. Comments by participants included:

"It was very helpful to bring together staff from the humanist schools to share experiences."

"I have made good friends with teachers from other schools."

"The conference was enjoyable and we were well looked after."





Above is a picture of Winnie the school bursar, who was the conference administrator.

A mark of successful integration was the popular decision to encourage future teacher exchanges among the Humanist Schools, and to work through the Uganda Humanist Schools Association to develop common policies on applying Humanist principles in deciding approaches to school management and discipline.

Site Development

Before our previous visit in July 2012 there had been a number of major steps in the development of facilities at the school. A large bequest to the school had made it possible to build a hostel to house 72 girl students. This included a small toilet block and three small washrooms. As the picture (top right) shows it has made an attractive and extremely valuable addition to the site.

A partially completed new kitchen and two roomed hostel, which provides overnight accommodation for part-time teachers, are now completely finished and were in use during the conference.

The shrubs which were planted in June, with a grant from supporters in Suffolk, have grown up and are beginning to provide a good covering for the barbed wire fence as well as

contributing to the greening of the school site.



The pictures below show the new fence being used as an effective washing line and general views of the increasingly attractive site.



In the picture below, boy students take care of their washing.



The other major development in July 2012 was the installation of the pumped water storage system, which has transformed life on the school site by gravity feeding a constant flow of water to stand pipes for the kitchen, toilets and wash rooms (below). The humble tap is something we take for granted, but not so in rural areas of Uganda.



The newest improvement has been the construction of two new blocks of VIP toilets – one for girls and one for boys, the latter funded by supporters in Staffordshire. The Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilets were developed in Zimbabwe, but Peter Kisirinya found a local builder that had gained experience fitting them for a number of World Bank funded projects in Uganda. The diagram below illustrates the basic design principle, in which flies and odours escape through a pipe which vents the latrine from the rear.

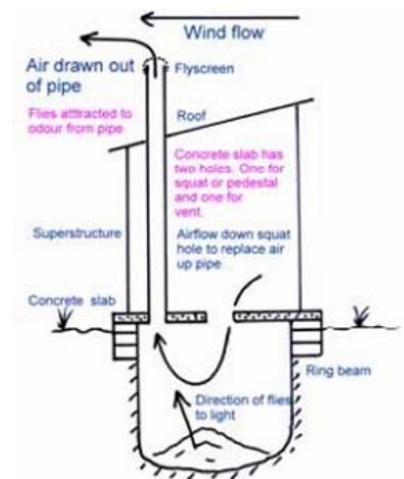


Figure 2-4: Effect of venting a pit toilet

http://www.ecosanres.org/pdf_files/EcologicalToilets-PeterMorgan-Mar2009.pdf



The boys' toilet block has 4 stances for students with a separate toilet for male staff and visitors.



There is a similar toilet block on the other side of the site for girls and female staff and visitors.

Students

Improved facilities, including those for girls' boarding, and good O and A-level results in 2011, with 4 students gaining university scholarships, resulted in a large rise in recruitment in 2012. Further advance in O-level grades continued in 2012 and this has led to more families signing up their children for the school.

Classes	Boys	Girls	Total
Senior 1	26	50	76
Senior 2	30	43	73
Senior 3	12	26	38
Senior 4	21	25	46
Senior 5	10	21	31
Senior 6	4	24	28
TOTAL	103	189	292

The numbers of students who board in the school at the start of 2013 has increased to 99 girls and 58 boys. The boys are housed in rooms that were built as classrooms and are far from ideal for sleeping.

In 2013 UHST supporters are providing scholarships of £120 a year for 40 children in the school. For local students paying their own fees the rates have risen to reflect the higher demand for places. Up to O-level, students now pay annual day fees of £67 and £205 for boarding. A-level day students pay £85 and boarding £242.

As the current level of UHST scholarships does

not cover the full costs of boarding, students on a scholarship are asked to pay a half fee if they need to board. This precludes the very poorest students from taking such places.

Teachers

In February 2013 Isaac Newton High School had 6 full-time teachers and 11 working part time. While pay is still low there has been an improvement in conditions. Every teacher now has a formal contract and they are enrolled in the national Social Security scheme. Each teacher contributes 5% of their pay and the school another 10%. The combined contributions go towards building up credits towards a final pension. This represents a huge improvement in working conditions for staff and should have a substantial effect on motivation and retention.

Part-time staff includes a number of undergraduate students, including former students from the school, who work for the school one or two days a week. This helps to bring bright, committed teachers into the school, while helping the students to fund their university education. These part-time teachers are able, when necessary, to stay overnight in the teachers' hostel on the school site.

Support from UHST in 2012

Isaac Newton High School has received the following grants from UHST since January 2012.

34 scholarships	£4,080
Fencing, kitchen, teachers hostel, dorm lights	£7,220
Textbooks	£1,800
Science equipment	£500
Efficient wood burning kitchen stoves & cooking pots	£1,400

Emergency food money (East African drought)	£900
Well and pumped water storage system	£6,250
Purchase & planting of shrubs for living hedge	£500
Start-up grant for 4 students going on to university	£400
VIP toilets & washrooms for boys and girls	£12,515
Service and repair of computer network	£420
2012 staff bonus + £100 musical instruments	£1,100
Data projector	£269
40 scholarships term1 2013	£1,600
TOTAL =	£38,954

Future Needs

Isaac Newton High School has taken a great stride forward over the past year. After 7 years of operations it is now possible to assess what needs to be done to complete the basic school project.

As the school community grows and, particularly, as the number of boarders increases, the need to provide health care on site becomes important. 2012 was a bad year for malaria cases and, when we add in other common illnesses, the costs to the school of buying medical services outside the school has increased substantially.

For some time it has been Peter Kisirinya's aim to put a medical room and dispensary on the school site, which will serve both the needs of the school and those of the local community. Service to the community would be on a paying basis. It is expected that the income from this community service will cover the costs of a full time nurse, who will

also be available to meet the needs of school students and staff. A small subsidy from the District Health Department might also be forthcoming. As a sign of Peter's commitment to the project he is already busy with the community making bricks for the medical room building and work has started on the foundation and front wall. The building will be next to the school gate with an outside entrance for the local community and an entrance on the school side of the fence for students and staff. As the school is bringing together a large community of individuals in a rural area and has a duty of care for their health and welfare, the medical room is becoming a priority.

The school has also started to make bricks in preparation for constructing, from its own resources, a canteen where students can take meals – protected from sun and rain.

The school has good sleeping facilities for girls in the new hostel. The boy boarders are using unfinished classrooms, which are clearly not fit for purpose. In order to provide parity between girls and boys the construction of a purpose-built boys' hostel is a priority.

At the moment the school uses a playing field for sports which is on the top of a hill 25 minutes' walk from the school. By the time the school reaches formal registration in a year's time it must have its own playing field. A plot of suitable land is available for purchase, but earth moving equipment will need to be hired to level and grade the site.

When the school kitchen was constructed money was saved by putting in make-shift wood burning stoves. The savings were put towards the construction of an adjoining teachers' hostel. Unfortunately, the stoves were not made with proper fire bricks so, on first firing, the bricks broke up and the ovens collapsed. Money is now needed to take out the inferior stoves and put in high quality fuel efficient ones. Peter has seen the excellent stoves that were installed at Mustard Seed School and has obtained a quotation from the supplier, who is willing to travel to Masaka to install stoves of the same quality. These will

enable three pots to be heated at one time, will reduce wood consumption dramatically and allow the cooks to work in a smoke free environment. Completing this work is relatively low cost and a high priority.

The other work that needs to be done on the site is to complete and refurbish some of the first buildings that were constructed 7 or 8 years ago. The first classroom block was never completely plastered, the floor needs to be finished and windows and doors fitted. The hall is in a similarly poor state and needs to be refurbished so that it can serve as an examination hall. This will enable the school to apply to become an examination centre for the Uganda National Examinations Board and allow students to take their exams on school premises.

When it rains the water runs in an uncontrolled fashion through the school. With the ferocity of storms in Uganda increasing, as a result of climate change, it is essential to put in channels to drain surface water and also to construct all-weather paths around the school site.

A longer term need is to bring mains electricity across to the school from the nearest supply point in a village 2 km away. This is an expensive operation but will become a priority as the school grows further.

The following list of requirements is in the order of priority given by the school:

Medical room and dispensary	£3,750
Boys hostel for 96 students	£22,500
Playing Field (land purchase and grading for football & netball)	£10,500
Kitchen stoves	£875
Refurbishment and completion of first building and the main hall	£3,000
Furniture for the National Examination hall	£2,000
Metallic water tank 25,000 litres	£3,500

Work on site drainage and paths £2,500

Extension of mains electricity to school (Long term need) £27,500

If you feel you or your group would like to contribute to meeting any of these needs then please contact stevehurd@uhst.org (01782 750338).

Donation and standing order forms can be found at:

<http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/donate/>