



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Progress Report from the Director of Mustard Seed Secondary School, Busota, Kamuli September 2020



Foundation work on new Boys' Dormitory

Introduction

Due to the Covid pandemic my flight to Uganda in May was cancelled and Entebbe airport has been closed to overseas visitors ever since. So, I am very grateful to Moses Kamywa, the Director of Mustard Seed Secondary School for writing this update on the school's recent progress.

Steve Hurd, Chair of UHST

Director's Report

Government measures to protect Uganda from the Covid pandemic closed the school in April, so our students have lost at least 6 months schooling. Fortunately, we have positive examination results to report from last year's cohort of students, and thanks to the maintenance of support from Uganda Humanist Schools Trust we have continued to develop the infrastructure of the school and managed to retain our staff team.

Academic Progress

Our academic performance in 2019 showed marked overall improvement, as revealed in the results from national examinations taken at the end of 2019 and published in January and February 2020.

All candidates gained a grade in the O-level examinations. We had no outright failures. 5 of our students gained an aggregate division 1, which was broadly in line with the national average. 30 gained division 2, 59 division 3 and just 2 gained the lowest pass grade, division 4. This ranked us in 8th position out of 26 secondary schools in Kamuli municipality and 374th out of 4,123 schools countrywide.

At the start of this year, many of the successful students enrolled for A level courses at the Mustard Seed School, Busota.

The A-level results, which come out a few weeks after the O-level ones, were our best to date. We entered 14 students and all of our candidates scored the required two principal passes permitting entry to university and other institutions of higher learning.

We have put a lot of effort into improving our performance in science and this is beginning to show in improved results, especially at O-level.

Covid-19

To combat the Covid pandemic, all schools in Uganda have been closed since April. Our students have lost at least 6 months of learning and, with the loss of fee income, we have not been able to pay teachers their normal salaries. The monthly transfers of scholarship money that we receive from UHST and supplementary

hardship payments have enabled us to partly replace the pay to permanent staff and we have helped casual staff out with food parcels. During the Covid-19 quarantine, we have continued to pay our staff 50% of their normal pay to help them cope with the situation. During the covid closure we have had to pay other costs, including quarterly utility bills the pay of onsite security staff.

We have kept in regular contact with our students, and they are all eager to return to as soon as schools are allowed to reopen.

School and Community

Our local community around Busota depends upon Mustard Seed School economically. The school employs over 50 people from the surroundings, as both teaching and non-teaching staff. It is the biggest school in the southern division of Kamuli municipality. Our borehole has supplied much needed water to nearby families during this covid-19 quarantine. We buy foodstuffs from the community, hence improving their income. The road to school is periodically maintained since we pay local service tax to municipal authorities.

Infrastructure Improvements

Using funds from UHST, we completed the construction of a new girls' dormitory. It is served by Blair toilets with fixed piped water and showers. Not only has this second dormitory reduced congestion, it also makes the girls proud and happy to be in a school that looks after their welfare.

The boys also had additional toilets built adjacent to the multipurpose hall. This made it possible to use the Hall as a reading and study area in the evenings, without

having to worry about going back to their hostel in case of nature's call.



Entrance to new girls' dormitory

UHST has further helped to fund the refurbishment of the old hall, to create a library and science lab.



New science lab

The old lab has been turned into a computer lab with over 20 computers connected to the internet. All children are allowed access to this facility for research, computer literacy and for pleasure.



New Internet enable computer lab

This makes our school different from the rest, as a humanist school, we avail learners of the necessary information to help them make good choices in their lives.

Every year UHST provides funds to purchase books and science lab equipment and chemicals to facilitate evidence-based learning for which we are grateful.

We are currently undertaking further infrastructure improvements by constructing a second boys' dormitory (see front picture). It is fully funded by UHST to enable social distancing in the dormitories, when schools reopen to students at the end of this month.

When schools reopen, as a team we are committed to move on with the duty of improving humanity through education. We also aim to move forward in using education to uplift people's livelihoods in Busota after covid-19.

Moses Kanya,
Director, Mustard Seed Secondary School

If you feel you or your group would like to help us to support the Humanist Schools in Uganda, or to sponsor a student then please contact stevehurd@uhst.org (01782 750338).

Donation forms can be found at:

<https://ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/donate/>