



## Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

### Katumba Parents Humanist School Visit Report and Secondary Education Appeal March 2023



Secondary planning team: Hassan Maate, Juma Siriwayo, Steve Hurd and Elisha Ssebadu

After setting out from Kampala at 7.30am in a Toyota Landcruiser, we arrived in Bundibugyo, on Uganda's border with the Congo at 6pm, having stopped once for the loo and a soda. Large sections of the tarmac main roads, completed by Chinese contractors in the last couple of years, are already breaking up. They were not engineered to cope with pounding by heavy lorries plying between Congo and the port of Mombasa in Kenya and heavy cement trucks from Hima Cement works in Western Uganda. It was a relief to reach our destination near Katumba School, which nestles in the beautiful setting of the Ruwenzoris, the fabled Mountains of the Moon.





Ruwenzori Mountains, Bundibugyo District

On my first evening I met the very able Katumba management team comprising Juma Siriwayo, School Director, Elisha Ssebadu, Site Manager & Engineer and Hassan Maate, Headteacher. We shared a meal of local foods including matoke, sweet potatoes, dodo (a green vegetable) and chicken before getting down to business. Our single objective was to examine the feasibility of adding a secondary section to the Katumba School.

Although Katumba is in one of the poorest and most remote locations in Uganda and the school is relatively new, its children do well in the national Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Of the 30 children who took exams in November, 8 gained the top grade 1 and the rest a creditable grade 2. Below are pictures of successful children.



In view of these successes, parents are looking for an opportunity for their children to move on to secondary education. However, there are no secondary day schools in the area and only a few parents, with a reasonable cash income,

can afford fees for their children to attend the nearest boarding school 17 km away.



Successful Katumba girls with their parents

UHST supporters have done their best to help. They are funding scholarships to enable 22 children from Katumba to attend the Humanist High Schools. However, this option is expensive and unsustainable. It also takes scholarships that are needed by equally deserving children coming up through the two new primary schools at Isaac Newton and Mustard Seed. Taking Katumba children a long way from home is also socially disruptive. It separates children from their families and community at a tender age and many may not return.

We are anxious to find a way to provide secondary schooling in Katumba, so that children can be educated to UCE O-level where they were brought up. Staying in the community is important. Children have much to learn from their parents such as survival skills (food security and farming), management of domestic chores, socialisation and caring within the family, language, listening and storytelling, which passes down local culture and history. Many of these would be lost if children were routinely taken far from their homes at an early age. There can be little doubt that if we could find a viable way to provide secondary schooling at Katumba School then it would bring huge community benefits.

Long-term financial sustainability is an issue. In August 2022 the primary school's finances were in a poor state. While enrolment was well over 700 children, almost a half were paying no fees and the school struggled to cover the costs of tuition and feeding. This was unsustainable

and risked the survival of the school. To restore financial stability in 2023, the parent-governors raised school fees. Perversely, this had little effect on numbers. Almost all parents miraculously found the extra money. Good PLE results and the fine-looking school buildings make parents keen to educate their children at the school. They are willing to forgo other essentials to pay school fees. However, Katumba still takes its social obligations seriously. It gives free places to over 100 children of mothers who were widowed during the 2016 insurrection.

Below are pictures of the newly completed Katumba Parents Humanist Primary School. The Library and Information Centre have been completed and the whole school given a colourful make over. Staff are delighted with the help they have received from supporters of UHST and Humanist Aid in Sweden.



Proud community leaders at Katumba School



School kitchen and classrooms

## Secondary Education Appeal

There are enough children within walking distance of Katumba School to enable it to operate as a day school serving the local community. With encouragement from the management committee, UHST has decided to mount an appeal to raise funds to create a community school that educates children from 3 to 16, baby class of the kindergarten to secondary O-level. To make the expansion affordable, primary and secondary schooling will be on one site and the staff rooms, computer room, library, playing field and multi-purpose hall will be shared.

The total cost of the two-stage development will be about £70,000. Today we are launching a 1<sup>st</sup> Stage appeal for £35,000. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage appeal will follow in 2024.

The site for Katumba's secondary section is a former cocoa grove, alongside the primary.



Walking the boundary of the new land



Members of the PTA are mobilising a community effort to clear the land

If our appeal is successful, the new building programme will be phased as follows:

**2023 (Target £35,000)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Phase construction goals:**

- *Multi-purpose hall.* This will enable the school to register as an examination centre, so that children can take national exams within the school, as well as being used for music, dance, drama, debates and school and community activities.
- *Senior 1 classroom and Science Lab* with storeroom, water supply and sinks. This will enable children completing their primary schooling in 2023 to start Senior 1 of their secondary schooling in February 2024.

**2024 (Target £35,000)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Phase construction goals:**

- *3-classroom block, with storeroom,* to accommodate Senior 2, 3 and 4 classes.
- *Additional toilets* for girls and boys.

Over the next year we will also provide funds to:

- *Buy more computers and software* to meet the needs of the primary and secondary curriculum.
- *Increase the supply of books and learning materials* throughout the school.

These improvements will enable Katumba children to complete all their Primary and UCE O-level schooling without needing to leave their homes. If everything goes to plan, we will

create a fine Humanist Community School that serves as a model for day-school education in a rural community.

**To Donate to the Appeal**

We would welcome donations to help us to bring secondary education to Katumba School. It will enable children in the area to complete their entire primary and secondary schooling without having to go far from home.

Donation details are on our website:

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

For further information please contact:

[stevehurd@uhst.org](mailto:stevehurd@uhst.org) (07773 972601).

We are grateful to:

**Members of Katumba Parents Humanist School Management Committee**

- Irumba Juma Siriwayo - Managing Director, fundraising and administration
- Mbambu Asiimwe Hellen - Educationist / Adviser
- Maate Hassan - Headteacher and Academic leader
- Night Shawiya - Community development
- Elisha Matte Ssebadu - Engineer/ Director for Building and Civil Engineering
- Freedom Balikamanya - Sports and co-curricular activities
- Katusabe Biira Esther – Parent Teachers Association representative