



## Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

# Eagle's View Humanist Primary School Kayiira, Jinja March 2024



On the steps of the school offices February 2024

Eagle's View Humanist Primary School was founded in 2019 to serve the scattered rural community around the village of Kayiira in Buwenge sub-county of the Jinja District of Busoga. The founders were Rogers Muwanguzi, who is the Managing Director, and Brian Isabirye, his co-Director.

### Rogers' early life

Rogers was born in the remote Busoga village of Busiya. His parents are Muganza Longoire Fred and Namubiru Ruth. They are small-

holder farmers, who grow mainly subsistence food crops to eat at home. Whenever they had a surplus, they sold it to pay for their children's education and to meet their other needs from the cash economy. The family were practicing protestants who were later attracted by the Pentecostal style of worship.

Rogers is the first born of five boys. His journey to Humanism started at Mustard Seed School. The school has a Humanist ethos and, from time to time, hosts Humanist volunteers from around the world. Rogers learned much about

Humanism from these volunteers and especially from Conor Robinson, who came with 2 other volunteers from Foundation Beyond Belief in the United States. It took Rogers some time to shake off the religious indoctrination he had been subjected to as a child. However, gradually through interactions with secular individuals like Moses Kamy, Dan Miln, Robert Bwambale, Lyanda Tilley and many others, he learnt that he was not alone. He found a new family around him who had an appealing open, liberal and secular outlook on life.



Rogers Muwanguzi

Rogers completed the first four years of primary schooling at Busiya Parents School in his village. Later he joined St. Mary's Primary School, Nsuube, where he completed primary education by taking the Primary Leaving Examination. Rogers parents got the money together to enable him to move to Buwenge Progressive Senior Secondary School where he studied for the Uganda Certificate in Education (UCE) O-level and passed in Division 1, the top overall grade. This gave him an upper hand in attaining a UHST scholarship to attend Mustard Seed Humanist Secondary School, where he took his Uganda Advanced Certificate at A level.

As Mustard Seed was well over an hour's drive from his home, Rogers became a boarding student. He studied physics, mathematics and economics and served in various leadership roles, including Assistant Head boy and vice chair of the disciplinary committee. This helped him to develop leadership skills.

Although receiving an offer of a place at university, the fees were way beyond what his parents could afford. With good A-levels he managed to secure a teaching job at a rural primary school. He set money aside from his limited income to pay part-time fees for a Primary Teachers Certificate course at Bishop Willis Primary Teachers College (PTC) in Iganga. He taught during term time and studied during holidays to attain a Grade III Certificate in Primary Education, the essential minimum requirement to teach in primary schools in Uganda. Such a qualification can be upgraded to a degree level qualification by further study, and Rogers would like to do this as soon as he is able to secure the necessary funding. Rogers loves teaching and the feeling that he is empowering the next generation of children.

### Eagle View's early days

Rogers met Brian Isabirye at His Grace Primary School during his school practice. After working together for four years they decided to start Eagle's View Humanist Primary School. In 2019 they began by constructing crude temporary classrooms from corrugated sheets on a piece of spare land which they rented near Kayiira village.



The first temporary classroom

The plot was too small for a complete school and to allow for expansion. So, in 2020, a community member offered to sell his land to provide a permanent site for the school. They had no money, so Rogers reached out to his Humanist friend in the USA, Connor Robinson, for help. Connor launched a successful *GoFundMe* campaign for 10 million Ugandan shillings which enabled them to buy the land.

Rogers feels that this was an example of humanism at work.

The Kayiira community is poor and not a single child had completed primary schooling before we set up the school. The lure of cash for children to work as cutters in local sugar cane plantations encourages them to leave school early.



Children cutting sugar cane

Although they set their school fees very low many of the families that send their children to them still fall into arrears. Keeping the school open has been a constant struggle. They owe their continued existence to intermittent donations from generous donors on Facebook and elsewhere.



New girls' dormitory

A single, generous supporter helped them to improve their infrastructure. A first donation enabled them to build a school office and staffroom, which were requirements for the Ministry of Education to license the school - though they are using the staffroom as a temporary dormitory for 15 orphan boys. A second donation enabled them to build a dormitory to house 35 local girls who were living in particularly challenging circumstances.

The money was channelled through an African Humanist Lyanda Tilley, as the donor wished to remain anonymous.



Lift pump supplies water to the school

The school has clean water from a borehole and a lift pump but has no electricity supply.

### UHST visits

UHST Trustees first visited the school in July 2022, when it was on its initial temporary site. In February 2024 Hilary and I returned with our son Daniel who, as a partner in a large accounting firm and a UHST Trustee, helps to keep UHST's financial reporting in order. It was wonderful to see the school functioning on its new piece of land. The new admin block and girls' dormitory are attractive buildings and appear to be well constructed. The 10 temporary classrooms are functional, but we can see that, with open upper sides, bright sunshine and rain is bound to disturb lessons.



Cookhouse and temporary classrooms

There is a shortage of furniture and in the larger classes there is a serious space problem. More toilets are needed. Currently just 4 toilet stances are shared among 400 children and their teachers, two for males and two for females.

Cooking facilities are completely inadequate. All the cooking is done with large sufurias on 3 stones above two open fires in an enclosed room. The room is acrid with smoke, which is a threat to the health of the two cooks who work

there. It is imperative to improve daily cooking arrangements.



Smoke filled kitchen

In the absence of a solution based upon renewables, the construction of externally vented, efficient wood-burning stoves would be a start in improving conditions for the cooks, while slashing wood consumption by two-thirds.



Mother and baby dance

The children carried out a wonderful dance display for the visitors. We were honoured by being asked to plant a mango tree and we look forward to seeing the tree develop as we feel confident the school will.



Planting mango tree with Brian and Rogers

### School governance

We were pleased to hear that there had been progress on improving school governance. When we first visited, the school was being run as a one-man business with all monies passing through Rogers' personal bank account. This is quite common in Uganda, but it cannot work for a charity like UHST, which must ensure that all donor funds are used for the development of the school. Since our first visit, the school has been registered as a not-for-profit organisation and it will soon have a dedicated bank account through which all receipts and payments pass.

Following our visit Dan Kasanda, UHST's Ugandan auditor, visited Eagle's View to offer advice on how to manage financial recording and reporting in a way that would give confidence to donors. Here is an extract from his due diligence report:

*Eagle's View Primary School, Kayiira is in a remote impoverished area where livelihoods depend upon subsistence farming with small amounts of cash from casual labouring and the sale of surplus food. There are no government schools and the remoteness of the area combined with its poverty, have discouraged private schools, run for profit, from being established. The directors are seeking to fill an important need.*

*Last year 2023, the school had its first lot of candidates sit their PLE. Out of the hard work of teachers and determination of pupils, the school excelled in performance. Out of the thirteen*

*candidates, five passed in division one while the rest (eight) passed in second division.*



Brian, Rogers with Dan Kasanda

*Currently the school's enrolment stands at 411 pupils. This is a good number. Fees collected from pupils enables the school to pay teachers' salaries and some associated running overheads. However, due to the low fees paid by pupils, the school has not yet managed to put up permanent classrooms.*

*All operations and accountability of the school is still in the hands of the two directors.*

**Observations:**

- *Many classrooms are overcrowded.*
- *The kitchen is in a sorry state. It is tiny with a lot of smoke.*
- *The teachers were all mindful of their obligations.*
- *The pupils bear happy faces, an indication of content.*
- *The two permanent buildings, school office and girls' dormitory, were well constructed.*
- *The toilets were generally clean.*
- *The school has free land where permanent structures/classrooms can be built.*
- *Bookkeeping is not to the required standard.*
- *For the years the school has been in operation, it has never prepared a financial report.*
- *The entire management and operations of the school were upon the directors.*

- *No agreements/contracts for completed works were available.*

**Recommendation:**

- *Baseline accounts be prepared as a basis for moving forward.*
- *Proper accounting procedures (including computerised accounting) need to be implemented.*
- *Permanent classrooms are urgently required.*
- *Fees should be steadily raised to improve pay, conditions and motivation of staff.*
- *Improve security so that textbooks can be kept at school.*
- *Urgently construct a new kitchen with well-constructed, energy saving cooking stoves.*
- *Employ a school bursar to manage financial record keeping.*
- *Make formal agreements with contractors conducting works at school.*
- *Strengthen the school board by inviting an additional Director from another Humanist School, from the Local Community and from UHST.*

*Conclusions: Eagles view Humanist Primary Schools is a viable venture with a promising future.*

The two Directors have already agreed to implement these recommendations. As soon as they are fully in place then I am confident that UHST Trustees will approve support for the school.

**Gaining official recognition**

An important step towards official recognition by Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports came in August 2025 when the school was granted an operational license. It has two years to meet the standards required to gain full registration. By August 2027 the school must have:

1. A qualified Headteacher not below Grade V Teaching Certificate in primary education and must be registered with the Ministry of Education and Sports.
2. All teachers registered and /or licensed with Ministry of Education and Sports.
3. Administrative and financial records.
4. A school bank account.
5. Key statutory documents (e.g. Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

(1995), *Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act 2008*, Local Government Act (1997), Public Service Standing Orders, Teachers’ Professional Code of Conduct).



Eagle's view humanist school

School license

6. A Functional School Management Committee (SMC), constituted in accordance with the SMC Guidelines and *Education – (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act 2008* and must be approved by DEO.
7. A minimum of one staff house on, or near the school compound.
8. At least 5 acres of land located within a safe and secure environment. Classroom size (floor area) should not be below 5.8m by 7.8m (45.24 m<sup>2</sup>).
9. Proper security arrangements.
10. First Aid kits.
11. An enrolment of not more than 40 pupils per class per teacher.
12. Appropriate sitting facilities for the learners.
13. Provision of safe drinking water.
14. One pit latrine stance or toilet (squatting/Asian type preferred) for every 40 pupils by sex.

### Creating a virtuous circle

Eagle’s View, like the other Humanist schools in Uganda, is a private school that relies upon fee income. In Uganda the proportion of private schools has grown since the education system was liberalised in the year 2000.

Roughly 50% of primary schools are private and 80% of secondary schools. Because government schools are seriously underfunded and have class sizes as high as 150 children, many parents try to get their children into private schools. While government schools are meant to be free, most of them have termly charges – ostensibly to pay for extras, but in practice many schools try to charge as much as they feel parents will pay. There is therefore a continuum in fees which transcends the public/private divide. Fees tend to be low in schools with poor results in national examinations and high, or very high, in elite schools with excellent examination results. This leads to strong competition among schools to raise standards, though schools and children that lose the race must often make do with low paid, poorly qualified teachers, poor education and low attainment.

As with many new schools in poor rural areas, Eagle’s View School faces a struggle for survival. With no track record of success in examinations, fees have been kept low to encourage parents to try the school. However, low fees combined with low enrolment numbers make it a struggle for schools to pay teachers, buy food and other essentials.

The vagaries of climate also have an impact. When the rains arrive late or end early, crop yields are adversely affected and may fail completely. So, with no surplus to sell, families struggle to pay school fees. This leaves schools with a dilemma. Do they take the harsh measure of sending home children who have not paid? Or do they try to keep children in school in the hope that money will come from parents later? Taking the humane second option is the course you might expect a Humanist school to take, but such a policy can have unintended consequences. If poor parents who nevertheless manage to pay school fees see that children, who have not paid, are allowed to stay in school, then they too may hold back on payments. We have seen this happen, and when it does, school income slips into a downward spiral and threatens a school’s existence.

The Humanist schools must maintain a tricky balancing act. Firstly, when communities realise that they have the potential to become very good schools. they very quickly become oversubscribed. When this happens they must decide whether to give priority to more needy local children or to select brighter children, with higher grades in their Primary Leaving Examination and/or those from families who have the means to pay? UHST tries to ease the dilemma in the high schools by providing scholarships for bright children from challenging circumstances. All Humanist schools, primary as well as secondary, help children from needy family circumstances by offering a discount or even waiving fees, but they cannot afford to do this for many children. They need most children to pay full fees if they are to pay teachers and meet other running costs.

A recipe for success has been learned by the long-established Humanist schools that have been operating from as early as 2005. If schools can demonstrate that they achieve high standards of education and welfare, then parents will send their children. Teacher morale is crucial. Schools must show that they value teachers by prioritising teachers’ pay. Paying as much as they can afford. Regularly paying every month – ideally for 12 months of the year not just during term time. Helping teachers on a discretionary basis with other needs such as rent for housing, meals, transport to school and access to books for preparing their lessons. If teachers are contented and can see hope of things getting better then they will teach better, children will be happier and learn more, and learning and results in examinations will improve. As the school improves enrolment will rise and fee levels and teachers’ pay can be raised little by little. In this way, a virtuous circle of success feeding success and further improvements in teachers’ conditions and in the education and welfare of the children.

The strategy has worked well for the early schools. Back in 2005 teachers were being paid as little as 50p per lesson and morale was low. Over time, however, there have been steady

improvements, and the Humanist schools are beginning to stand out as happy and successful schools that get better each year. Eagle’s View has made an excellent start on this virtuous circle of improvement. Hard work by teachers and children in a happy, supporting atmosphere has led to outstanding results in the first year that children have taken the Primary Leaving Examination. Of the 6 children in the 2022 cohort, 3 gained the highest division 1 and the rest division 2. In the 2023 examinations, 5 children gained the highest division 1, with everyone else gaining a very creditable division 2. This has happened in Kayiira village where, until this year, not a single child had previously completed primary education.

**Balancing payments and receipts**

Below are the main expenses of Eagle’s View School in the final term of 2023.

Item	Uganda shillings (Ush)	UK £s
Staff salaries	10,200,000	£2,217
Food	4,278,000	£930
Firewood	2,600,000	£565
Stationery & other materials	589,000	£128
Teachers’ rented accommodation	320,000	£70
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,987,000</b>	<b>£3,910</b>

The basic pay of a teacher is 250,000 Ush (£54) a month, £162 per term, £486 per year.

Day fees are 100,000 Ush (£22) per term. Boarding fees are 350,000 Ush (£76).

50 children (35 girls and 15 boys) board in the school.

If fees were paid in full, termly school income would be:

Day fees 36 million Ush (£7,850)

Boarding fees 17.5 million Ush (£3,800).

Making a total income of £11,650, which would be more than sufficient to cover the basic termly running costs and enable the school to gradually improve its infrastructure.

However, some particularly needy children are allowed to stay in school without paying fees, others pay reduced fees and many more fall behind on payments and run into arrears.

As a result, total fee income was down to 14,960,000 Ush (£3,252), leaving a shortfall of £438. Donations from Facebook friends have made up the difference, enabling the school to keep going – but its overall position remains fragile.

### Final reflections

Rogers and Brian have successfully steered the school through the challenges of the first 3 years. This is how they express their progress and needs.

*We are grateful to local parents for trusting our school with their children. Enrolment is growing well. Before we were established, primary school drop out by village children was high and none had completed their primary schooling. We have worked hard to keep even the least fortunate children in school, but we cannot afford to support more than a few children who pay nothing towards the school's running costs.*



Parents in solidarity with teachers

*We are pleased that the school has been able to provide employment to local people. We have given 10 full-time teaching posts to bright young people who, while having Primary Teaching Certificates, were employed casually or not at all. Several other previously under-employed people are also now working with us as cooks, caretakers or security guards. The food we buy from local famers gives them valuable additional income.*

*Our excellent performance in the 2023 PLE examinations has enabled 5 of our top-performing children to gain UHST scholarships to move on to secondary education at Mustard Seed Humanist Secondary School.*



P7 children leaving for Mustard Seed School with their bedding rolls

*We have enthusiastic community involvement in school policy making and governance through our active Parent Teachers Association.*

*We thank our staff for the commitment they show to their teaching. We have done our best to reward their efforts by doing our best to pay salaries promptly each month and this is being rewarded by us all feeling part of a team working together. Our teachers share ideas on teaching methods and on handling problems that crop up in child and classroom management.*

*Support from generous Facebook friends has helped us a lot and given us encouragement to go on despite some of the problems we face:*

- *The poor state of our temporary classrooms mean that teachers and learners are exposed to adverse weather conditions. Learners must keep shifting desks in class during sunny days to avoid direct sun rays and on rainy days it is worse because they must squeeze in corners to keep dry.*
- *Coughing is common due to the dust-laden air in our earth-floor classrooms.*
- *Paying salaries of teachers and support staff in time has been challenge especially in the second and third term*



*when most of our parents wait for harvests before they can sell produce to pay school fees.*

***Our pressing needs are as follows:***

- *We need a security fence around our school, so that books and other resources can be kept securely within the school.*
- *Sufficient books for teachers to use while teaching and for children to seek knowledge on their own.*
- *10 decent permanent classrooms.*
- *A purpose-built kitchen and food store. The kitchen needs to be equipped with externally vented and efficient wood burning stoves.*
- *Additional ventilated toilets for children and teachers.*
- *Help with paying our teachers and giving them adequate material support, including funds for our teachers to improve their qualifications by part-time study.*
- *We would like help each year to enable our brightest children to have scholarships to continue their education in a Humanist secondary school.*

**Supporting the Humanist Schools**

If you feel you or your group would like to help us to support the Humanist Schools in Uganda, or to sponsor a high school student then please contact [stevehurd@uhst.org](mailto:stevehurd@uhst.org) (07773 972601).

Donation forms can be found at:

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