

My Year Working In Uganda.

My year away working in Uganda was the most eye-opening, perspective changing, rewarding year of my life. I knew it would be a fascinating year but no words or advice told to you by others can ever quite make you realise what you are about to be doing. I would like to thank you for making this year possible by supporting me during my fundraising with Project Trust. Without you I would have not raised enough funds to support my year in Uganda and I would not have had the chance to give my knowledge and skills to the people I met in Uganda.

Being a teacher was a huge challenge. I had a class of 108 aged between 11 and 16. Their understanding of English varied hugely and at first I felt that teaching them would be impossible. It took all my energy and will to slowly gain the respect of my class and therefore managing the class. Throughout the year my class's grades improved and their attendance was more stable. They became more enthusiastic about learning and became less shy to try out their English in the class. By the end of the year I had teachers from other local schools approaching me and telling me that students from my school were speaking English outside of school, which was brilliant to hear.

The people of Uganda are the most welcoming, friendly people that I have ever had fortune to meet and live amongst. They have such little in terms of possessions yet they would always be willing to share their food and invite you to their home. I could not once walk through my town Kaihura without stopping to chat to someone even if I did not know that person. Their eagerness to learn about life outside Uganda is infectious.

Being away for a year gave me such a huge perspective of what I have here in the UK. I lived on very few ingredients all year. Rice, pasta, onions, tomatoes, flour, oil, avocado, cabbage and on a very rare and fortunate day I may stumble across a cauliflower or my personal favourite of green peppers! It has made me appreciate everything that is on offer in the UK. We all have so much here in terms of food, possessions and education and my year away has especially made me strive to succeed in my education at university.

Here is a small report I wrote about where I worked in Uganda:

I lived and worked in a small but busy town called Kaihura in West Uganda. It is different to most rural towns in Uganda because it is mostly made up of a self-funding charity. This means that it is in a fairly healthy financial state and can support itself. This is thanks to a lady called Faith Kunihiro. She grew up in Kaihura, went to go and work in Jinja (East Uganda), then felt a calling from God to go back and help develop Kaihura. So she trusted this instinct and risked financial stability to return to Kaihura. She then started to help Kaihura with just 5,000 USh (£1.25). With this she bought pencils and exercise books and gave them to poor students. Faith then worked her way up, gaining sponsorship and support and today Kaihura has grown into a thriving town. Bringing Hope To The Family (BHETF) is Faith's charity and is made up of Home Again Orphanage, Hope Academy Primary School, Hope Again Medical Clinic and Kyngera Vocational School, BHETF offices and Village Art, which consists of a café, a craft workshop, a craft shop, a bridal boutique and a salon. All the money made goes straight back to BHETF making itself sustainable. The work is fantastic.

At Kaihura Pink Primary School (the school I worked at for the year), Primary One of 150 children is taught in one classroom in a crumbling building with a roof that is on the verge of collapse. There are three other rectangular buildings that are split in half to make two classrooms. This holds Primary 2 and Primary 3 in one, Primary 4 and Primary 5 in the second and Primary 6 and Primary 7 in the third building. Each classroom has a blackboard, benches and shutters for the windows (no glass). There is one very small room, which is a staff room/office. Up until June 2014 there was only one text book per subject per class for use of the teacher only (in June 2014 the school received a donation from the charity '410bridge' of 800 textbooks! This has greatly helped the children develop their reading skills).

For equipment there was one metre ruler and wooden compass for the blackboard that was shared for all the classrooms. It was the children's responsibility to bring to school exercise books for each subject and a pen. School lunches were not provided – 6 children in my class of 108 would bring a lunch box, others sometimes brought a stick of cassava or sugar cane, and some brought 500 shillings (roughly 12p) to buy a 2 inch by 2 inch square of bread from the nearby stalls. Most did not eat all day. This is the normal setting for a government-funded school in Uganda.

One thing that my school was very good at was the attendance of the teachers. There would never be an unsupervised class and the teachers all taught at a very high standard. Class sizes at Kaihura Pink were between 80-150 and there would be six children to one bench (and the bench was meant to seat two or three). The teachers work hard to try and get these huge classes to perform well in their exams.

