



# Ian and Shelagh's Ugandan Adventure November 2022



Hello again,

Well, it has been too long since our last communication. It's now 3 years since our last visit to Lira and finally we made it back there in the middle of October, for a 3 week visit. After all the troubles with Covid lockdowns, which meant that most schools were closed for almost 2 years, it was great to be back there. We arrived and Sam collected us in his new (to him) car – a very nice recent Land Cruiser with all the gadgets. Such an improvement on the previous old Toyota saloon car. We went straight up to Lira because our friend Michael was there and it was planned that we would have joint discussions with the Keframa team.

## Keframa High School

As we arrived the S4 students were sitting their O-level exams and so the whole atmosphere of the school was hushed so that they were not disturbed. There was an air of purpose about the place and the exams were well organised. Over the time we were there we had quite a few meetings with Augustine and Jimmy Francis to discuss the way ahead for the school. The break for Covid was very disruptive and quite a large number of students did not return when school reopened, a number of the girl students had got pregnant or married in the time away from school. In addition, the rains were so badly affected by climate change that the crops had failed for 3 or 4 seasons in a row, coupled with the closure of markets for extended periods on lockdowns, there was a serious problem of starvation. In reality it is likely that more people died of starvation than from Covid.

Coming out of the lockdown at the beginning of 2022, Keframa had a small number of students, only 138 compared with over 200 in 2019. Some of the discussions centred around how best to increase the number of students and particularly the number who would be able to pay the fees. Over the two years of lockdowns the only real source of income for the school was the sponsorship money we were able to send them, thanks to our loyal and dedicated supporters. The following week most of the teaching staff went out touring around primary schools to publicise Keframa to the P7 students, who would be looking for a secondary school to move on to.



We had a meeting with all the S4 students on the first Saturday to give them some encouragement for the remaining two weeks of exams and also we met with the sponsored students. They were all so grateful for the support and several explained that they would not have been in school at all if they had not been sponsored. Over the rest of our visit we met with the remaining sponsored students and had some good interactions. This time we were helped by having both Tonny Okello, who is our link person in Uganda between us and the school, and Headteacher Emily. We often find that the students are very quiet when we meet with them on our own, but this time they were much more forthcoming.

S4 sponsored students



S1 Sponsored students



S2 Sponsored students



S3 Sponsored students

We are hoping that the publicity initiatives will result in a much larger intake of students for the year starting January 2023. The school continues to be enthusiastic and to have its Christian ethos as a point of distinctiveness. We took part in the Sunday service in the school hall on the first Sunday, and Shelagh preached (the first of 5 sermons!). The singing and music were really enjoyable and of good quality, all the students seemed to be committed and full of life.

## Uganda Christian Institute



The Nursing and Midwifery School were allowed to reopen sooner than other schools as the Government realised that nurses and midwives would be needed as the Covid continued. Sam has really driven development on at a fast pace, he has almost completed the 4 storey block for teaching labs, administration, library and computer lab, while we were there the roofing was being prepared – a steel structure rather than the usual wood framed roof – all while the lower floors were in use by the students and staff! He is also having a 4 storey L-shaped accommodation block built for girls. They are both very impressive buildings, to a high standard.



New Girls' accommodation block



Computers in the computer lab

The developments are not confined to the Nursing School, the Agriculture School has seen its test growing area expanded and they now have an enlarged piggery, goat house and a chicken shed, where there were 500 newly hatched chickens – all so that the students have real space to practise their learning.



Sam has also bought more land in the area and grows maize and other crops to help feed the students.

Ever looking for ways to increase the income for UCI, Sam has built a new factory to make nails (yes, nails you use for building). There is no factory for this in the north of the country and he has an opportunity to provide nails for the growing building businesses in the area. He buys wire and then the first machine stretches it down to the correct diameter and the wire is then passed on to the nail making machines. He can make 200 nails a minute on each machine in 6 different sizes. He expects to break even in 2 years.



## Other Visits

We also met up with a lot of our friends, including a visit to a distinctly rural church with Rev Dinnah for Shelagh to preach, the road to it was good fun and we were pleased to have Sam's 4WD car as the track kept getting narrower and less even than a footpath! It had been raining so we had some good sideways action in the car (at low speed for those who might be worried). The church service was good with some lovely acoustic music – no amplifier set on MAX – and the sermon translated into the local language. It seemed to be well received. We had asked Dinnah if there was some way we could reduce the burden on the community, because they always insist on feeding visitors and we were aware that these villages did not have the resources to give us food. It is normal to give visitors a meal, so Dinnah did not warn them we were coming and there was some frantic scurrying around when we turned up. It all worked out fine and they did provide some sodas for us, which was nice, and honour satisfied all round. Dinnah gave us a meal at her place later.

There were many other visits to people including a vocational training college, a number of students we have supported over the years and a nursery and primary school in Kampala.

Overall it was great to be back there and to reconnect with so many lovely people.