



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Update on the Mustard Seed School, Busota

Wednesday, 2nd March, 2011

Facilities are now well up to standard

In November the school inspector warned that the Mustard Seed School had to improve its basic infrastructure during 2011 if it were to meet the new government standards for secondary schools.

UHST's judgement at the time was that the school has been working hard, in challenging circumstances, to provide a good basic level of education to its students. Consequently, we had no hesitation in making the upgrading of facilities at the Mustard Seed School our immediate priority. During our visit to the school in November to have discussions with Moses Kanya, the School Director, we identified what needed to be done. The Rationalist Association provided substantial extra funds and, with additional money raised from our own supporters, we have now addressed the main shortcomings.

Since November, the RA and UHST have helped the school to:

- purchase the remaining plot of land and buildings (jointly with IHEU) that were being rented by the school. This secures the school's future and relieves it of future rental costs.
- complete a 60 metre deep borehole and install a lift pump to provide on-site water;
- purchase a piece of land that will be developed into a playing field for sports;
- complete building work, paint and furnish the new science laboratory and additional classroom;
- refurbish buildings on the previously rented land to provide offices for senior staff and a staff room for teachers;
- refurbish the old administration rooms to create a room for computers and install an 8-client network packed with educational software (funded by the Pink Triangle Trust);

- purchase textbooks in all subjects for students in Senior 2 (only the Senior 3 class now remains without individual copies of textbooks);
- employ four new graduate teachers, including a new headteacher.

After the injection of resources and the concerted efforts of school staff the Mustard Seed School now meets the required standards. Consequently, the school has been added to the list of officially recognised schools and the threat of closure has been averted.

Letter and pictures from Moses Kamya

"It has taken some time to reply due to a busy schedule at the beginning of term. The start of term was delayed as families kept their children at home until after the Presidential elections – just in case there was violence, which did not happen.



We are coping with the recall of the bank loan for the science lab. As you know my uncle's land was used to guarantee the loan and the bank took possession. Our family have put a deposit down on a new piece of land for my uncle, who has just retired. So that is how we are moving on the land to ensure that by the close of this year, the land is recovered. It is challenging to keep up with the monthly repayments – we only have a year to pay, which will be difficult!

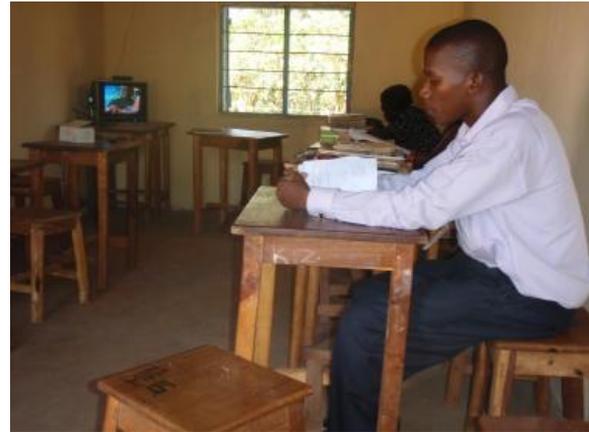
The science lab is nearly complete, remaining only with painting in front. I have sent pictures of the lab both inside and outside including the layout of furniture. I will be sending pics of students in a science practical soon. Without doubt, the science lab and the science equipment you have provided is of tremendous importance. The equipment improved the performance in science O-level examinations. It needs just a little more equipment to make it a fully functional general science lab.

About the water pump, no longer do our students need to make long queues on



neighbouring boreholes for water. Lessons are held on time since water for meals is available at all times. Parents in a recent meeting held at the school to show our facilities (see pic), expressed a willingness to give us boarding students since water is available at the school. The community is very happy since we can give them water in the evening. This has helped to make the school part of the community.

The new administration block has improved the school's organisation capacity. The headmaster now has a separate office, from the secretary, director of studies and the bursar. The staff room enables teachers to plan lessons comfortably. We put a television inside for them to access news, information and for entertainment outside school hours. Both teachers and parents are pleased with this development.



The computer lab is such a wonderful development at this moment in time. Teachers were the first to be taught how to use them.



The educational software on the network gives us access to a wealth of knowledge, lesson plans, schemes of work, etc. The little that the children have learnt already makes them appreciate the beauty of IT.

This is helping us to improve recruitment; senior one now has 13 students and more are coming. Old students dropped a bit but new ones are enrolling. By last Friday, we had 67 but more are expected to return now that the elections are over. Parents have really appreciated the computer development and requested in our last meeting to allow community members to access these computers out of school time and in the holidays. I told them that we would look at it administratively and give them feedback.

As earlier mentioned, the school is now registered with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). Uganda National Examination Board (UNEb) officials paid us a visit as a follow up on our application to become a UNEb examination centre last Thursday. I explained that we have plans to have an additional four classroom block, which is a requirement, but that we could not ascertain when the project would commence. Their last word is that in case the project does not begin by 30th April, then we will be considered next year.

We have made some changes in staff in order to improve our effectiveness. There is a new headmaster, Timothy Mugabi BA EDUC (voc studies) from Kyambogo University, a new director of studies, Godfrey Gitta BA EDUC from Makerere University. There is a new lady teacher for English and Literature from Kyambogo University, and two other graduates from Kyambogo University, one for Maths and Commerce and another for Entrepreneurship and Geography. We have a



new secretary, who is computer literate, and a bursar.

Results for senior four were released on Monday, our students performed very well with two first grades, eight second grades and twelve third grades. No failures. These good grades have been achieved due to the new textbooks and science lab equipment. Science subjects were done well and English; thanks to the help we have received from UHST.

In another development, our students who performed well in the UCE exams are requesting that we set up A' level this year. Teachers are available, so we are considering this request. Generally, the perception of people about our school is becoming positive because of the improved facilities. Please thank the supporters of UHST and of the RA who have made this possible."

Drought has affected recruitment in 2011

Large parts of East Africa, including the north and east of Uganda where the Mustard Seed School is located, have been affected by a serious drought over the past two years. Yields of maize, the main staple crop, are at all-time lows and income from cash crops has been seriously affected. The consequence for the school is that many local people cannot afford to pay even the very low fees charges by the school. As a result, enrolment has fallen by almost 50%. Only 113 students had returned by March 2010 (the school year begins in February):

	Boys	Girls
Senior 1	06	09
Senior 2	09	19
Senior 3	21	10
Senior 4	13	15
Senior 5	08	03



Orphaned boy studying on a UHST scholarship who stays with his uncle, aunt and younger cousins.

Moses is expecting a rise in first year numbers during the second term, when the first of this year's crops have been harvested.

UHST is considering whether we can guarantee to raise sufficient money to allow the schools to provide free tuition during the first year for all students. This should bring a full cohort of students into the school. The brightest could be offered scholarships – as many as we are able to raise from our supporters, and the rest of families might be more inclined to pay once their children have experienced a year in the school.

Current and Future Priorities

The school's next requirements include:

- the construction of an additional four classroom block;
- hiring a bulldozer to grade the newly acquired sports field;
- completion of the existing hall to make it usable for national examinations;
- purchase of additional laboratory equipment and chemicals;
- purchase of textbooks for Senior 3 year students;
- construction of a dormitory for girl students (with a boys dorm to follow);
- fencing the entire school compound.

If you feel that either on a personal or a group basis you would like to contribute to meeting any of these needs then please contact us at uhstinfo@gmail.com or download a supporter form from our website: www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org.

Steve Hurd
Chief Executive, UHST

2 March 2011