



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

The Economic Impact on its Surroundings of Isaac Newton High School, Katera November 2013

The Local Economy

Isaac Newton High School is in a rural setting. It is surrounded by small farms which are largely subsistence in nature. Few farmers have a regular source of cash income. Coffee is the cash crop but it yields much less income than in the past. Some farmers earn a little money from ginger and vanilla, but otherwise they rely on selling surplus food that they grow, including small livestock such as chickens or pigs. A few people earn cash by labouring for others, digging the soil or carrying water from the nearest stream or well. A small number weave mats and baskets and some sell produce from small market stalls.



In such an economy it is quite a challenge for families to raise money to pay school fees for their children. In addition to school fees they often need to find money for school uniforms, meals and examination fees. Some families engage in the cash economy with the specific target of raising money for school fees. Once

they have the required money they then concentrate on growing food the family needs for itself.

Some families have older children who have found jobs that pay a regular income. These jobs range from labouring, to small-scale trades, riding motor bike taxis (called boda-boda) and a few who gain regular jobs in the formal sector of the economy working in shops, offices and small workshops and factories. Still others gain professional jobs. Invariably when family members have income earning jobs away from home they send regular remittances back to their families.

Virtually the only formal sector jobs in the area around the school are in government services e.g. midwives and other health workers. Most opportunities for work that earns a regular income are outside the area in main towns and cities such as Masaka and Kampala, the capital.

The School as an Enterprise

Isaac Newton High School is already the largest formal sector employer in the area. The school employs 27 teachers – 12 full time and the rest part time. In addition there is a site manager, a bursar, two cooks, a night guard and a day guard. Other local people are employed on a casual basis to do small, specific jobs around the site.

The annual salary bill of the school is of the order of £12,500. Most of this money is spent within the area around the school and in local

trading centres, including Masaka town.

The school has created a substantial additional market for local produce. Four women hawkers come on to the school premises each day to sell items to staff and students, such as fruit, ice cream, stationery and air-time cards for mobile phones. The school has created a market for tree fruit such as Jack Fruit, mangoes and avocados that was previously being left to fall to the ground and rot.

The school spends almost £5000 a year on carbohydrate foods (maize and cassava flour, matoke bananas, sweet potatoes and occasionally rice), beans, vegetables and, on special occasions, meat from local farmers for school meals for students and staff. Firewood for the cooking stoves is also bought locally.



As the school has developed, new buildings have been erected on the site. These create a demand for local labour to make bricks and to work as building labourers. Building materials are also bought locally. There has been a steady demand of £10,000 to £30,000 a year for bricks, sand and cement, constructional timber, roofing sheets, metal window frames and doors, water storage tanks and pipes, glazing, plastering and painting.

The school has also added to the demand for local services. There is more work for boda-boda taxis to bring teachers and workmen to and from the school and the numbers of bikes and riders has increased. A hairdresser comes to the school every Saturday to keep the students' hair at the regulation length. Many teachers take advantage of this service too.

The school also spends money with local printers for publicity leaflets and question papers for mock examinations. It buys uniforms and badges from local tailors and dressmakers.

With over 30 staff and 345 students the demands on local medical services have increased. In response, the local health department has opened additional small health centres in two nearby villages. These, in turn, have created more jobs and raised the standard of medical care available locally.

As well as using local services, school staff demand housing in the area. A number of enterprising local families have responded by constructing buildings to rent to teachers at the school.

The general rise in economic activity in the area has led to a doubling of land prices in the area around the school.

Taking all of these things together, Isaac Newton School is helping to raise the prosperity of the entire area around the school and, in turn, increasing the capacity of local families to pay school fees.

A similar investigation of the effect of the Isaac Newton Mbute Campus on surrounding villages and the Mustard Seed School on the local town of Busota would reveal similar effects. So, while economic regeneration was not the aim in setting up the Humanist Schools, it has certainly been a result.

If you feel you or your group would like to contribute to helping the development of the Humanist Schools in Uganda then please contact stevehurd@uhst.org (+44 (0) 1782 750338).

Donation and standing order forms can be found at:

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