



# One Trip One Thousand Memories



Derek asked me to write a few paragraphs about my recent trip to Uganda. I am not sure I can do justice in a few paragraphs to the amazing experience which was my first trip, but I will try.

Through my work I met Derek a couple of years ago. He mentioned Capstone and the great work that was being done through a dedicated group of people and a relatively small amount of money. I indicated an interest in doing something to help and Derek invited me to join the trip going out in February 2011. I wanted to go but hesitated as I was not sure what value I could bring - I am not a teacher, nor a doctor, nor a tradesman who could build something - I'm a business adviser. Derek explained that the most recent initiative, micro finance scheme set up to help women who wanted to establish or grow their businesses, had been created the previous year through a generous donation from a Dundee entrepreneur, Chris Lundie. I met with Chris, we talked about ways in which I might be able to help and he convinced me that there was lots of work for both of us to do in the Women's Development Project. Many of the women were keen to get some formal training to help them with their businesses and with both of us going out we could also give them one to one advice, so I decided I would go. I was part of a small team with three others: Derek, Chris and Andrew, none of whom I really knew but that was going to change!

We left Dundee at 2am and the journey was the start of some great team bonding. I recall Andrew being relieved of his suncream at the security gate in Edinburgh Airport and his joy at finding a Boots store open in the departure lounge. He bought another bottle, only to be relieved of it this time at the security gate in Amsterdam. It was very funny at the time; three of us thought so anyway. We touched down at Entebbe about 9pm. I could not believe the welcome that awaited us there. Firstly there was Joyce, an old friend of Capstone I was told, who ensured our suitcase and the crates (containing allsorts from medical

equipment to football shirts to coloured pencils) made it safely through customs. Then, a large group of people with huge smiles on their faces waited to greet us with hugs and handshakes. I was introduced to Pastors Sam and Tom, Annette and others. They all knew my name and greeted me as if they had known me for many years. Their affection touched me.

Then my first ride in an old Toyota mini bus. It was an amazing journey from Entebbe through Kampala to Lugazi. The lively sights and sounds - music, cars, people, the smell of food blending with the smell of diesel from the trucks on the road, the heat of the evening made warmer inside the bus as we were all squashed together, the chat of friends catching up on the news about family. My excitement meant I had arrived and I could tell I had an amazing 10 days ahead of me. We stopped by at the roadside to buy fresh pineapples to take home; they were Andrew's favourite and we were not going to run short. An equally warm welcome greeted us when we arrived at Sam's house. I was confused by so many people and apologised as I knew I would not remember everyone's name. Everyone was very happy to be there and to renew long established friendships. We had a wonderful supper and when my head hit my pillow sometime after midnight I knew I would not be able to sleep - I was far too excited!



Lugazi, Uganda

“Then a large group of people with huge smiles on their faces waited to greet us with hugs and handshakes...

They all knew my name and greeted me as if they had known me for years.”

## FEATURE REPORT

Derek had ensured there was a full programme of both work and pleasure - although the work was also a great pleasure. The next seven days were just to fly past: an update from Annette on the project and some of the women who were doing particularly well, a trip to Kampala (an experience for sure as the general election was about to be held and there were people everywhere, rallies in the streets, vehicles parading those hoping to be elected, flags, loud horns), a wonderful wedding (an all day event of celebration, so much colour, the women in traditional dresses looked amazing, as did the bride and groom) my first visit to the Children's Centre (again so many happy beautiful smiling faces) during which Chris and I were fortunate enough to be able to stay for the afternoon talking to some of the older children.

And then to work on Monday morning! Chris and I were in the Church at 8am ready to deliver the training. We had been advised that Ugandan timekeeping would be different to what we were used to so we were pleasantly surprised that some of the women were also there at 8. On each of the 3 days we had about 40 women in the class all keen to learn how they could improve their businesses and on the final day a sprinkling of men too! Late mornings and afternoons were when Chris and I went to visit the women at their businesses. Annette had done a fantastic job on the logistics and I think between us we saw 48 of the 52 women who had received a loan. Generally the women were very open in their discussion with us. There was a varying level of ambition amongst

the women and we were able to spend extra time with those that wanted it. Some of the women invited us into their homes and talked to us about their families and their challenges. It was often very emotional but also inspiring. I was amazed to witness no self pity but instead gratitude for what people did have and a sense of a better future to come, especially for their children.

I visited the Living Water Health Centre, the local government hospital, a nearby secondary school (50 pupils in a classroom all studying diligently) and the Skills Centre as well as Directors of Capstone Uganda in their homes in Lugazi where we were all made to feel very welcome. I had never imagined the trip would be so interesting and I felt very privileged to be welcomed by this community in the way that I was.

There were so many highlights but probably the best day was when we went on a trip to the Source of the Nile and the Bujagali Falls with the 50 or so children from the Centre. Again making full use of every square inch of the seating in the bus, we shared sweets and chatted throughout the journey. The smiling faces and laughter when the children ran around on the grass kicking footballs was great to see.

We had been in Lugazi for a week and it was time to say goodbye as the team, with Sam and Tom were heading off to the Millennium Gardens for the last two days of the trip. I had met some wonderful ladies who were working hard to grow their businesses

and make a better life for their families. Some left a big impression on me: Florence, a teacher with a young family, running a small store, Marjory, a very able leader in the group running a tailoring business, Margaret, a shy and very caring individual who hand-knits school jumpers, and Christine, a wonderful woman, juggling her tailoring business with her boda boda rental business and her family and Church commitments. Not to mention Annette, who keeps the whole initiative going using her wide range of skills and approaches.

Finally, I have to mention Sam and his wonderful family who looked after us so well during that week, making us delicious meals, entertaining us with songs, and just chatting with us and making us feel part of the family. I have to say I felt a special bond with one of the youngest family members, Nathan. I often think about the two of us sitting in the evening playing cards, he not speaking any English but facial expressions saying everything that was needed. I will never forget the kindness and warmth the community of Lugazi extended to me; I hope I am able to go back sometime soon to visit my new friends.

And finally, finally, I have to mention and sincerely thank my 3 amigos, Derek, Andrew and Chris who shared one of the best adventures I have ever had. I love you guys!

Joyce Matthew



*with the children from the Capstone Children's Centre*



*with the local Boat Driver*