



## **Report from Ugandan trip September-October 2016**

### **By Rachel Muter**

It is difficult to condense the experience of three weeks in Uganda working within the Masese slum, into a report and to be able to capture the challenges, joy and life altering events it brings. This is my fifth year of being in Uganda and ninth trip, the fourth taken on my own.

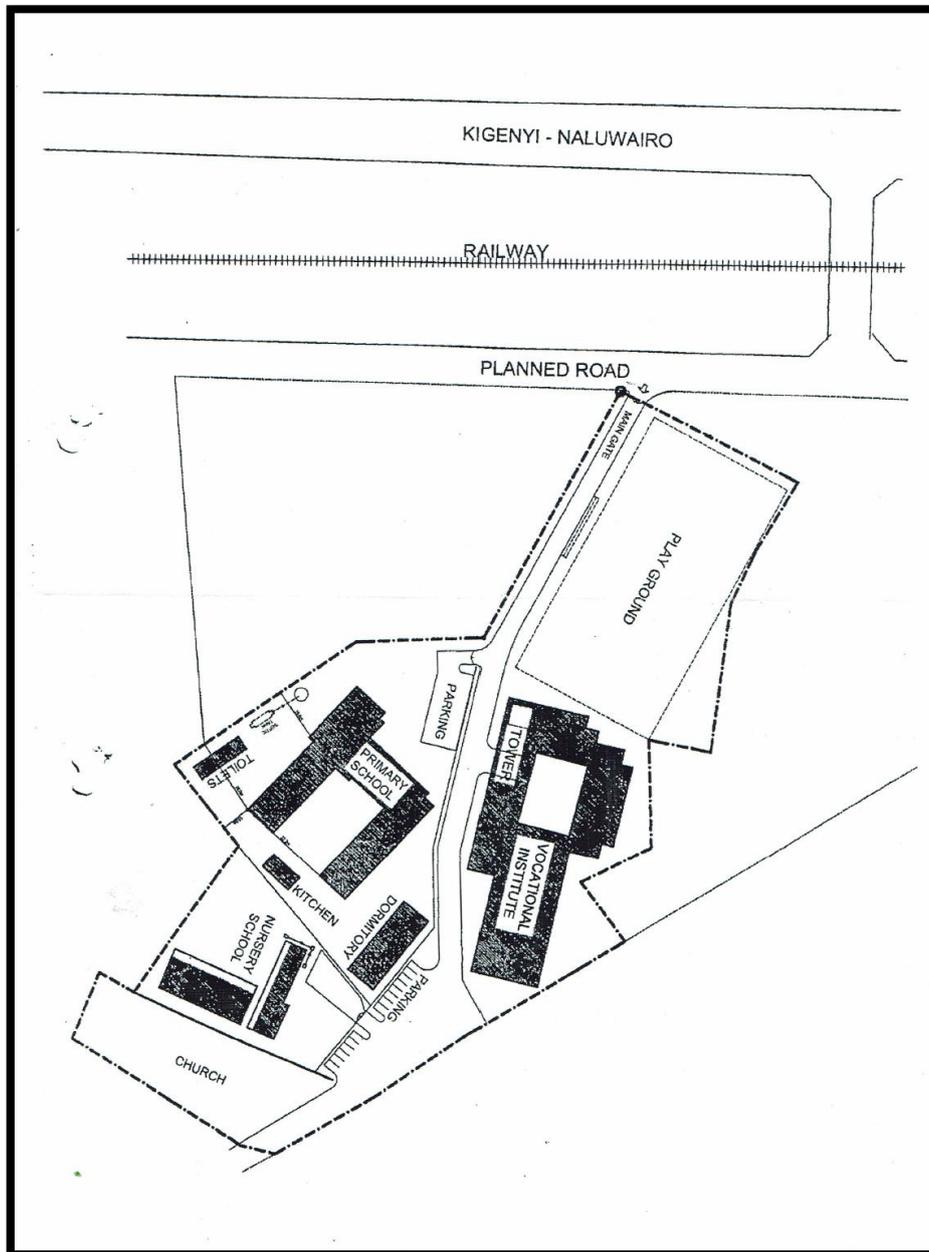
The general purpose of going out in the autumn term is to 'touch base' with Macedonian Vision Africa (MVA), and find out where they are up to and how things are developing. The specifics around this trip were to interview for the role of programme manager which is a new role funded through the Maurice and Hilda Laing family trust, photograph and exchange letters with the children who are sponsored through MVA (UK), and teach some drama skills to girls who can then use them to teach sexual and social health. On a personal level, I also wanted to take the opportunity to interview some women about their faith and if it influences at all how they earn a living in Uganda. This is research which forms part of my Masters in Religious Studies and Global Development.

### **Macedonian Vocational Institute**



OGEMA Charles (Motor Vehicle Mechanics), NABWIRE Annet Anjera (Tailoring) and ASIO Ruth Lydia (Cosmetology and hairdressing)

Macedonian Vision Africa is a Ugandan led Christian NGO (Non-governmental organisation) which has seen significant development and growth this year. Since 2005 when it was founded MVA has been renting a building in Danida, Masese, but 2016 saw them move in to their own premises on their own land in Masese. Until more funding is secured, what will eventually be a primary school is at present Macedonian Vocational Institute (MVI).



MVI offers tailoring, cosmetology (hair and beauty to you and me) and motor vehicle mechanics. They are a registered vocational school which offers qualifications to DIT level (Directorate of Industrial training) and an application to offer UBTEB level (Uganda business technical examination board) is being processed.

The official registration brings with it many requirements and restrictions e.g. the necessity to only employ qualified and certificated staff (see photograph on page 1) and recreational facilities (see below). This has resulted in a turnover of staff and the creation of a football field. (Additional funding from the Laing Family Trusts)



Football field being levelled

The vision to transform the lives of people living in the Masese slum brings its challenges, not the least of these is the balance between providing 'free' places to orphans and child headed households at MVI, and generating much needed income by bringing in fee paying students from outside of Masese. The tension to keep the vision coupled with the pragmatism around income generation is a very real one, which is still being worked out at a trustee level.

The intention is by 2017 MVI will expand to offer computers and bricklaying.

### **Macedonian Child Outreach Project**

Another new appointment in 2016 was OBUYA Julius into the role of Macedonian Child Outreach Project Co-ordinator (MCOP). His salary is funded through a percentage of the child sponsorship scheme and fundraising MVA (UK) does throughout the year. Although this is his first paid full time role, he has previously been volunteering for a Compassion sponsorship programme in Jinja which was great preparation for the co-ordinator role.

I was really impressed with how he was making his mark on the role and the project in general, since his appointment in July. He was keen for the two of us to make family and school visits.



Musubika Hajira, her mum and Obuya Julius paying a home visit



Ezekiel, David, Ronald, Suudi and Sepiriyano at St Peter's High School

I found the home and school visits enlightening and increased my understanding of the lives the children in the project lead. The school day is a long day for some, where the children begin by doing home chores followed not only by study but a long walk to and from school.

We have 71 children sponsored on the programme at the moment. This secures school fees for the year, pays for Julius' salary, and gives an opportunity for sponsors to build a relationship with the sponsored child. We would like to see this grow, so if you do know of anyone who would consider sponsorship please pass on my contact details.

(<http://macedonianvisionafrica.org/child-sponsorship/> and [masesejinja@gmail.com](mailto:masesejinja@gmail.com)) We are looking for long term sponsors as this brings greater stability for the child, and inevitably the project.

### **Programme Manager role**

Although I was on the interview panel for the programme manager role, I was leaving Uganda before an appointment was made. We had two strong candidates out of the three we interviewed. The preferred candidate is on maternity leave at present so conversations were necessary between her and her husband as there would be a significant drop in pay compared to her present employment. Recruitment in Uganda follows different rules than in the UK, and salary is not necessarily posted with the job advert. I look forward to informing you of the outcome of those conversations.

### **Senga, Bernard and the Night Watchman**

One thing I was shocked to learn was that three employees (Senga, Bernard and the Night Watchman) of the project earn below a dollar a day. (Below \$1.25 is regarded as the baseline measure of extreme poverty by the World Bank) Senga means 'auntie'; she works from 7 in the morning to 7.30/8 at night, feeds, cooks for and is there for the children every day. She has worked for MVA since it began in 2005. Bernard is chaplain and Macedonian Vision Africa community church pastor and guess what the night watchman does?!



OUMA Bernard Wanjala



ABIYA 'Senga' Betty

They earn approximately 80p a day which is just below a dollar a day. At present the project does not have the funds to increase their wages. To double their income to £1.60 a day would only cost £292 a year per employee. If you would like to make a donation to their wages, please contact me. We (MVA UK) will be thinking about how we can fundraise to support them over the coming months.

### **In Conclusion**

It was a significant trip for me. Through my interviews with the women in Masese, and the time spent with the children, I feel the depth of understanding I have of the Masese community and the complex nature of living in poverty has hugely increased. I am convinced more than ever that Macedonian Vision Africa's holistic approach to transforming the lives of the Masese community is the right one. It is not perfect, and finances are not secure, but Macedonian Vision Africa brings peace, calm and stability to many whose everyday lives are far removed from that. It is a place of trust.

I thank you for your interest, prayers and support. They are greatly needed and greatly appreciated.

'...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us'.

Romans 8 v 37 (NIV)