

## Macedonian Vision Africa UK Uganda visit October 2019

‘...go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin.’ Mat 17:27

Nigel Harris and Rachel Muter, from Macedonian Vision Africa UK (MVA UK), visited Macedonian Vision Africa (MVA), an NGO based in the Masese slum, Jinja, Uganda in October 2019. Although both Nigel and Rachel have made trips individually to see and support the ongoing work of MVA this joint trip was the first since 2013.



**MVA Trustees (L to R)  
Egesa Stephen, Kim Agnes,  
Pastor Adundo Alfred, Kakuze Tabitha.**

Since MVA UK was established in 2014, annual income has regularly exceeded £5000, so the natural trajectory for MVA UK was to pursue charitable status for the UK organisation. However, after the AGM earlier in the year, the overall feeling was that of concern; concern about a lack of communication between MVA UK and MVA and potentially a lack of clarity of vision or at least, aligned vision for both organisations. Our concerns were only exacerbated when the programme manager resigned in July.

After prayerful consideration, MVA UK decided to write formally to MVA expressing our concerns. The risk in doing this was a potential acceleration of a breakdown in relationship, but the Ugandan team responded with grace and favour. MVA acknowledged that communication needed to improve and, on their suggestion, they were willing to formalise our relationship in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) witnessed by a solicitor.

MVA UK agreed to the proposal for an MOU and a trustees' meeting to discuss and agree upon its content was scheduled for early on in the visit. The MOU is a big step forward in our ongoing partnership, renewing and clarifying expectations between both parties. The MVA and MVA UK trustees' meeting lasted a whopping 4.5 hours, but was worth it. Along with this renewal and formalising of relationships came two decisions: a decision by Pastor Alfred to

step down from his role as Pastor at Nile Baptist Church at the end of December, and work for 4 days a week as Director for MVA, and for MVA UK to register with the Charity Commission in 2020. Both decisions are steps of faith with risks and costs attached. For Pastor Alfred there is insecurity of income and for MVA UK the registration with the Charity Commission will require a lot of work. However, the vision that Pastor Alfred will bring to the role will drive the project forward, and the registration will not only enable us to apply for Gift Aid but also for grants that require charitable status.

Another significant part of the trip was the appointment of a new Child Coordinator for the Macedonian Children's Outreach Programme (MCOP). MCOP supports children financially and pastorally to go to their local school. There were 147 children in the programme a couple of years ago, but with children graduating from school and moving on to tertiary education, and some dropping out due to a variety of reasons, the programme now has 116 children. 70 of those children are sponsored through the sponsorship scheme that MVA UK runs. The MCOP coordinator role is crucial for the sponsorship scheme as well as providing support for the child.



**Ndyamuhaki Sylvest**  
**The new MCOP coordinator**

Nigel, Rachel and Pastor Alfred interviewed three candidates and were very happy to appoint Ndyamuhaki Sylvest to the role. As a recent graduate of Social Studies, Sylvest had been volunteering both in an AIDS organisation and a street child organisation within Jinja. To support himself whilst volunteering, he had been waking up at 5 in the morning to make chapatis to sell. His commitment and enthusiasm to make a difference to the lives of young people shone out.

As well as MCOP, MVA also has a vocational institute (MVI), a sexual health group (MAYI) and microfinance groups (MMF). MVI is a fledgling institute, newly registered with the government, and requires investment in infrastructure and materials as well as ongoing costs for staffing and registration. There are four subjects on offer: cosmetology and hairdressing,

tailoring, motor vehicle mechanics (MVT) and bricklaying. All students are also required to gain a certain level in entrepreneurship and computing.

Although there has been some progress with the institute since our last visit, it wasn't fulfilling certain legal requirements: it needs a moving vehicle and a septic toilet, as the drop latrine was almost full and no longer fit for purpose.

With money from a donation, they were able to hire a moving vehicle for the exam period.



This is a temporary solution, and although not ideal, is manageable for the time being. The septic toilet, however, needs to be built as soon as possible. It costs about £5000 to build, and will be one of the fundraising objectives that MVA UK will be addressing.

MAYI is led by Nabwire Christine and the group teaches young women and girls to

make reusable sanitary pads as well as teaching them about sexual health. Although it is an area which has had a lot of publicity in recent years, MAYI has been running on money from a few donations and relatively small fundraising events. This is partly due to limited vision and scope from Christine.

Nigel felt it was important to arrange a meeting with Harris from Amplify Change, a woman from an organisation based in Mukono district which does similar work. Harris, Christine, Mercy (a colleague of Christine's) and Nigel met to discuss the work of Amplify Change. Amplify Change has a lot of funding and Harris talked about the possibilities open to MAYI if it was more organised and systematic in its approach to the work. It was a really positive meeting which inspired Christine to be less individual in her attitude and gather a team around her; to look at her strengths and weaknesses and work with people who complemented them. She could see there were opportunities for funding and expansion of the work of MAYI which excited her.



**Demonstration of shape cutting**

Since our return Christine has recruited a team and also held a reusable sanitary towel workshop. This was funded with money from fundraising and donations back in the UK, and held in a school for the deaf in Jinja. MVA UK are pursuing grant funding possibilities for the work of MAYI, and look forward to hearing of the development of the project.

What became clear during the trip was the trust and depth of relationship between MVA UK and MVA. This was apparent, not only in the relationship between the trustees, but also the relationship and trust that had been built with the children in the programme. One of the great things about the work is the fact the children join the programme when in kindergarten and remain in it until tertiary education. In visiting the children each year, they learn to trust you and believe that you are doing your best for them. It is a tremendous privilege to be part of something that is long term and holistic in approach.



So why the quote at the beginning of the report? Although God can and does perform miracles, He also asks us to go and fish, to take the step of faith and seek Him and do the work He has called us to do. MVA UK and MVA have taken that step together in faith, and are looking forward to what the future holds.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the project, want to fundraise or sponsor a child, please email Rachel on [masesejinja@gmail.com](mailto:masesejinja@gmail.com).