

DOLEN FFERMIO Annual Report March 2023- end February 2024

This has been a year of great activity on our Ugandan link projects, old and new. As the first year completely free of Covid restrictions, there has been a lot of enthusiasm to try and make up for lost time. Our Ugandan colleagues, all volunteers, must be congratulated on their amazing efforts in difficult circumstances, including the increased heat of climate change affecting all work, and especially agriculture.

We still have not returned to having exchange visits between colleagues in Wales and Uganda, except for Chairperson Lorna Brown's month-long visit starting in October 2023. Nor have the in-person meeting and conferences with international themes and delegates in Wales resumed, but we hope that with the strengthening project links between Welsh and Ugandan schools and colleges we can return to these events. We have still maintained a good profile in Montgomeryshire, with a presence at many local events, and conferences and discussions organised by Hub Cymru Africa. We were encouraged by a commendation from the High Sheriff of Powys 'for great and valuable services to the community'.

Link projects Wales-Uganda

NGORA DISTRICT

Ngora Vocational Training Institute.

The development of the Institute development took a great leap forward in the implementation of last year's Wales and Africa grant to provide mains electricity and clean water to the site, essential steps before training could begin. Our colleague and site manager Moses Ekoi is to be congratulated on achieving these utilities, made extra complex by the need to feed and accommodate many workers. Installation of the 3-phase transformer was completed in July. The borehole digging was beset with difficulties, a common occurrence worldwide. The first dig found water at 75metres, but had to be abandoned as a broken cleaning pipe could not be retrieved. The second one was successful, but experienced a blockage before the pump was in place. All is now resolved and ample clean drinking water is flowing, but it caused months of delay and some extra expenses for the project. WCVA, the monitoring body agreed to a time extension of 3 months to completion. The local community is already benefitting by collecting clean water from the borehole.

200 students have applied to be the first cohort of students, in catering, building and agriculture. All is set for short courses to start at the beginning of `March, starting with 50 catering students being trained in the making of fuel-efficient cooking stoves. Large tents will be used for teaching purposes, until funding is found for classroom blocks and workshops.

A building to support the 2 reservoir water tanks, has been extended using Dolen Ffermio and FARLU funds to house a storeroom for valuable equipment and provide office space on the ground floor. The upper floor will be a room for staff, or student tutorials, it can accommodate 35 people.

The 2000 tree woodland, planted 18 months ago is already 20 metres high. A seedbed has been established to be used to make a mother garden for cloning a new species of eucalyptus excellent for Uganda. Work is under way to construct fishponds on the Institute land.

The Christmas Campaign raised £3200 which will be used to fund training activities at the Institute involving new bucks for crossbreeding to produce meat and milk, sewing machines and accessories for tailoring, fruit trees to plant and prune, fuel efficient stove production, and sports equipment for recreation, vital for students' physical and mental health.

Goat and sheep breeding unit.

The herd has remained healthy after the suspected clostridial outbreak last year. Vaccination has continued.

The main innovation has been the sowing of *Brachiaria* spp, drought resistant grass, sequentially in paddocks at the unit. This is being very successful.

The old buildings are in need of repair. Once this done, new bucks and rams can be introduced. Finding a source of good crossing sires has always been a difficulty, but now, for meat production we have found a good new source of Boer, Savannah and Kalahari bucks, from Akasi farm in Buyende district, and Galla bucks from Mpiritigi training Centre, Kamuli. Toggenberg dairy bucks can be sourced from Mount Elgon foothills, and goat dairying expert, Micheal Mukhonde has promised to help in setting up a dairy goat unit, with training, at the Institute.

The TECCO construction and Solar social enterprise company is continuing its recovery from time of Covid. Recent solar installations include a 600Kw array to power the laboratory of a farmers' co-operative factory producing organic sunflower oil, with 3000 out-growers.

KAMULI DISTRICT

Nakyaka demonstration farm

A lot of cocoa seedlings are being planted, the good market price reacting to the world shortage. It is planted alongside banana plants, also expanding. Bamboo species are growing well and will soon be ready for harvesting canes for many uses, to replace timber and reduce de-forestation. A new government bamboo production site has been established in Mbale and is a good source of information.

A wellcome development at the farm, is co-operation with the local fishing and farming communities, especially the youth, who can now access land to plant their vegetables in return for work on the land. Our hope of establishing a borehole to benefit the community and our own farm with clean water has had to be put on hold for lack of funding.

Difficulty is being experienced in finding a suitable manager for the farm to replace Haruna who is retiring. We had hoped to arrange a partnership with an agricultural college, but this has not materialised. However our supervisor Paul Musenero is exploring many different avenues.

Permaculture

Kamuli Schools permaculture outreach project. We supported permaculture training in 9 schools in Kamuli district, 5 primary and 4 secondary. Under direction of our colleague, Charles Mugarura, and his BEU permaculture organisation, and field trainer Laurence Mutabuza, this has been an extremely successful 12-week pilot project. Pupils are very interested in planting school gardens and learning to transfer knowledge to their home farms and they have formed school permaculture clubs, one has 192 volunteer members! The project is now being expanded to 16 schools with new trainers joining in. We are continuing to assist with some finance.

Charles Mugarura is encouraging the schools to grow not only food crops, but also higher value export crops, vanilla beans and pineapple for drying, and coffee which BEU will provide a market for. This will be a significant help for school funds and to help fund further permaculture training.

Montgomeryshire and Kamuli District schools link project.

The Community Foundation Wales (CFW) generously gave funding last year which is supporting an educational link project, between Ysgol Llanfyllin, led by teacher Jon Doolan (English stream) and Bethan and Eleri Jones (Welsh stream) and 3 schools in Uganda, Busoga High School, Kamuli Boys

Boarding primary and Nabirumba Primary School led by our colleague Connie Kauma, over 2 years. The first collaboration was with traditional story telling, the pupils exchanged videos, puppet shows and excellent artwork to illustrate the stories. Arts Connection Llanfyllin has assisted.

The teachers report that the pupils in both countries have been very excited and engaged by the link. The second phase of the project will start next April and include gardening, permaculture and climate change issues.

Awareness raising.

There has been a revival in interest in Dolen Ffermio in schools, locally in Llanfyllin through the CFW link project and by The Marches School in Oswestry who nominated us as their annual charity.

We presented a talk on the Ngora Solar Power social enterprise to the Climate change workshop at the Hub Cymru Africa Global Summit in May. We continue to participate in their webinars on international topics.

We continue to write feature articles in our community newspaper and distribute newsletters about our activities. We contribute to social media and maintain our web-site, but lack funding to improve its capabilities. A new information leaflet was produced in Welsh and English versions to explain our aims and activities, and a similar banner for use at events. These have been well received.

Fundraising.

We have not applied for grants this year, while involved in completing the Wales and Africa grant at the Institute. The Christmas Catalogue campaign, the Grand Draw and the annual May-June plant sale have been our main sources of local funds. Stalls at local events and shows, raise some funds and attract donations.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Dolen Llanbrynmair in raising funds for the Institute.