

DOLEN FFERMIO ANNUAL REPORT 1 March 2021 to 28 February 2022

INTRODUCTION

For the past two years our activities have been overshadowed by the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. In Wales our group interactions have been mainly restricted to 'zoom' meetings and there could be virtually no interactions with the local community and wider public except through some publications and social media. In Uganda, the strict meeting and movement regulations eased gradually, but schools did not fully re-open until January 2022. Our Ugandan colleagues kept the projects going remarkably well, our grateful thanks to them, but we recognise the pandemic has taken a toll on everyone. Compared to the huge death toll in UK, Uganda has managed much better, reports to WHO show only 3595 deaths to Covid and 163,751 cases to end of March 2022.

Vaccine availability was lacking and official records suggest only 31% of Ugandans have had their first dose. Obviously there will be great disparities throughout the country and our project areas seem fortunate in that our colleagues say that frontline medical staff, teachers etc and secondary school and college students are fully vaccinated.

We in Wales are sad not to have been able to visit Uganda for two years on account of Covid 19 and we greatly miss meeting up with our colleagues there and seeing the projects first hand. However, we have excellent routes of communication and are, again, very impressed with how active our colleagues have been in furthering the projects, in spite of the continuing difficulties of Covid and the ever increasing effects of climate change.

NGORA DISTRICT

Goat and sheep breeding unit

Manager Moses Ekoi reports that the health of the stock has been generally good, except for limited outbreaks of kerato-conjunctivitis and anaplasmosis, which have now been resolved and preventive measures are in place. Fenced paddocks have been made to grow supplementary food crops and housing improvement is underway. Since we located a good source of larger meat goat breeds and following the relaxation of Covid travel restrictions, Moses was able to go to Kayunga district to purchase a 75% Savannah buck and 2 females, to introduce a new element to our predominately Mubende Elite herd.

The Permaculture demonstration site is developing well, with the recent addition of pineapples to the other food crops and trees.

TECCO social enterprise company

The solar installation and retail business is picking up now that Covid restrictions are reduced and young people are being recruited as company agents to promote solar lighting to families in their villages. Construction activities are slow as they are mainly reliant on government contracts which are lacking in the depressed economy. However, the banking section, with its agencies for Stanbic banking and mobile money through the MTN telephone company are doing well and extra staff have been employed.

Ngora Vocational Training Institute

The successful Orphans and Vulnerable Children Project in Ngora came to an end in December 2021 after providing valuable support over 9 years to 260 children enabling them to remain in school, stay healthy and build sustainable futures, The Ngora team, led by Moses Ekoi, are now embarking on an

exciting new venture, the Ngora Vocational Training Institute. This will benefit many more young people and will lead them into gainful employment through education, IT skills and vocational training to required government standards as well as provide facilities to develop all their talents in the arts, music and sport. Ngora District is an area of extreme poverty and very few young people are able to access secondary education or training. Funds were raised for the Institute through the traditional Christmas catalogue and the Big Give Christmas campaign.

As we reported last year, Dolen Ffermio has acquired an excellent site for the Institute on 8 acres of land, with plenty of space for classrooms, a library and workshops, as well as fields for permaculture and agroforestry training, livestock and fish ponds. No funds for the purchase came out of Dolen Ffermio funds. With help from our partner group, Dolen Llanbrynmair, we have completely fenced the land and Moses is working on a business plan so that we can start applying for grants.

KAMULI DISTRICT

Nakyaka demonstration farm

Paul Musenero and the DFEFH team have started a major new livestock venture involving goats, pigs, and bees. This will greatly increase the ability of the farm to interest groups of farmers and students to study there. The goats and pigs are housed in wooden raised, slatted floor pens, hygienic for the animals and allowing collection of manure for use on the crops. Initially the female goats, mainly Mubende Elite breed are being served by the Toggenburg dairy buck, to start the plan for goat milk production in the local community. Bee hives sited in trees on the land now assist pollination for all crops and the orange and coffee orchards. Community farmers are being trained to make hives and harvest honey, a much healthier alternative to sugar in local diets and a very profitable commodity for sale.

Crops

Many crops are doing well in spite of the vagaries of rainfall and excessive heat caused by climate change. Chilli peppers and vanilla have been introduced as valuable cash crops which community farmers can benefit from as out-growers.

Tree and bamboo nursery

This is now a well established asset to the district, and especially school lands, as a source of many varieties of trees. 12 bamboo species are now doing well and will soon be a source of planting material to distribute.

Permaculture training

The first permaculture training course for teachers since Covid restrictions were relaxed was held on the farm in October 2021 for 10 days by our consultant Charles Mugarura and his team of trainers. This is part of a nationwide training programme to equip school teachers to deliver the permaculture part of the Ugandan national curriculum, which Charles was instrumental in achieving. In addition to the teachers, Dolen Ffermio sponsored 6 women farmers from Nakyaka community women's adult co-operative group.

Grant assisted projects

The Community Foundation Wales (CFW) kindly donated funds for 2 projects in Nakyaka:

1. Seed distribution in the Nakyaka farming community. The poor harvest of 2020-21 caused by lack of rain, meant that farmers did not have enough bean seeds to store for the next

planting season. The £1500 CFW grant was used to buy bean seeds for 44 farming households. The distribution was organised by the community's 2 co-operatives, adult and youth. They obtained pledges from the beneficiaries to return 10% of the harvest as a revolving fund for next season's planting.

2. 'Eco-brick' making training is now under way for 30 members of the farming community using another £1500 CFW grant. The bricks are curved and interlocking, ideal for making round structures such as water tanks, sleeping houses, stores etc. Made of sub-soil and a little cement by a hand operated machine, they are much more environmentally friendly to produce than the traditional fired bricks and use minimal mortar.

SCHOOL LINKS

The school links which we have worked hard to establish have been on hold since the start of the pandemic. Schools in Uganda were closed for most of 2021, though some final year exam classes were allowed to reopen on 1 March. All other classes were able to go back from January this year. The government curtailed the holidays and there has been a huge effort to catch children up. Because of the restrictions, there has been no opportunity to develop the school links further in Uganda and very little opportunity in Wales but, as soon as schooling returns to normal in both countries, we are determined to re-start the programme. There are well established links between Llanfyllin and Busoga High Schools, and 6 local primary schools with 6 in Kamuli district.

SAFEGUARDING

A policy document, code of conduct and consent forms were developed in 2021 and it is necessary that we look at how these will be implemented. Currently consideration is being given to the best way for incidents to be reported in Uganda and how we can be confident that procedures are followed. We need to ensure that we align our policy and practice more closely with local policy and procedures. It is recognised that it is not easy to monitor what is happening in Uganda at a time of Covid restrictions nor is it easy for our colleagues in Uganda to find time to address these matters. We are also looking at what needs to be done to conform to safeguarding procedures in Wales once we resume activities with schools.

AWARENESS RAISING

Our activities in this regard were very limited for a second year because of the pandemic. Our usual school activities including a conference, meetings and talks to groups could not happen, and agricultural shows and other events were cancelled. However we published articles in our local community newspaper on issues such as UK food security, Ugandan projects and climate change.

We had a presence and display highlighting COP 26 in November, in Llanfyllin, along with the local group BRACE (Building Resilience against Climate Emergency) in which we are actively involved. Dolen Ffermio is also a partner of the Climate.Cymru initiative. Trustee Cordelia Weedon mounted an exhibition at Llanfyllin High School using the work of Ugandan students on the topic of food to mark Black History Month. Our new trustees Kadun Rees and Len Fritsch are active in awareness raising through our social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising has been a huge challenge during the pandemic and we are even more grateful to the people who support us regularly through standing orders, as well as the many donations from individuals. As always, gift aid boosted our funds considerably. Thanks to Mark Prust of the Llanfyllin SPAR, Lorna Brown was able to hold her annual plant sale on the SPAR forecourt for the whole of May. Thanks to her efforts and with contributions from loyal supporters, it did extremely well to raise £2400. Three sponsorship runs by trustee Kadun Rees, member Alasdair Purkis and

supporter Geoff Carr raised the excellent sum of £1517. Trustee Emyr Owen again held a Grand Draw which raised £450. We took part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge for the second time to supplement the funds raised by the Christmas catalogue. We are very grateful to the 9 generous members and supporters who donated £1500 in pledges, which the Waterloo Foundation doubled, to start the Big Give campaign. Donors to Big Give and the catalogue raised £10,415, which will be used for the Ngora Vocational Training Institute. All trustees and volunteers in the UK are unpaid and we pay our own personal expenses (including trips to Uganda when they are allowed to take place). Our only expenses in the UK are for essential printing, postage and stationery costs, bank charges and audit fees.