

F A L L 2 0 1 3

OUR VILLAGE UGANDA

Empower. Educate. Equip.



Long-term Solutions Through Long-term Relationships

Humble beginnings, perseverance, sacrifice, and the belief that no one is forgotten have all shaped Our Village Uganda (OVU) into what it is today. OVU started because people believed it was worth fighting for - these children and our communities are worth fighting for. We have grown because our community has grown, because our community has been **EMPOWERED** that they can make a difference and fight for the innocent and ultimately can fight for a better future. We have grown because our children have seized the opportunity, which is denied to so many, to learn so that their **EDUCATION** can open doors for them. Good seeds and the proper tools are needed to grow, and we know that if we don't plant our crops today we cannot expect a good harvest tomorrow. As we plan to grow more we must **EQUIP** our empowered community so that they can use their education and resources to be able to meet the needs of their own family and community. Through empowerment, education, and equipping we can work towards restoration and true solutions. Such achievements do not happen over night, but occur slowly and surely as people are willing to work together and share burdens in the hope of better days.

Some of the stories inside:



Empower

Women of Lamwo in Northern Uganda seek healing after war by planting seeds for a better future.



Educate

How OVU is helping fill the gaps in a country where 71% of children do not complete the government primary schools.



Equip

By building for the future, we are equipping our community to support themselves.



Empower

“We are giving a word of thanks because what you have given us has gave us meaning within”

– Mary, an Acholi woman from Lamwo District

Northern Ugandans lived through a 20-year rebel war that spanned from 1986 to 2006. During this time, 1.7 million people were forced to leave their homes and live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. 80% of the 1.7 million people were women and children. Many women and children were abducted into the rebel army and forced to do horrendous acts. Since 2006, the people of Northern Uganda have got to enjoy a cessation of war. However, there are still many scars, and as Mary a widowed Acholi women exclaimed, “as you look around at us, you can see the pain still in our eyes”. The Acholi people are working hard to re-start their lives. The challenges are numerous, but upon visiting the Acholi one cannot help but be humbled by their willingness to work hard with their small means.

Planting a seed for the future

“We need counseling, we don’t know how to live anymore. So many people are committing suicide”, wrenched James Olul, LC3 of the Padibe East IDP camp. He was responding to Terra’s question in 2007, “what do your people need?”. Terra was expecting a call for material assistance. The war was over, but people didn’t know how to live anymore. Children had grown up in war and in these terrible IDP camps. Landmines were being cleared off the land and the opportunity to go “home” had finally come. The Acholi people were preparing to go back to homes that now were just bush with nothing except the clothes on their backs. It was through this pain that OVU decided to start with a seed entrusted to the women of Lamwo. These seeds represent the hope of better days. Quite proverbially, the Acholi women stated, “If you give us seeds to grow crops, we can start to rebuild our communities”.



“The Acholi tribe will not be depleted!” declares an Acholi woman

This September we met with the Northern Uganda women’s group again, with over 200 women having benefited from these seeds so far. One of the groups of women collected all of the profits from their crop to pay for one child to go to school, while other groups started a “rotating savings box” where they all helped each other save. Some of the HIV-positive women were able to use part of their harvest to help bring more nutrition to their diet. There is still so much working against these women. To put it bluntly, these are some of the most marginalized women in the world. Many people are still missing from war. These women have experienced and witnessed the most horrific hardships known to mankind. Amongst this, they lost EVERYTHING. They are starting again, but the wounds of war are still fresh.



Our Village Uganda is committed to keep working alongside these women, to be a helping hand where there hasn’t been one. Never have we met a group of people so willing to invest in the future by simply their own sweat and hands, in the hopes of better days. Some women walked 14 km (one way) just to see us, and some came carrying the words of others that were too weak to walk. These women came because they are now encouraged there is something to live for, something to fight for. They shared with us that they need: simple things like goats, hoes, seeds, with their dream item being an ox & plow. We are currently planning together with them to see the way forward and how best to deliver resources to them. The women see the value in what a hand-up does. Agnes, the women’s leader has declared, “We should make a meaningful saving, what our ‘daughter’ [Terra] has started we should also begin for ourselves, so that we will not only be the hand to receive but also have the hand to give.”



EDUCATION

Why is education such a big focus at Our Village Uganda? Some of you reading this may be coming from a Canadian setting where public schools generally provide a decent standard of education. That is not the case in Uganda, where the 'free' universal primary education (UPE – The Ugandan government's elementary education system) does not provide a quality of education that can bring a child to think outside the box and to reach the next level of education. We believe that both Canadians and Ugandans have the right to an education that can open doors for them. We all want to strive to ensure that children receive the best education, but for the majority of Ugandans this is especially hard to achieve.

UPE is great on paper, but has not been successfully implemented in Uganda. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) stated in their report on Ugandan education that "The quality of education remains poor, especially that provided by the public sector. In primary education, numeracy and literacy rates remain low... Whilst enrolment rates are high, completion rates of primary education are low". At our own primary school at OVU, we have found that children that had been in a Primary 3 class in the UPE system have had to go back to nursery level teachings when they come to our school because they lacked in the most basic of teachings.

It is hard for parents here, especially those in rural settings. "92% of Uganda's poor live in the countryside" (World Bank). Many families struggle to even enable their children to attend the 'free' government schools. They still have to pay for books, school uniforms, and often government schools ask for additional fees even though this is against

the law. Many children are falling through the gaps in the education system here and the effects of it are being seen in rural Uganda. People are not able to meet their family's basic needs.

There is no school in the village where we will be building our school – near Nawanyinge Trading Centre, Iganga District - and in the surrounding area there is predominantly government UPE schools. When you are in the area, you will see many children running around during the day when they should be at school. When we asked government leaders in the area why this is, they say "parents have given up hope to even make their children go to UPE schools any more as they see no value in it." Due to their level of poverty, they do not have any option of paying for all of their children to go to a better school.

What is OVU doing about this?

OVU has come in to fill the gaps in the surrounding communities of Kigulu county. We are partnering with our local community to ensure that children that are falling through the gaps in the broken UPE education system are able to get a quality level of education that can bring them to the next level. We are not just handing this out freely, but are calling on living relatives to partner with us and help provide material assistance whenever they are able. We are very excited for the completion of our own primary school so we no longer have to rent the cramped, dilapidated buildings where we are now. When we complete our school we will have space for a larger number of children, which will foster more lasting change in the local communities of Kigulu county.

"In East Africa, Uganda has the lowest proportion of children staying in school up to Primary 7" (UNESCO)

"Over one million pupils who enrolled for Primary One under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 2006 did not reach Primary Seven, a 71% dropout rate" (Ministry of Education)

"Children in Primary 6 could not comprehend material meant for Primary 3" (2011 UWEZO report)



The proof is in the pudding

We have 158 Children attending our primary school. Our children have been scoring very well on the nationwide government exam, enabling them to go on to secondary school. We currently have 33 students in secondary school.

Persis (on the left) grew up at OVU attending our Primary School, and we have continued to partner with her as she attends Secondary school. She currently holds the second highest grades out of the 507 students in her grade.

Equip

Aiming to hand-up, not hand-out

We do not want to be an organization that brings up people dependant on foreign “aid”. We want to live in relationship with people, partnering with them and empowering and equipping them through building infrastructure so that they can help one another from within their own communities.

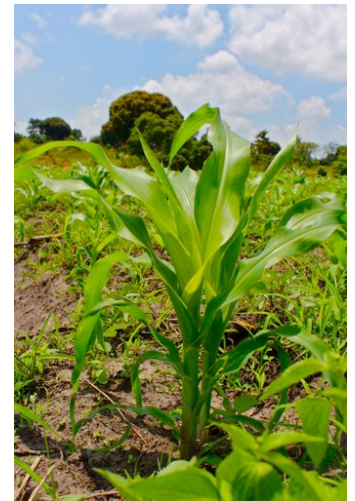


Invest in the future of Uganda

OVU has purchased land in the aim of equipping our community. With this land, we will work hand-in-hand with our community to develop it so that it will be a resource that will equip them. We are currently developing business plans in agriculture and livestock which will eventually be ran independently by locals and which will be used to generate income to cover OVU operating costs.

Just the beginning...

So far we have used our land to grow food for our primary and secondary children, which has helped offset costs and bring more variety to the children’s diet. Our secondary children have helped weed in the ‘garden’ on almost every other weekend in the last 3 months, which lessens the burden for external resources while simultaneously giving basic agriculture skills to the children. We also hire local help from our community. We recently also drilled our water well on this new land. The lab results have come back and it is clean drinking water, a very rare commodity!!! In Canada we often forget what a precious gift clean drinking water is. Next on the list is construction of our first latrine block (out-houses); we are thankful to already have the funds in place to start this month.



Partner with us...

We are striving for real development, which means building up our community so that it has sustainable means for lasting change. We are currently looking for people to partner with us to help raise funds to build the dormitories for school children on our new land. We have grown weary of the insecurity of renting, not knowing what the future costs will be and whether the landlord will terminate the rental agreement to pursue his own venture. These dorms will not only be a safe and comfortable place for the children to sleep in but they will also help us in achieving sustainability as we will be able to welcome in paying boarding students to help cover our costs.



Filling the gaps in Uganda

There are 8.1 million orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda. These are the children that fall through the gaps in society, the children who are not receiving the proper nutrition, healthcare, education and love that every child deserves.



Meet Margaret and Samuel on the left. Samuel's mother passed away and his father is very old and sick. He was the only son to *one* of his father's wives (polygamy – that is a whole other issue) and was to inherit his father's land. Due to this, Samuel's relatives plotted to kill him so that they could inherit the land. It is now unsafe for Samuel to go back to his home village. Margaret is one of the Matrons at OVU and is also a widow with several children of her own. She has welcomed Samuel into her family and now calls him 'son'; her home is now his home.

Meet Loy (on the right), her father passed away and her mother was left to care for Loy and her older sister Helen on her own. Being a loving mother, she did not want to abandon her children to an orphanage and so she partnered with Our Village Uganda. As she works to get back on her feet, we ensure her daughters receive the education, healthcare, nutrition and love they need, and that these precious little girls do not fall through gaps in society.



Help us fill the gaps

Every child's situation is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution when combating poverty. But we have seen that when you empower groups of people in Uganda, then an entire community is given long-lasting tools for change. That is why we at OVU do not have individual child sponsorships, as we do not want our children to look abroad for handouts and subsistence. We want our children and communities to be empowered by partnerships so that they see that they themselves possess the resources and abilities needed to change their communities. Please consider becoming a monthly partner with OVU, and help us fill the gaps in society as we work to empower our community from within.

To learn more about Our Village Uganda you can:

Join our Facebook page at “Our Village Uganda – Ekyaro Kyaife”

Check out our website at www.ourvillageuganda.org

Send us an email at info@ourvillageuganda.org

Give us a call in Uganda at (+256) 0 782 935 071

Or call our Canada office at (306) 728 2691