



Welcome Mark Zziwa – our latest guest!

Kids of Africa – a new guest and a brief update

Good morning! I just returned from Uganda and write these lines on the red-eye-flight from Amsterdam to Zurich. The plane is filled with business people and bankers who look happier than two months ago. I spent an energizing weekend in the village and am now taking cover behind my laptop and slightly sloppy attire in order to summarize a few of my weekend-impressions.

Summary: 1) A new baby-boy. 2) Much progress to be seen everywhere. 3) Many happy smiles. 4) We need more volunteers. 5) Opportunities in education and vocational training. 6) Tourism, real estate and lending still going strong in Uganda. 7) So is population growth.

1) A new baby-boy. An abandoned baby-boy (pictured) of five to six month age was recently delivered to Katwe police station child and family protection unit, by a Lady named Bitijuma. This Good Samaritan recently received a visit from a mother and child whom she did not know. She offered refreshments and some food as they seemed to be displaced, possibly by the civil unrest in Uganda's rebellious north. When the mother asked to use the bathroom she disappeared for good. Bituma is a mother of a two-week old baby herself. Having looked after the abandoned baby-boy for three weeks herself, she brought him to the police-station in order to seek help in finding a new, lasting home for the boy. Soon thereafter, we were asked to help and so we did. The boy was introduced to Mama Prossy who has endorsed him in his family and named him Mark Zziwa. We are grateful that Mark is a healthy boy with a strong personality already at this young age.

2) Much progress to be seen everywhere. The village continues to progress very well. Children are making good progress at school and we're teaching mothers to support them better to do their homework. We have shortened commuting-times by relocating most children to a nearby primary school, All Nations. That was a good decision for the school as much as for our village. It's also helping us strengthen our ties into our community. We've decided to provide free porridge for all 240 students at All Nations for a while. This doesn't cost us much but it goes a long way as hungry children do not learn very well. The houses and kitchen are clean and the water-filter works well. We're also planning to install a water-borehole and –filter at All Nations School in order to reduce infectious diseases among school-children. Electricity is available about 60% of all times. That's quite a good rate. Our children are almost universally healthy. Of course, regular seminars on hygiene and other health-related matters have become part and parcel of our village-routine which is open for many. Our football skills are improving. Our court has recently hosted many matches among younger and elder players from KoA and our entire neighborhood. I claimed responsibility for the highest number of goals shot during the weekend – unfortunately my position was that of goalkeeper.

3) Many happy smiles. They say that a positive disposition is the best way to stay healthy. So we try to think and act with a positive mindset. Apart from minor bruises and the like, I simply haven't seen an unhappy child lately. Staff is also upbeat and joyful which, like in any family, is positively contagious for kids.

4) We need more volunteers. Our children are growing up so rapidly, that we agreed at our management meeting that more pedagogic support would be very welcome. Volunteers would not only work with children but also members of staff on child-development and pedagogic matters. We can offer an exciting, opportunity to qualified and experienced volunteers. They would spend at least six months in a uniquely rewarding environment – an experience most of our volunteers have tried to extend after their initial stay. Please feel free to spread the word, should you know a likely candidate for this opportunity!

5) Opportunities in education and vocational training. This is likely to be our focus for the coming years as we gradually extend our focus from Kindergarten to Primary and soon even secondary school/education. We must and we will work hard to make the most out of the curiosity, talents and energy which many of our children have. Children's natural drive to discover and develop new skills is one of their great opportunities in life – an environment which facilitates and fosters this, will make a lasting, positive difference. We will not miss this opportunity.

6) Tourism, Real Estate and lending still going strong in Uganda. As an economist I cannot help observing such things. It seems the Ugandan economy is relatively resilient towards the global economic crisis. That would also explain the continued strength of the Uganda Shilling and the government's relatively resilient tax receipts. The country has much to offer not only to tourists but also to lenders and investors which seems to be increasingly appreciated. No doubt, that's a welcome development for Central Africa.

7) And so is population growth. Even though economic growth and urbanization tend to lower fertility rates, the demographic growth will remain on a challenging growth trajectory for years to come. Not is the child- and youth-bulge still dominating the age-pyramid but life-expectancy is rising from one of the world's lowest levels of 40 years and child-mortality is declining. These are all exceptionally positive developments from a public health perspective. But they pose significant social, economic and political challenges. This is precisely why long-term development-projects like this one seem so important to me.

Thank you for your interest and continued support! I can reassure you, that every Dollar we spend is carefully reviewed and has a direct and lasting impact. We cover 100% of our costs and expenses outside the village personally ourselves in order to ensure that donations will reach these children with no deduction or dilution whatsoever.

All best wishes, Burkhard

