

Uganda 2009

On the 7th July 2009 the domore team set off to Uganda. Seven eager, fresh faced students stepped off the plane at Entebbe and were immediately taken into the African way of life – well at least the African pace of life. After a 2 hour wait we finally left the airport and embarked upon our journey to Mbale where we would stay for the majority of our trip. We quickly got accustomed to the bumpy roads, dusty atmosphere and the army of street traders who would appear at the windows if you dared slow down under 5mph. We arrived in Mbale and were given a really warm welcome by our host family the Mutono's. A light dinner and introduction to African life and it was time for bed.

The next morning we were immediately into the thick of things. After quickly adopting our new nick name as Muzungu's we set about work on our projects. Task 1 was to provide clean water to two rural villages that were without. I was amazed by the simplicity of the lives that the villagers lived. Most had never left their mud hut community and many of the children had never seen white people before and were therefore fascinated by our skin. We were quickly handed hoes and started digging out the trench for the well. Despite much laughing at our novice technique we pressed on, many of the skilled locals quickly gave us a hand. By the end of the week it was completed and the village had a running spring well which should flow for over 20 years not only providing water for drinking, cooking and cleaning but also flowing into the fields to aid the growth of the crops.

Once a week we would gather a team of four doctors, a bus full of medicine and travel to a rural village to perform a medical outreach. Hundreds of villagers would flock to the building where we set up in order to receive medical treatment. People were so desperate to be seen that queuing became an interesting concept. We would register people, take their temperatures and blood pressures then send them onto the various doctors to be diagnosed. It was shocking how simple most the conditions were to treat, yet without access to the most basic medicine how quickly they had developed. We treated as many people as possible until we ran out of medicine then we had to turn away the unfortunate few who had arrived too late. Overall we gave out over 2300 prescriptions and vaccinated hundreds of children but you can't help but think of those who we could not treat.

One of our projects was to provide books for a school and help read to the kids. We arrived at the school and were shown to the room where we were to read to the children. The room had rubble all over the floor and you could barely see due to the dust and the fact there was only one small window. We had some money left and decided as a group to spend it on making this shack into a working library and reading area for the school. We knocked down an internal wall to make one big room and removed the rubble. No sooner would we place bricks outside than an army of helpers would pick it up and help us pile them on the other side of the field. Regardless of age every child was willing to help. We fitted more windows, had the floor masoned, painted, decorated and sorted a lot of books and after 2 weeks it was finished. We then conducted an assembly to explain how it should be used. It only then occurred to us that this was the only library in the area. Almost all of the teachers had never been to a library and were just as fascinated as the kids. We therefore had to teach the teachers to show the kids how to use it. Once we were done the students played instruments and performed us a traditional song and dance. There are 600 pupils enrolled to this primary school but last year just one child graduated onto secondary school. I hope that the new library may do something to help more children graduate school and expand their horizons above village life.