

Mission Trip to Uganda **September 8th - September 25th, 2004**

By Ruben Griffin
Construction Team

I recently had the opportunity to go on a Christian mission trip to Uganda with an organization called World Harvest Mission (WHM) based in North Highlands. I found out about the non-profit organization through a newspaper article that was published in the May issue of the Sacramento Observer. In the article, William Kasirye the director of WHM, talked about the needs in Uganda, and the part that their organization is playing in addressing those needs. After reading the article, I got interested and wanted to find out more. I talked to William several times and asked lots of questions about the trip which was being planned for September. I asked him questions such as: When are you going? What is the cost? What can I do over there? What are the requirements? What will we eat? Where will we stay? What is the weather like? etc. The more I talked to William, the more I wanted to go. William, who is from Uganda and goes to Uganda on mission trips practically every year for the last several years, put many of my concerns and apprehensions to rest.



Ruben with students from Bethany Village

When I finally decided that I wanted to go, God started to open doors that I thought were preventing me from going. The main obstacle was that I did not think that I could get time off from work during the Sept. 8th through Sept. 23rd time frame. But God arranged my project schedule and my work schedule so that I could take my extended vacation this year instead of next year as I had originally planned. Another obstacle was my passport, I was attempting to go to Ghana earlier in the year with a Howard University alumni group but I could not get my passport in time for that trip. After I decided to go to Uganda, my passport finally arrived. I could not get it earlier because the government continued to ask for more information (photo ID's from when I lived in Chicago, Minneapolis, Washington, DC, etc.). I realized that it was God's way of telling me to get my passport, but He had a different trip He wanted me to go on; He wanted me to take the 16-day mission trip to Uganda instead of the 10-day tourist trip to Ghana.

I started to attend the monthly mission trip meetings at New Life Community Church in Fair Oaks where William attends. At the meetings I met most of the other people who were going on the trip. There were members of New Life who had been on 2,3, or 6 previous mission trips, which made me feel more at ease, knowing that many



World Harvest Mission Team from the USA

people on this mission trip had been on other mission trips in the past. The Sacramento team was joined by others; one team member came from Modesto, California and another came from Washington D.C.

Once I was signed up for the trip, I started to help with some computers which had been donated to the organization. We had about 15 Pentium II computers that did not have operating systems or applications installed, so we installed Windows 98 and the Office 2000 applications on them. I also downloaded and installed drivers for the printers, scanners, and other hardware that was donated to the organization. I was also able to get several of the computers networked together and communicating with each other before we left on the trip.

Along with the 20 donated computers and monitors, we also took bibles, books, 20 sewing machines, 10 knitting machines, school supplies, clothes, yarn, soccer balls, construction tools, microwaves, etc. We took over 60 boxes of supplies and materials for the people of Uganda, each box weighed about 70 lbs.

In Uganda, we were based in a town called Gaba, which is just outside Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. We worked with Pastor Fred, Patrick, and other members of Gaba Community Church and the Africa Renewal Ministries. Gaba Community Church and Africa Renewal Ministries have a primary school and a high school next to the church that has an enrollment of over 900 students. Many of the children are orphans or have been abandoned due to war, AIDs, famine, etc.,. Africa Renewal Ministries provides schooling for the kids who are sponsored for \$25/month.



Ruben with Patrick (Gaba Community Church, and William (World Harvest Mission Director)



Pastor Fred of Gaba Community Church and Africa Renewal Ministries

We stayed at a campsite that was on a peninsula, so it required a 45-minute boat ride on Lake Victory from Gaba Community Church to get there. The campsite is located in Nabitaka village in the Kyaggwe (pronounced Chug-way) district. Africa Renewal Ministries has bought 30 acres of land there and they are developing it with schools, orphanages, and homes. They host several mission groups a year at their campsite in Kyaggwe, World Harvest Mission is one of the partner mission groups that they host. I was very impressed by the work that Gaba Community Church and Africa Renewal Ministries are doing for the Lord in Uganda.

The 30+ person group that went to Uganda from the USA was split into 3 teams: A construction team, a minstry team, and a knitting team; each with it's own specific assignment.

1) The goal of the construction team was to work with the members of Gaba Community Church and residents of Bethany village to construct a primary school in 10 days. That goal was accomplished in record time, several days ahead of schedule. The new four-room school building will be able to hold over 100 students.



The completed primary school

2) The goal of the ministry team was to preach in Churches, lunch hour fellowships and to visit and preach in 52 primary and secondary schools. During those visits, team members shared their testimonies, and other sang songs. According to reports from Scripture Union in Uganda, 2,600 students and 12 teachers accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

3) The goal of the knitting machine team was to train 21 women in Entebbe on how to hand knit, crochet and how to use knitting machines. In spite of the fact that prior to the WHM trip none of the Ugandan Women had ever seen a knitting machine, they worked so diligently that in less than a week, they were already making scarves, baby hats and sweaters. The Women are looking to partner with individuals, organizations and churches so that they can market their products in the United States. Their first order of sweaters should arrive in Sacramento in time for the Christmas season. They also plan to eventually have their garments sold over the internet.

In addition, 54 bicycles were donated to pastors from each of the 54 districts in Uganda and several of the computers that we took were donated to various organizations. I was able to help one organization (Scripture Union) with getting some of its computer equipment running.

In conclusion, I had a great time in Uganda and a wonderful experience on my first mission trip. I went to Uganda to be a blessing to others, but the people were also a blessing to me. Our hosts and hostesses from Gaba Community Church were very warm and friendly, they made our stay in Uganda very comfortable and enjoyable. The schools were impressive because the kids go to school in uniforms from 8am to 5pm. They start the day by singing praise songs about God and Jesus Christ, and Christianity is openly taught. Then, to go to the churches and see how people who have so little can praise God so much was also a blessing to see.



Ruben with hosts and hostesses from Gaba Community Church

My mission trip to Uganda was very fulfilling and I would strongly encourage anyone who has ever considered going on a mission trip to do so. We need to do more to help other countries that are less fortunate than we are. I would also recommend going on a mission trip with an organization like World Harvest Mission. They are experienced with mission trips and extremely well organized to do Gods work. According to William, their next trip is scheduled for June of 2005. They plan to visit schools, train more women in knitting and also complete the construction of a local Church at a cost of \$3,000. To learn more about the upcoming trip, volunteer or to donate to the Church construction project, call (916) 339-2684 or visit their web site at www.worldharvestmission.org