

WEEK 6: WEDNESDAY JUNE 18TH, 2014 – TUESDAY JUNE 24TH, 2014

I had a fantastic last week in Uganda. The week started off with a meeting of the Lugungu language board in Buliisa. It was necessary for Link to meet with the Lugungu language board as a way of securing support for their literacy programme in the region. Link firmly believes as does the Ministry of Education of Uganda that early learning should be taught in the pupils' local language. Therefore, Link is working with five of the Link sponsored primary schools in Buliisa to ensure that the primary 1 to primary 3 literacy classes are being taught in Lugungu.

The meeting proved useful and the Lugungu language board were very keen to assist Link in any way possible because Link offering to provide materials for teachers in the region to be able to teach in Lugungu is also helping to preserve the Lugungu language and consequently their identity and culture. At the end of the meeting one of the members held a brief naming ceremony and I received my pet name, which is a tradition in Western Uganda. A pet name is given to a child at birth and is the name that friends and family as well as people within their local community will refer to them as. The name that was given to me was Amooti, which I was told means princess of the Bunyoro kingdom. I really enjoyed receiving my pet name and it was yet another way of becoming part of the community where I had been living the last four weeks.



After meeting with the Lugungu language board we headed back to Masindi to regroup as a Link team and create the five-year plan for Link Uganda. We all took part in contributing ideas of where we would like to see the organisation headed and how we would be able to achieve some of these projects. Some of the potential projects included a focus on girl's education, health and hygiene, road safety, and the promotion of education for disadvantaged and marginalised children.

The following day I was leaving Masindi to head back to Kampala. However, I could not leave Masindi without making one last visit to the all girls school. I really enjoyed all of my visits to this particular school and I felt it rude to leave the area without saying goodbye. Upon my arrival the head teacher greeted me and she was very pleased to see me but sad because it would be our final visit together

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before I headed back to Scotland. I really enjoyed walking around all of the classrooms and saying goodbye to the teachers and students. I even purchased a banana leaf basket made by one of the primary 6 pupils as I was leaving as a memento of my time at the school and as a way of saying thank you for their hospitality. I am really going to miss my weekly visits to the school and chatting with the teachers and students.

After visiting the all girls school we made our journey back to Kampala. I was filled with mixed emotions because I knew that I only had a couple of days in Kampala before I headed back to Scotland. I truly loved my time in Masindi and it had become a second home to me. I enjoyed the small town feel that Masindi had and the friendliness of its people. I also appreciated the beauty of the landscape and the surrounding countryside and I knew that I would miss watching the beautiful sunsets over the mountain ranges. However, I knew that what I would miss most would be the school visits and seeing the continued progress of Link schools in Western Uganda.



I found myself wishing that I was still in Masindi in my final days in Uganda. Kampala is a beautiful city but I am always more relaxed when in the countryside so the hustle and bustle of Kampala can be exhausting at times. However, I was able to meet up with a former Link research volunteer that is now living and working in Kampala promoting quality of education in private secondary schools across Uganda. It was fantastic to meet up with her and exchange our experiences including living and researching in Uganda as well as interning for Link. I really enjoyed being able to meet up with her and it was a great way to end my Ugandan journey.

My last week in Uganda was lovely. I have really enjoyed the opportunity to be able to travel to and conduct research across Uganda. I met so many incredible people working very hard to improve the quality of primary education in government sponsored schools in Uganda. The dedication of the teachers and willingness to learn of the children was inspiring and will assist Link in successfully continuing their sustainable projects. Link's commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy comprehension of primary 1 to primary 3 aged children is giving the pupils a stable foundation to excel and to progress through their primary education. Thus giving the pupils a better chance at attaining the grades needed to enter secondary school and continue their journey of educational advancement.