

WEEK 5: WEDNESDAY JUNE 11TH, 2014 – TUESDAY JUNE 17TH, 2014

This last week has been exceedingly busy but very enjoyable. Donors were arriving to assess the progress of Link's literacy programme within their Hoima and Buliisa schools at the primary 1 and primary 3 levels. Therefore, Peter and I spent Wednesday through Friday preparing the schools in Hoima for the donor's arrival on Monday and Tuesday. We travelled with the Link project coordinator for the Hoima district to the Link sponsored primary schools to monitor the teacher's progress following the Link sponsored teacher training workshop conducted in Hoima a few weeks prior. Subsequently, whilst Peter and I were in Hoima the Link project coordinator for the Buliisa primary schools was assisting the local teacher's with their preparations to host the donors.

Upon our arrival at the Hoima schools we noticed that the teachers had not rearranged their classrooms to have the children sitting in groups. Therefore, the first thing Peter and I did upon entering the classrooms was to rearrange the desks so that all of the students were grouped together with roughly 8-12 students in each cluster. The importance of group work was noted both in our Link teacher training workshop as well as the Red Earth workshops I attended.



After putting the children into groups we explained the benefits of group work to the teacher and how it encourages teamwork, peer support, good behaviour, and makes the children the centre of the classroom rather than the teacher. Furthermore, when children are in groups the teacher is able to give a variety of activities per lesson enabling the students to work together. Whilst this is occurring the teacher is free to walk around the classroom monitoring their work and observing the students' individual as well as collective progress as well as their overall understanding of the material. Consequently, this reduces the amount of time that a teacher is standing at the front of the classroom lecturing to the pupils rather than letting them engage with the material on their own with assistance from the teacher as needed.

After arranging the classrooms into groups we then proceeded to look at the teachers lesson plans and work schemes giving feedback on the layout of their lesson plan and the content within each lesson and how it related to the current topic in the required Ministry of Education curriculum. The majority of the lesson plans and schemes of work were consistent and well thought out and directly pertained to the curriculum. Therefore, we were able to notice an improvement in the teacher's lesson plans and work schemes noting that the teachers had adopted the recommendations from the Link teacher training workshop 3 weeks prior, including adding detail to their lesson plans and accounting for how long each activity should take so as to not run over time during a lesson.

When we were visiting the Hoima schools we also brought the teachers more materials to make posters and charts pertaining to reading and writing in their local language, which in the Hoima and Buliisa schools is Runyoro, Lugungu, and Alur. The language break up of the 16 Link schools in these districts is based on the language that the majority of the children speak so there are 5 Runyoro schools, 5 Lugungu schools, and 6 Alur schools.



The teachers were very pleased to have received the extra materials and seemed to be looking forward to creating new charts and displays to make their classrooms more conducive to learning. After assessing the lesson plans and talking through potential material that could be displayed on the charts and posters we then sat at the back of the classes and observed their literacy lesson. Afterwards, we gave each teacher feedback on the overall lesson noting both positive aspects of the lesson as well as the areas that could be potentially improved upon. I really enjoyed travelling around the Hoima schools with Peter to prepare the teachers and their classrooms for the arrival of the donors. The teachers were very receptive to our advice and seemed a bit hesitant to receive the donors at their schools and have them observe their lessons. However, on the day of the donor's arrival to the Link primary schools the teachers were very prepared and

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eager to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and to have the donors observe one of their literacy lessons in the local language.

We took the donors to the Hoima primary schools on Monday and the Buliisa schools on Tuesday. The donors observed the layout of the classroom, the quality of lesson delivered by the teacher, and the charts and visual aids present around the classrooms. Overall, the donors were very pleased with the capabilities of the primary 1 and primary 3 children, including the pupils' abilities to identify letters and syllables, as well as being able to sound out the letters as they read the words in primary 1 and for the primary 3 students their ability to create and read short sentences. Fortunately, the donors were rather impressed with the progress that Link has made towards literacy teaching in their sponsored schools in Hoima and Buliisa and appeared eager to continue the relationship between their organisation and Link to continue the progress of literacy teaching in Western Uganda.

It was very interesting to see the processes and effort an NGO has to go through when hosting donors. Especially since it is such a crucial part in securing both current and future funding from donor organisations, more so if the funding is tied to the progress of the project. So it was really a fantastic experience for me to see another aspect of how an NGO operates.

I have really enjoyed my time travelling around Hoima, Buliisa and Masindi assessing the Link schools and monitoring the progress that they have made thus far in improving the quality of education in Western Uganda. I am in awe that I only have one week left in Uganda before travelling back to Scotland.