

COLOMA PRIMARY SCHOOL

General update as we enter into 2017

2017 has begun a new phase in the life of Coloma Primary School. Primary school is a 7 year programme in Uganda, meaning that for a full primary there are 7 classes. These we have had since 2014. Each class apart for Primary 1 has 40 pupils. P1 has 30 so that they can be given a good foundation. Thus we have been carrying approx 270 children.

The limiting factor in our accepting extra children has been lack of accommodation. We are inundated with applications even to 2020. Since 2015 we have been building a dormitory but only progressed when money became available. At the end of 2016 2 rooms and an ablution block on the ground floor were completed. Thus it became possible for the school to begin a double stream and the class chosen has been Primary 3. The Christmas holidays were extremely busy trying to get everything in place for the beginning of the new dormitory: beds to be bought, curtains to be made (Sr Nevis DMJ kindly took that on and did a lovely job) cubicles to be built for the matrons, shelves for children's boxes, solar to be installed, toilets and showers to be got ready. Within the school, a new P3 classroom was needed on the ground floor so a lot of moving about became necessary and the dormitories where children slept had to be converted into classrooms. More had to be bought: New desks and classroom furniture, text books for 40 children, extra tables and benches for the dining hall. Even 2 new teachers had to be employed which necessitates a new staff house. In fact an existing house at the school was renovated and made ready. All of this was not a simple job and demanded a high degree of planning, implementation and money to have all ready by Feb 6th. Except for light in the dormitory all was accomplished and lights are now installed. Normally we have been used to 30 new small children each year but this time it was 70. We now have about 140 children under 7 years of age – all boarders. They are beautiful children but needless to say need a lot of care and attention.

The children are doing well. Over the past 3 years the results from the Primary Leaving Government exam have been very promising. Each year we have performed highly in the district and the children have been able to continue higher education. More importantly for us is that the children have a good holistic education and that when they leave Coloma Primary School they are well trained socially, morally, emotionally and academically, each with a high degree of skills training. They train in sports, music, drama, hand crafts using local materials, knitting and crochet, gardening, woodwork. Many join Guides and Brownies and religious groups. We still have not introduced IT into the school but it is in mind. Hopefully the children can stand up and be counted as young adults in Ugandan society.

Our future plans are that we continue to educate and train the children highly with a special emphasis on orphans and children from vulnerable homes. There are 112 of such children presently being cared for by our sponsors. Without this assistance we could never have followed this dream of giving the very best to the most needy of children.

Since the school began we have used the kitchen built in 2010. At that time it catered for 60 children and about 30 staff – teaching and support. This same kitchen has been cooking now for over 350 in total. It is small and smoky and we are proud and thankful to the cooks who continue with special dedication to provide 3 full meals daily and 2 breaks. We are very blessed that since January 2016 we have been assisted in the construction of a new kitchen with 8 new energy cooking stoves and food stores. This we hope to start using in May/June. The chimneys are being built now and we remain with verandahs, water and solar light installation.

The school has as a goal the protection of the environment and so do not use hydro electricity. Each building has its independent solar system. There is plenty of free sunshine in Uganda! Tree planting is a priority and since the school began over 2,000 trees have been planted on the land at the school. Having purchased land a bit away from the school over 10,000 trees have also been planted. With new energy stoves we hope to reduce the firewood consumption by 50%.

The whole area is suffering from a shortage of rain and water harvesting is a high priority of the school. As far as possible water tanks are attached to all school buildings and plans are under way for an underground water tank when funding is secured. When water tanks are empty water is pumped from the National Water supply but this is extremely expensive. Small children consume a lot of water.

In 2017/2018 we hope to continue to build the 1st floor of the dormitory block and to build another staff house in preparation for accepting another double stream of children in 2019. Our donors are always so generous to us and we are ever grateful to them.

The farm belonging to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph at Coloma also is in plan to be improved by buying better quality animals and improving pastures. The plantation which was on the land when it was bought is not doing well and even when part was used for vegetable it has not been very successful. It is totally dependent on rainfall and the area is highly affected by climate change. There is a need for evaluating the best use of the land.

All in all much has been achieved at Coloma over the past 7 years and we look forward to our continuing partnering with friends, donors, neighbours and all people of good will.

Compiled by Mona Maher

March 2017