

## Reflections on the visit to Uganda May/June 2024

As a representative of Stanton Harcourt CE Primary School, I joined the Trustees visit in May/ June 2024. There were four main areas of WADU's work that we had insight into while there:

- support for Batwa children in rural schools
- support for primary school sponsored Batwa Rising Stars at Future Generations School
- support for secondary school sponsored Batwa students
- community development (latrines).

Stanton Harcourt particularly supports the work with Batwa children in the rural schools.

We were able to visit four of the nine schools during a normal school day:

- Mukitojo
- Kavumaga
- Kynurashengye (with children from Kaato Annex)
- Kagoma



It was the first week of the new term when we visited, so numbers were down as some children were slow to return to term, but there was a good turnout from the Batwa children. In these schools, Sue, the team and I delivered a range of activities including some ball games, some maths activities (less successful because the children did not have a concept of using a dice and moving round a game board, so we dropped this), telling the story of The Lost Sheep in assembly, using an adaptation of The Enormous Turnip (the Enormous Carrot) to

engage the children in using English to tell parts of the story, and doing some oral and written work on colours, using the tablets.



We were able to visit two more schools on a public holiday, when the Batwa children had been invited in for a mini-centre day:

- Nchundura
- Rwabarindi

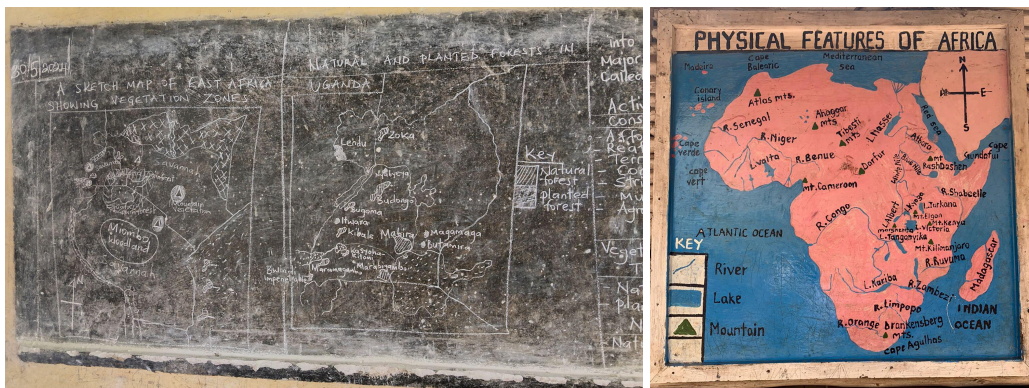
Here, the WADU team did checks, distributed supplies, cut hair and provided porridge. We were able to run some games and Abigail told the story of the Wise Man who built his house on the rock and taught the song. At Nchundura, we were able to make a live link with Stanton Harcourt school, where all the SH children were gathered in the hall. We showed the SH children the amazing views

from the mountaintop school, the games, the haircuts, the classrooms, and water filter and I was able to introduce them to Precious. This was a real highlight and has left a lasting impression on the Oxfordshire children.

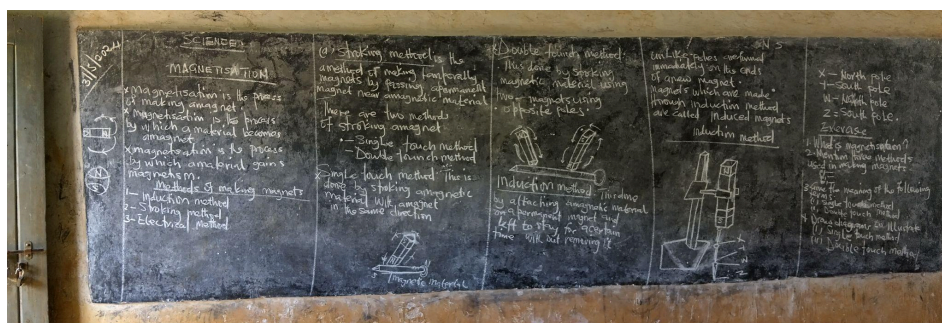
We also visited the Future Generations school where the sponsored Rising Stars children are educated where we were given a highly competent display of singing, poetry and dancing and had a tour of the school. Abigail was able to connect with the Rising Stars and I was asked to teach a P5 class - despite having specifically asked that we could watch a lesson, not lead one!

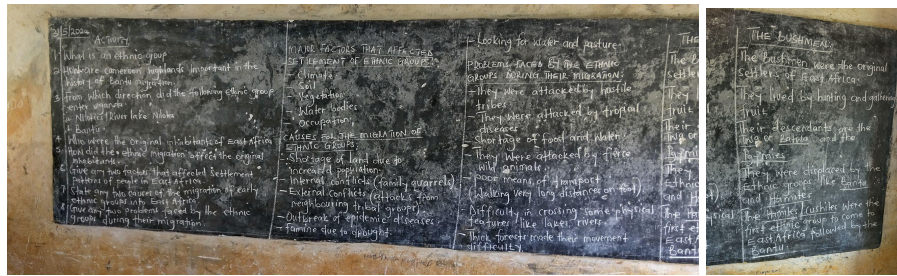
The challenges facing the rural schools and hence the children in these schools are enormous. Here are some thoughts I have had during and since the visit:

1. There are simply no resources - not even large paper and pens. This means that a teacher can spend considerable time drawing a good quality, complex map on the chalkboard, which the children copy into their books, and at the end of the lesson it is wiped off. It would be so helpful if they were able to draw it on paper and then put it on the wall to refer to in subsequent lessons. (Future Generations classrooms were full of excellent posters created by the teachers.)



2. The curriculum is extremely high level and content-heavy which is a challenge in the context of these schools. Given that the curriculum has to be delivered and the lack of resources available, it is not surprising that lessons appear to follow the format of the teacher writing from the curriculum book onto the board and the children copying into their books. In one classroom, the teacher had written lists of bullet point facts and written up a list of activities and the children had copied everything, including the list, into their books. There was no evidence that the activities had been discussed/ tackled.





3. With this curriculum being delivered in very cramped classrooms, it is perhaps inevitable that the children do not seem very used to interaction in lessons other than standing when they are selected to give an answer to a closed question. It took a huge effort from Marion, Phionah and me, to persuade the children to practise their English and have a go at the interactive tasks I was aiming for them to do. Some of them began to catch on and made real progress even in one lesson and it was lovely to see some of the children enjoying the activities.

4. Some of the teachers were clearly engaged and keen to participate in what we were doing. Given the lack of resources and huge challenges they face, including insecurity about when they are paid, this was encouraging.
5. There could be potential to develop conversational English through play and PE. Games and activities designed to get the children talking and just having a go would be great.



6. The difference between the children at the rural schools and at Future Generations was stark. In the P5 class at Future Generations I was able to teach in English with almost no translation. I was asking the children to come up with nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which they could do confidently. We then used what we had to develop sentences, which they did with humour, and then we switched the tenses in which the sentences were written, including using the progressive and perfect tense. There is no doubt that the children being educated here will be far advanced compared to those in the rural schools.

7. It would have been extremely interesting to watch lessons in some of the schools but I understand why the teachers/ headteachers did not want to do this.
8. It is good where the links with WADU can benefit the whole school rather than just the Batwa children, for example through water purifiers, play equipment, netball hoops. It seems to me that this is an incentive for the schools to keep engaging with WADU and working hard for the Batwa children.

Overall, it was an immense privilege to visit the schools, meet the children and see the work that WADU is doing to help the children and their communities.