

It has been a privilege to be involved

At the conclusion of the final meeting of the UACO Australia Board, Anthony Radford spoke for everyone when he said it "has been a privilege to be involved".

Dr Radford is a specialist in community medicine and like Judy and Allan Steel has been on the board since its inception in 2000.

Along with Rev Dr Gillies Ambler and Fred Wilson, at that time the group was formed to support and co ordinate the work Judy was undertaking with Dr Edward Ssembyata in Kampala.

Later Rev Rod Dyson chaired the group before handing on to Ian Attenborough. George and Ann Newbury served for many years and recently Iva Quarisa, Michael Sexton and Kate Agus were added.

The Board has always seen its role as a conduit between those in need in Africa and those willing to help in Australia. The work is all volunteer and while many visits have been made by members to Uganda, no UACO funds have been used for this. The only overheads the Board has is postage for newsletters and the cost of a website.

By following her heart, Judy Steel was inspired to help some of the poorest people on earth and in Uganda Dr Edward uses his heart, mind and energy to make it a reality every day. Tens of thousands of adults and children have been treated.

Over more than a decade the Board has been deeply humbled by the generosity of Australians who have supported UACO. Every meeting has been given purpose by the donations that articulate a warmth of the human spirit to make things better for those suffering.

At the end now is a 30 bed hospital and eight bed theatre complex, maternity wing, physiotherapy ward, clinic, soccer academy and literacy school. This exists in one of the poorest cities in the world as a gift from Australians.

Any donations that are made will be sent directly to Dr Edward for equipment and medicines. However after June 30 2014 they will no longer be tax deductible. While money will be gratefully accepted we are no longer actively fund raising. The future is now in Ugandan hands.

At the opening of the theatre complex in May, Judy read a prayer written by Gillies Ambler. She read it again to conclude the final UACO Australia Board meeting.

In part it read:

Jesus you have always been compassionate towards those who are poor, struggling with sickness, overwhelmed by spiritual challenges and striving for justice. What we didn't know was how you would sweep us all up in the special, breathtaking opportunity: brothers and sisters in Christ in Australia and Uganda uniting together to achieve your purpose.

Thank you again and God's blessings

Ian Attenborough (Chair), Michael Sexton,
Kate Agus, Dr Anthony Radford, Judy & Allan Steel

UACO Australia Board.



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The Theatre Opening 7 May 2014



A day of celebration as the operating theatre complex is officially opened at Busabala Road. After more than a decade of work by Dr Edward supported by Australian donations the medical centre in Kampala is complete. Already more than 50 successful operations have been carried out. Judy & Allan Steel were honoured guests at the final act of UACO Australia.



Dear Friends

It seems a long time ago that we agreed to assist Dr. Edward to build his operating theatre but it has only been four years. On Wednesday 7 May that dream became a reality when we were present at the opening ceremony. Allan and I arrived in Uganda the previous Saturday and met up with Iva, Julie, Sandra and Natalie who have all been previous volunteers in Uganda and who all returned to celebrate with us.

On Monday 5 May Edward arranged for us to meet the theatre staff, including all the doctors and anaesthetists involved. We were given an in-depth report by the senior anaesthetist Dr. Vincent Kasoma. It was a truly unforgettable experience to be told that they had performed 53 operations without any infections or complications whatsoever. We were given a guided tour of the ground floor where we found to our amusement we had rooms with our names on it. Then we were invited to go to the theatre floor but first we had to all remove our shoes and put on rubber sandals, caps and gowns. Oh my goodness, they are so excited and proud of this facility

and I am sure it will become the best surgical wing in Uganda if they are able to maintain these standards. We discovered they had been operating in a small way for the past six months, mostly obstetric and gynaecological operations. There are two theatres. One is fully equipped and the second still requires an anaesthetic machine, surgical instrument trolleys, suction machines and a neonate resuscitation table. They also require a blood fridge and a machine for testing blood prior to surgery.

On Tuesday Iva, Natalie and I went to town to buy gifts for the widows at the opening ceremony. Each member of UACO (including the HIV clients and the soccer teams) received a bag containing 1kg highly nutritious soya porridge, 1kg sugar, tea leaves, Vaseline and a large bar of bath soap. While we were at the warehouse making these purchases, Sandra and Julie were busy with the mothers and their babies at immunisation. We all enjoyed our Ugandan lunch of japarti, tomato, cucumber and avocado – nothing quite like it in Australia.

Wednesday arrived after a very rainy night but there was a marquee and chairs so everyone sat in comfort. Edward had organised a full sung Mass by the local Catholic priest along with the most beautiful choir. In spite of the service mostly being in Luganda I found myself in tears. It was a very spiritual time for us all. When the service finished we walked through a guard of honour made by the widows to the doors of the theatre wing. Here we had more prayers and blessings and then Edward and I together cut the ribbon to the joyful ululating chorus of our friends.

A Ugandan custom was then completed when the priest went into every room in the building blessing it as he went. We returned to the clinic verandah and marquee where everyone had been patiently waiting and the speeches started. I think the speeches lasted for about two hours and then last of all it was my turn. I had been hoping that I would be able to say the things I needed to say without getting too emotional and mostly I got there. I needed to thank people who were very important to me and to the completion of the theatre wing. After completing our shopping for gifts for the widows we had some money left over so we were delighted to donate the money for the trolleys, suction machines and neonate resuscitation table.

We also gave Edward the equivalent of \$430 to buy medications for the clinic. Finally it was lunch time and everyone was given a soda and a meal of meat, rice, matooke, ground nut sauce and potatoes. For many UACO members it was the first time they had eaten meat in more than a year. When everyone finished it was time for us Australian visitors to give out the gifts. We had prepared more than 100. We left a similar amount to be given out as Christmas gifts and Edward now has a supply of the soya porridge for those who come to the clinic who are desperately ill and need food. They were all so excited when they saw their gifts and of course the dancing started. Even my old *jaaja* friends who can barely walk were up on their feet holding onto a stick and moving as only Africans can. It was a fitting end to a wonderful day. **Judy Steel AO**

NB: As we go to press we have received a generous donation for the purchase of the blood fridge.

This was God's initiative from the very beginning. God chose Judy from Australia and God chose Edward from Kampala, and found ways to bring them together and ignite a passion of caring for others. All Jesus said to each of them was: "follow me." All Jesus has ever said throughout this whole mission of God project has been "follow me." Isn't it remarkable to look back and see not only where we have been with Jesus, but also to give thanks to all people we have met and embraced along the way?

Jesus' pivotal command is to love God passionately, to love your neighbour compassionately and to love self wisely. Love is central to this mission of God, and over 16 years love has revealed many of its wonderful facets. Sacrificial love has been revealed again and again with so many generous donors, generous committee members, generous builders, generous hospital clinic staff, generous patients and generous young people.

Love has been witnessed in celebrations, affirmations, dancing and singing, in tears and laughter, in giving and receiving, in intense discussions and ever deepening relationships. Love has called forth confrontation sometimes to remove roadblocks, other times to fight injustice and yet other times to overcome blindness. Love has inspired people to strive beyond the possible, sending container loads with medical supplies, raising money through newsletters and visionary workers on the ground God has even gifted this mission with an ambulance bringing marginalised sick people to hospital and once even waiting outside a hospital, on standby, for Queen Elizabeth II! Love has brought skilled people from Australia and elsewhere to share with skilled people in Kampala to enable faith, healing, hope, joy and wholeness to be showered on God's people of Najjanankumbi.

A fully equipped hospital with theatres, physiotherapist, wards, teaching facilities, and considerable amounts of equipment play a key role in this amazing two-storey building which stands beside and supports a clinic which is active daily. Who would have been bold enough to believe this possible, except God? How amazing to experience such a wide diverse group of people working together, praying together, serving together and bring healing together in ways that enrich so many people. I believe that all true benefits are mutual and this truly mutual benefit has transformed Najjanankumbi.

Thank you God for bringing the people of Najjanankumbi and surrounding areas out of their poverty trap and setting them free. You have inspired so many people to work together for good. You have given the people of Najjanankumbi the gift of this hospital and clinic as well as the responsibilities to continue to bring hope, healing, joy, love and wholeness to all the people of this area. Jesus you continue to call your people of Najjanankumbi to follow you. You call them to discover new ways to share in God's mission. God as you continue to transform people give them new opportunities to serve with you.

Rev Dr Gillies Ambler
UACO inaugural Chairperson

Notes from Busabala Road

I spent many hours enjoying the company of the widows who were either sewing or making soap.

I took a number of dressmaking patterns and the ladies looked at them, then started cutting without removing the patterns from the envelope.

The dresses, shirts or skirts were made and proudly shown to me with a look of satisfaction on their faces.

The widows are a very special group and all have a story to tell, most were happy to share them with me. Being a widow myself they were comfortable talking about their life experiences.

I felt very privileged to hear their stories.

Sandra Deakin



I have a very good friend, Joan (pronounced Jo-anne), who I call my sister. She is 36, a widow, has two children, and is also HIV positive (her husband died of AIDS about six years ago).

She has no other family, which makes life VERY difficult as she doesn't really have anyone else to rely on.

She is the cleaner at the hospital, and smart, hardworking and beautiful. She hugged me so tight when she greeted me.

Joan gets to work at 6.30 am and works until about 6 pm then makes her way home to cook for her children (lately she has been working seven days a week - without overtime or a bonus).

She mostly walks home which is about 5km. If she has some little extra money she will catch a boda boda (motor bike).

Her salary is 120,000 shillings a month - her rent is 100,000 for a one room place which leaves 20,000 shillings to live on for the month, which I would say is nearly impossible (especially if she pays school fees which are over 300,000 a term).

It never fails to hit me that in Australia most people get home at night and wonder what they are going to cook for dinner, while Joan and a very large proportion of Ugandans get home at night and wonder where they will get the money required to buy things for dinner.

Iva Quarisa

This was my third trip to Uganda and as always it was memorable. It was great to see so many old friends and make new ones.

I was impressed to see the operating theatre finished and operational.

I was even more impressed to see the procedures that are in place and the pride taken in these. My hope is the word quickly spreads about the theatre and some money can go back into all the program's that UACO began.

As always I was humbled by the generosity of the Ugandans and their faith that things will be ok even if there is no money to buy food for dinner.

When we were leaving I wondered just how much of a difference has been made to this community, and I nearly cried at the answer I received.

Several people told me that without UACO and the generosity of many Australians, they would not be here today, they would have died years ago, and that makes it all worthwhile.

Julie Beaumont



On this my second trip to Uganda, I arrived with over 10kg of material and cottons donated by an friend.

Within minutes the women selected which material they wanted and began cutting and sewing.

They glanced at the pattern covers — then chalked, measured and cut - no pattern required! Amazingly they all turned out perfectly.

Dr Edward told us with the operating theatre there will be regular sewing required and the sewing group plan on providing this service, to earn a small income. It was a pleasure watching these talented women work.

They asked me to pass on this message "from the ladies from the sewing group, blessings and many thanks to all in Australia".

Natalie Quarisa

Treasurer's Report

The widows and HIV/Aids clients asked me to pass on their deep thanks to you.

During our visit to Uganda we used donations from Port Elliot and Westbourne Park Uniting Churches to provide gifts and lunch for UACO members to celebrate the opening of the theatre complex.

They were so excited that even the very old women started dancing.

Over the past year donations of just under \$25,000 have been sent to Uganda.

They have been generously matched dollar for dollar by the Kain C+C Foundation to guarantee the completion and equipping of the two theatres.

Already more than 50 operations have been successfully carried out and with them funds are beginning to flow for the on going cost of running the hospital and in the long term the primary health care and literacy programs.

One of the theatres is operating fully while the other requires some more equipment (including an anaesthetic machine) to give it the complete range of services.

This is our last appeal for donations.

UACO Australia is no longer actively fund raising however we will accept any donations and they will be forwarded to Dr Edward directly for equipment and medicines.

We can only issue tax deductible receipts until June 30 2014. After this time donations can be made but won't be tax deductible.

Thank you again for your generosity and faith in this project over many years. Your money has made a life changing difference to thousands of people.

Allan Steel
UACO Treasurer



Allan Steel prepares gift bags in the Hospital prior to the opening ceremony