



**Allan and Anne Lacey**  
CMS Mission Partners  
**(Uganda)**

Link Letter No 11 August 2010

**Dear friends,**

### The African chill...

Africa isn't always what you expect – a check on a website today has just told us its 29°C in Leicester, UK, but we are sitting in our house only 500km north of the equator, and it's a cool 23°C in the middle of the day. Who would have thought that we might need a fleece and warm socks in the evenings, drawing our curtains to reduce the draughts that blow in through the louvre windows? African homes aren't built to be cosy, so we have to confess it's quite nice to be able to go to bed after a chilly evening and snuggle under a duvet at this time of year.

The temperature is due to the altitude of course. Like most of Uganda, we live at around 4200 feet in Arua and at this time of year you know it. If we ever want to train for the Olympics it might be an advantage!



**A nursing student on community experience**

It's difficult to remember what we expected when we came out here three years ago to work, but few things are probably as we imagined them. With this in mind, we thought that we would describe in more detail a couple of things that we are involved in, with the hope that it will bring you a more realistic picture of life here.

### School of Nursing

This is where Anne works two days a week. The School was started a decade or more ago as an informal means of giving basic training to local staff working in the hospital. Since that time the School has become integrated into the Government regulated nurse/midwife training in Uganda as a 'PNFP' (Private not for Profit) school. Actually over 60% of the nurses trained in Uganda are from religious-founded institutions, whether Protestant, Catholic or Muslim. The course we run at the moment is a Certificate in Comprehensive Nursing, similar in level to the old Enrolled Nursing in UK. It takes 2½ years, and includes hospital and community nursing, midwifery, psychiatry and a bit of management. It's a lot to learn.

The students alternate between 'blocks'

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**Kuluva School of Nursing**



**Group work in the classroom**

of teaching in the School and working in clinical areas. We take annually one set of 40-50 students, so there are around 130 students in three separate sets at any one time. We have four Ugandan tutors (including the Principal), two others away doing further training, and, at the moment, two expatriates. There are also two secretaries, a bursar, a home warden, two groundsmen, a driver, and a messenger/tea maker. Pretty well set up you might say, and even more so when you hear that we have recently acquired quite a few new library books, anatomical models and practical equipment, a fancy photocopier, 10 new computers and an LCD projector. The last all came courtesy of a European Union project that has also renovated our buildings and built some new hostels over the last two years.

*Is this really Africa?* Well, yes. The School runs pretty well most of the time, thanks to the Principal's good management and Christian commitment. But there are quirks as well. Many students struggle to pay the fees of around £750 a year and so most of them are in arrears, and that means funds for their food are sometimes in short supply. They live on a diet of porridge, cassava and beans most days, with vegetables added a few times a week. Meat comes twice a month and usually runs out before everyone is served. There are many hard stories of students' backgrounds.

Martha, a second year student, is very pretty, bright and looks like a naive teenager. However, she is actually 23 and married with a three-year old child (married students still have to 'live in' at the School). After her first term her husband, who had agreed to pay her fees, began to lose interest and stopped making regular. When Martha went home in the holidays to her in-laws' village, which is

where she lives, she was treated with coldness. Recently her husband took another wife (not unusual here, even among Christians), and expected Martha to continue to give him his marital rights when she was home. She refused, saying that she couldn't live in a polygamous home and returned to her parents' home, and so he refused to pay any more fees. She doesn't know how she will continue at the School, and rarely sees her son who lives with his paternal grandmother.

For the most part students are a delight, keen to learn and uncritical of the programme of teaching that they receive. Their greatest desire is to be 'modern' so they love anything that is associated with the West, be it CDs of Christian music or modern teaching aids. Computing classes bring

**Anne Avinyia, Principal at School of Nursing**





**Dilapidated ATC classroom**



**Student accommodation at Oyibu ATC**

great anticipation, and after their first successful click of a mouse most students are full of delight and addicted (from the last class, only six out of 56 had ever touched a computer before). However, Anne has been less successful in interesting the Ugandan tutors in modern technology, and most teach using dictation from the notes they themselves made when studying. The younger tutors are keener to learn new skills (even the overhead projector is considered ultra-modern!), but it's a slow process to bring about change in teaching methods. And then you wonder... if students are encouraged to think for themselves, question, argue even (*all virtues to be encouraged in Anne's opinion*), will they then become cynical and unresponsive like some of their colleagues in the West?

### **Writing...**

Talking of the unexpected, Allan never saw himself as a writer of proposals for funding. But that's one of the many jobs he has found himself asked to do recently. Most of our Ugandan colleagues speak English with fluency (albeit the African version of English, which is somewhat tricky for us at times), along with several other languages. But when it comes to written, formal English, few of them are so fluent, and their writing style is often a bit flowery and quaint to western readers. Allan was asked to help with a proposal to a UK charity that supports Christian initiatives in areas of Muslim influence. The proposal concerned development of the Archdeaconry Training Centres (ATCs) around the Diocese. ATCs are where church teachers, or lay readers, are trained for ministry.

Our idea of lay readers from the UK was about people with paid

secular jobs working on a voluntary basis in the church, preaching and taking services on a part-time basis. Not so here. The lay readers are full-time workers, each responsible for a church within a parish (hence the term church teachers), with a single ordained pastor over perhaps eight or nine churches. The church teachers are local men and women, usually with little formal education, and supporting themselves with subsistence farming. They are paid by the church, but it's a pittance and nowhere near enough to support a family. For training they attend an ATC for one or two years on a residential basis, often taking their wives and children to live there with them. The ATCs are poorly equipped with very basic buildings and tiny libraries. The tutors are local pastors with little educational expertise.

The proposal is to set up three or four ATCs with better infrastructure, and concentrate the diocesan church teacher training in these. Two centres would be for Lugbara speakers (most church teachers have little English), and one for each of the other main languages of the Diocese, Kakwa and Mad'i. It's a huge vision, given where we are at the moment, but two of the centres would be in areas where Muslim influence is strong and so might qualify for the funding. But how much time to devote to a proposal that might go nowhere, in the hope that it might on the other hand transform things? The previous one that had been written (Allan can't find out who wrote it or when) was 24 pages long and hopelessly over-ambitious.

Meanwhile he is trying to provide some help for the 600 or so church teachers in the form of *Lectionary Link*. Most church teachers possess no source books for preparing sermons apart from the Bible (a few don't even have that) so the *Lectionary Link* materials provide much that is new to help with Sunday by Sunday preaching. They are translated into Lugbara, though not yet into the other languages.

Such are a couple of examples of the work we get involved in here. We hope to share more with many of you when we visit our link churches later this year.

#### A few pointers for prayer to end:

##### We give thanks for:

- Allan's ankle that was broken in January is more or less fully recovered, and doesn't hamper his activity any more. Didn't God make our bodies well?
- We had a lovely four weeks back in the UK during May to celebrate our daughter Jo's wedding to John. It was great to see them married before the God they both know, and catch up with all our family and friends at the same time.
- The *Lectionary Link* programme is more or less on schedule, despite the delays caused by Allan's broken ankle and our recent time in UK. The reprographics unit is also doing well.

##### Please pray for:

- Kuluva hospital – there are still serious problems there, including a large debt and continuing low morale and division among staff. Pray especially for the chaplaincy there, which has itself been involved in the problems.
- Anne's new assistant at the Diocesan Health Department, who rejoices in the name of Cinderella. Cindy is keen, able, and has made a good start, but has a lot to learn before we go on leave in October.
- A programme of teaching on stewardship and giving, which Allan must complete and deliver to pastors throughout the diocese before we return home in October.
- Our plans for our UK leave as we finish our first term here. We will be in the UK from October 2010 to April 2011. We have already arranged dates to visit most of our link churches, and also various activities such as

retreats and holidays. We will circulate the programme nearer the time.

- Preparations here for that leave, that we can finish what we need to do and hand over our responsibilities to local colleagues.

This comes, as ever, with our love and thanks to God for your faithful support

With our love and thanks for your prayers

*Anne and Allan*



**Top: Students and their families at Maracha ATC**  
**Bottom: Study day for church teachers**

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