



# TRIP REPORT ON THE SCHOOL TO YAMBA ABAANA USA 2018

By Fr Dominic Tumusiime, AJ.



Special Greetings from Rubanda, my family and our school in south-western Uganda.

Dan and I had a wonderful time in Uganda, both in my family and at the school. We greatly thank God for a safe trip he granted us both to go and to return. Our trip began on January 15<sup>th</sup> and returned the 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018. Thank you for your prayers. The time we spent in Uganda was too short especially for me who was at home but we accomplished more than we had hoped to. After our return therefore, I take this chance to share with all of you a little of the much done that is of common interest to us and to all our friends and supporters:

1. **General School performance:** There is a significant improvement in the overall performance of the school with more stable teaching and support staff than the previous year. I also noticed an improvement in the general discipline of students. On the negative side, one support staff and two students were suspended from our school because of lack of compliance with our school regulations. This was after needed discussions and consultations were done between the parents, students and the administration. And the best alternative was for parents to change the school for those concerned students.
2. **New Dormitory construction:** Was fully funded by the generous donors of YA USA. The construction is complete with the capacity to accommodate 80 students on double decker beds. This has significantly reduced the pressure of shortage of sleeping space and of congestion, created an environment which is free of dust and healthier for children to sleep in and enjoy their school life time. We expect the project closing report to come out soon from the school Engineer, Robert.
3. **Mini projects (community funded):** Fully funded by the community contributions. These include the following;
  - **Soil retention wall.** With a hilly terrain, this project has been part of the plan ever since we started planning to have a permanent structure in there. It was something the administration intended to do with the community as part of their constant participation in their development. The project was essential in order to protect the soil from erosion, keeping the ground stable and safer for the buildings and children.
  - **Stairs:** Fully funded by the community: Lack of proper stairs has been a constant challenge at our school ever since the school started but we couldn't think of a better stair than the one we had until we could get a permanent structure built. And this was the right time. It's now much easier and safer for students and others to access the new dormitory.
  - **New bathrooms:** With the new permanent dormitory structure in a new location, extra new bathrooms for students in the new dormitory became a necessity. This would solve the long-standing issue of students walking a long distance with water on their heads and now the burden is over. It has indeed saved the students from rain, mud and other risks.
  - **New Toilets:** Fully funded by the community. The idea for a new toilet came in later during the dormitory construction as we assessed our past experiences. It wasn't foreseen in the new dormitory project planning that it has been so difficult for both students and matrons waking up in the middle of the night or during rains to travel to the old toilets one terrace up. A lot of risks were eminent and very real at times.

- **Dining renovation:** Fully funded by the community. After the construction of the new dormitory and the relocation of the students who had been utilizing the former second dining hall, we were able return the two dining halls to their original purpose of dining. However, we had to do some renovations to combine the two dining halls into one, creating more space and eliminating eating in shifts which has been so troublesome, time consuming and disorderly for the whole school time management. We now have a nice single dining facility at the primary campus with middle columns joining and supporting the former two separate dining rooms.
- **Agriculture:** This has been financially supported by the YA USA to improve and expand on production. It has two aspects: Gardening and piggery.
  - **Gardening:** We have two school gardens; one at the nursery and the other at the primary campuses. With the recent visit and contributions of Mr. Dan Bedard, these gardens have started to take a better shape and more professionalism of what school gardens should look like. We want the gardens to impart improved farming skills to students as well as expand productivity. Gardening has positively impacted students and staff. During my vacation, I was surprised in my normal meetings with the students. They literally requested me to authorize their school administration to allocate them land for a school garden and time on the school timetable to routinely go to the garden for work. They even demanded to do it following the patterns of planting seasons. After a discussion with the general PTA and SMC, the two pieces of land were approved at each campus for a school garden under the pillar of “Life Skills”.
  - **Piggery:** has also been financially supported by YA USA recently and is doing quite well. There are more pigs and they are healthier. The main objective is to promote pig farming to students and create a source of animal products for the school that is extremely scarce in the whole community.

4. **Sponsorships:** began far back in 2004, a year before our school was even born in 2005. The first batch of students to benefit are our first borns of whom some are now in the University and others in colleges. The second group is now in high school with the third in secondary and many more and especially those sponsored by the USA since 2012, are still in our primary and nursery schools. Please note that not all those gone beyond our school level (grade 7) have active sponsorship from us. However, we still count them as part of us or of our sponsorship support program whenever it comes to reporting about it. It’s mainly because of the foundation and some level of follow-up services we still offer to them such as the Alumni program we annually coordinate.

5. **Ms. Peace Uwimana:** Our YA US representative, is happy and loves her work. However she deals with the challenge of lack of a steady and reliable electric power supply environment. We need to look into how to upgrade the nursery solar power system where the YA office is located in order to provide sufficient power more less like we have at the primary campus to allow her to perform her communication role more efficiently. Currently there is very little solar supply at the nursery school, only enough to light specific places. It’s also insecure at night. Peace, who had her first adorable daughter Deborah last year, travels from home in Kisoro to Rubanda every Monday and back to her home on Fridays to attend to her weak mother as her husband Bosco continues to find a stable job away from home.

6. **The Auditor:** His audit report was done and presented to the School Management. It was a work well done. His findings and recommendations were all taken seriously for the near future. Some of the recommendations are to have the school and title as soon as possible as the land policy is a hot issue in Uganda today; name tagging of all our schools' movable assets and growing of our own gardens to cut food costs and improve on sustainability for example were recommended. He very much appreciated and acknowledged the huge financial contribution of the YA USA in the financial life of the school in funding big infrastructures and support for basic disaster needs of the school especially in times of crisis like that of last year, "Rubanda drought".

7. **Our 2018 Priorities:**

Needs seem endless. But with permanent infrastructures getting in place, a big part is being done. Our top priority for 2018 is the construction of **5 classrooms** for the primary section. And next to that is the Multipurpose Hall which is a requirement being placed on us by the ministry of education to have if our school is to be given a national sitting center status for the Uganda Primary Leaving Examination (UPLC) keeping its status as a private school. Currently, for five years, our candidates go to sit at the neighboring government school whenever sitting for these exams comes. We then have a pressing issue of upgrading the nursery solar system, buying the critical piece of land in the middle of the compound and another little piece in future that remains hanging at the corner of our compound next to the space earmarked for the construction of the new classrooms. These two pieces of land are critical and really a thorn in the flesh when it comes to the planning of the primary school compound. Once we own these pieces of land, we can plan what and how we want our school to look like and serve the needs of our children and the beauty of the school. Until then, we remain disorganized and tend to plan with what we have at hand. But we will get there. We have come so far. It's a journey that has taken a village to walk.

Thank you each one. Thank you YA USA Board, Donors of YA. Friends, Parents and the community of Rubanda, the Alumni, the school staff and our dear students. Each one has had a part to play and a price to pay in order to create this lasting impact in the lives of the children in Rubanda, the entire community and Uganda. The journey continues on. Please remain in the boat until it's at shore. Please, receive once again, special greetings from the people in Rubanda, the people most of you have never seen but you give so generously to make a huge difference in their lives. "Unity is power and "united we succeed"

***Have a wonderful Easter 2018***

God bless you. Fr. Dominic