

From: Rebecca Baldock

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Hi, hope the weather has improved and that you are now getting some sunshine.

I'd been meaning to write to you about some of the people I've met here and the inspiration that they are for a long time. So please allow me to introduce to you the following:

Today I met a lady called Muhindo. She'd come to the hospital, as an outpatient with a 16 year old girl. The child's story is a sad one. At the age of 9 she developed cerebral malaria. This left her with moderate to severe learning difficulties. She was physically okay, but unable to speak and had a tendency to bite people. At the age of 12 her mother died. (We do not know what happened to her father. The mother had another older child to a different man, so quite possibly this man had left her too). After the mother died it fell to the child's older brother to look after her. Due to her learning disabilities she was kept inside the house, until the brother ran away, 3 years later. The neighbours alerted this lady Muhindo to the situation, and she broke into the house with the police. They found Christine, who by then was 15 years old, severely malnourished and poorly cared for in a room. Due to her ill treatment she'd spent most of the time sitting or lying with her legs bent. The room allowed her to walk but she'd obviously chosen not to. She'd therefore developed severe flexion contractures at her hips and knees and is unable to walk. However the story does have more of a happy ending. This lady Muhindo is now looking after her. Christine is fed well, so she looks healthy, although small for her age. Muhindo had also started a stretching exercise program to try and straighten her legs. She's also given her a lot of love, and taught her not to bite. A year later, now Christine is healthier she's brought her to the hospital with the hope that we will be able to teach her to walk again. (She still has flexion contractures which we need to correct first. The other hurdle is Christine is very frightened of the thought of standing. So we will be working with her for a long time to see if we can achieve this goal).

Muhindo has no children of her own. She has however adopted 5 children over the years. Three of whom are now teachers. This is no mean feat here. Not only do you have a child to look after, but it's also incredibly expensive to put them through education. She is now looking after the other two children at home, both who have previously been neglected and she rescued. She's a Christian, and she told me that she sees these children, and hears Jesus' words, "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me". "What else can I do" – she tells me, so she takes them into her care and looks after them. The other reason that motivates her is that she was an orphan herself. Both her parents and other siblings died. I don't

know how, I don't think she does. But someone took care of her. She sees these neglected children and something inside her says that could have been me, and she wants to give them what she's been given.

Harriet is a midwife here and the in charge of the maternity ward. She is an incredibly strong Christian and so committed. She loves to sing worship songs to God and pray. Her smile just lights up her face. She has been at Kagando for about 10-15 years, despite being able to get a better salary else where. She is well know in the villages – having the reputation that if you find her in the hospital when you come to deliver, then you know both you and your baby will be well and looked after well. When we go away from Kagando we often take her away with us to give her a break. She regularly works an AM and PM shift together, to monitor a mother, or because the ward is short staffed. Similarly she is often called down to work on her off days if they are short staffed. I've rarely met a person so committed to their work and so full of Joy. She's not had it easy and faces many challenges, yet her faith keeps her so strong and encouraged and full of Joy.

Our Chaplin, Rev Gideon is also an amazing man. He's got a real heart for the youth, and the children's work has grown much whilst he's been here. He's a great encourager and facilitator of people, very good at getting everyone involved. But I think one of the things I admire about him most is his integrity and compassion for people. He's usually quite accepting of things, but when something happens that he believes is unjust he'll make a stand against it, but in a way that people respect and listen to.

Dr Frank is our surgeon and medical superintendent, (in charge of all the doctors and allied health professionals). He seems to come from a reasonably wealthy family, and as the youngest son, and only living male of the family he is much loved and respected. His family is constantly asking him to move closer to them as they miss him, but he is committed to Kagando for the time being. His wife also comes from a wealthy family in Kampala. Kampala is the capital city of Uganda, and she's never lived anywhere else. It's a very big difference to Kagando, but she followed her husband and they have settled here. People often think of us moving out here from England to Uganda and what a difference it must be. (In some ways it is, others it isn't) but it's a big difference for many of the Ugandans too that come to serve here. Dr Frank again works very hard, from morning until early evening. Whilst being here he managed to set up the ward to treat women with fistulas (where women have difficult labours and develop incontinence). He gained funding for this and these women, who are therefore treated for free. At the moment it is the time for the yearly fistula camp where visiting surgeons come to help operate these ladies. They do this once a year, and last time had over 100 patients turn up. These ladies are usually very poor and isolated from society, so the treatment makes a huge difference to their lives.

We have now waved goodbye to Joanne (the Irish physiotherapist). She's in Kampala and will fly back tomorrow. It's been a huge blessing having her with us this year. To help with the work, learn from her, and get another opinion on patients. Having her around also enabled me to spend more time away from Kagando. Last year I visited a few different hospitals and rehabilitation units. By doing this I was able to link up to the club foot project, and now all of us have gone on training, we get the braces the children need and have regular support follow ups to ensure we are doing things well. We've also been doing a lot of research into community mobilisation and community based rehabilitation. We've set up community mobilisations, and are now having regular orthopaedic surgeons visits. The next aim of this would be to treat and rehabilitate children in their homes as well as in the hospital. We've done all the groundwork, and have the ability to do it, now that the hospital physio is running well, but to set up a community rehabilitation program would take lots of money and extra staff. So Richard (my Ugandan physio colleague) is in the process of writing a proposal. If we are accepted and it starts it will no doubt happen after I've left Kagando. But Richard is quite capable and it will be an exciting thing for someone else to get involved in. If started it would hopefully help with patient compliance and follow up and also hopefully help to reach the children whose families are unable or unwilling to take them to the hospitals. It would also hopefully help stop situations like Christine's. She is the second child I've known of who has been locked away, and I'm sure there are others. If you have workers in the community that are known to work and help children with disabilities then hopefully the neighbours would react sooner.

Love Rebecca

Prayer requests:

- Please pray for these people. That God continues to help them in their work and use them
- Please pray for Christine. Give praise for the love and care that she is now receiving from Muhindo. Pray that God will heal the scars she must have from her previous experience. Please also pray for her and us as we treat her, that she will be able to walk again
- Please continue to pray for Joanne as she adapts back to life and work in Ireland
- Please pray for the Community Based Rehabilitation. That we will get the funding, and the right staff to be a part of it.