

# UGAIRISH

project

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**NEWSLETTER ISSUE 3  
SPRING 2012**

**M**any thanks again for all your continued support and donations over the past year. They have made a huge difference to the people of Kamuzinda Village and the surrounding areas and have been of vital help in achieving our aim. Despite lack of rain for the crops, a dairy cow dying and other problems, progress has been made in Kamuzinda Children's Village and the Farm School and our vision for them to become sustainable and self sufficient is slowly becoming a reality.

This is the third edition of our newsletter and we are delighted to share more about what is going on in the village and how your donations are being put to good use. There are two articles written by volunteers who were on the trip that took place in June 2011 and you can also learn more about our online donations, Facebook page and fundraising events.

*The UgaIrish Team*

# FARM SCHOOL

## EXAMINATION CENTRE

Education at the Farm School is taken seriously by a small core of devoted, willing and well-qualified teachers.

Examinations in the various subjects occur annually at a state-approved centre. Achieving success at these examinations establishes a standard which allows students to return to their family's area and pass on vital skills for agriculture to be successful. It also puts graduating students closer to the top of the pile when seeking employment. However, the exam process involves considerable cost and upheaval for the students, with early morning travel on the days of exams to the nearest centre.

Prior to our trip last June, UgaIrish Project were involved in planning and costing the village's own state-approved examination centre. This 30 x 60 foot building would serve as 2 extra classrooms divided by a removable partition: it is planned that basic IT facilities would be developed in one; the other will be used as a home economics room.

Work had begun before we arrived and continued, aided by UIP volunteers, during our fortnight. Finishing promptly was delayed by difficulties with sourcing local tradesmen to finish the work. However, as I write the finishing touches are being applied and 2012 examinations will be held in Kamuzinda!

The beginning of the new exam centre



## ELECTRIFICATION

The hard work involved in farming at the village since 2006 has run in parallel with establishing a 'vocational school', teaching animal husbandry, crop production, tailoring, carpentry, and home economics.

Electricity at the farm would undoubtedly make the farm and farm school much more efficient in:

- Pumping water \*
- Heat source for young chicks \*\*
- Lighting for the dormitories and for study in the evening
- Tools for carpentry

Application to Uganda's version of the ESB (an efficient, no-nonsense, safety and regulations-conscious body) was made in early 2011. During our visit in June the process of planning the route of the overhead cable from one end of the village to the other (500 metres as the sea eagle flies) was worked through. Payment was made by UgaIrish Project and works were complete with great rejoicing in the fortnight after we left.

Jus' like that!

\* 160 20-litre jerry cans are required every day on the farm; at 90 up-and-downs of the pump handle per can, that's a lot of pumping!

\*\* Without electrically-run infrared heat lamps, multiple small charcoal fires need to be lit and kept going every night.



## VILLAGE & SURROUNDS

### KOOKABURRA HOUSE

**K**ookaburra House is home to 21 orphans and is run by a widow, Mamma Margaret, whose husband was shot dead in the war of the 1980s. Injuries that Mamma Margaret received during the same incident have left one leg 5 inches shorter than the other.

It is the oldest orphans' house, built 25 years ago and is in much need of attention. All the volunteers put their hands to mixing cement and a new floor was laid in the kitchen. A spare room in the chicken house was levelled and floored to be used as an over-flow bedroom.

A rain harvesting tank was erected and guttering from the house was channelled to feed into the tank. The veranda around the house (supports the walls of the house but damaged by annual heavy rains) was repaired and plastered.

Gutters were erected around the kitchen and chicken house and fed into the rain-harvesting tank, and much needed painting was done.

It was a very busy time, but with so many enthusiastic and energetic volunteers, a massive amount was achieved. As a token of appreciation we were presented by the orphans with an unusual gift – Mamma Margaret's prize cock!



The veranda being finished off, ready for plastering

### BUSH FEEDING PROGRAM



**T**he Feeding Program is always a challenge, especially to first-time volunteers. It involves a trip into the bush where we meet the most destitute people who have no support network at all. Most people visited are on the border of starvation and live in abject poverty.

Apollo, our farm manager, links in with needy families, many of whom are suffering from AIDS and cannot access medicines due to geographical isolation and poverty.

The purpose of these trips is to bring medicine, food, clothes and other basic necessities. Sometimes these visits lead to other needs being identified and help organised, such as medical care.

One young mother of five who we had visited on previous trips has no use of her legs and is cared for by her elderly mother. This year, however, the children's grandmother was noted to have a orange-sized tumour on her neck. We feared for this family as they all relied on this old lady to live. We were able to organise for her to be sent to hospital for treatment. Hopefully when we return she will be better.

Other trips to the bush have led us to children who are in need of temporary or long-term housing at the orphanage, eg, due to parental illness. Children with profound special needs have also been encountered and their needs met.

Often volunteers have been so moved by the great need all around that they have returned with no shirt on their back! It is a very humbling time because the people are so gracious and kind.







- 1: Kelly's Hotel was one of our sponsors
- 2: Crafts are always popular!
- 3: Morning assembly outside the Primary School

Rose's old house, before it started falling down after a bad storm



## JULIET

Last June in Kamuzinda the UgaIrish volunteers became aware of a young orphan girl suffering with HIV/Aids.

Juliet is aged 15 but looks about 10 and is in very poor health. She lives in one of the village orphan houses and is looked after as well as possible by Mamma Moses, the house mother. However, there was no money available for her necessary medication, dietary requirements, and extra vitamins.

Within an hour of hearing about Juliet's hopeless situation there were offers from 3 of the volunteers to help support her over the next 4 years. Now, through monthly donations for her medical needs and extra fruit and vegetables, Juliet is in better health and able to attend school. She is a very intelligent girl, and, with this improvement in her health and also extra scholastic materials, she is progressing well in her studies.



## ROSE

Rose lives in the bush about 10 km from Kamuzinda; she has 6 children and when the volunteers visited her she was living in dire conditions – her mud house which was leaking and about to fall down (see picture on left) was propped up with poles and there was no bedding for the children. Two of the children are housed in one of the orphan homes in Kamuzinda and Rose is left with a teenage girl who suffers from epilepsy, a 4 year old, a toddler and a baby.

The team were very impressed at how hard working she is and how she is determined to eke out a living on her small plot of land. They decided to build her a pit latrine (toilet) and pen for 2 pigs, a boar and a sow, which were supplied by the farm school. With the help of the farm students it is hoped that Rose would soon have an income from the pigs.

Before the volunteers returned home they promised Rose that they would fund raise to build her a new house. That promise was fulfilled - in January Rose and her family have moved into their new house!





## ONGOING WORK

### HEN PROJECT

UgaIrish are helping to support this project which is spearheaded by Kate Oakley from the UK. Kate plays a very big part in the overall running of the Farm School and travels to Kamuzinda several times a year.

When fully developed the hen project will make the Farm School fully self sufficient and should go a long way towards paying staff wages at Kamuzinda Primary School and Nazarene High School, the orphanages and clinic and providing food for the orphanages.

70% of the hens were laying in March 2011 and the profits from these have been used to feed the livestock, pay some staff wages and meeting the daily farm needs. UgaIrish help with the monthly payments.

The children living in the 9 orphan's homes currently get 1 – 2 eggs each a week

### PIG PROJECT

UgaIrish are also supporting this project by helping with the monthly food and veterinary bills. In general there are over 100 pigs at the farm. The piglets are mostly sold off to generate income for the running costs of the farm and the pigs are used as meat for the orphans on special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter.



## 2012 PROJECTS

2012 will bring many new projects onto the horizon. Here is a snapshot of the main projects we're aiming for during the coming year.

### MELDURA HOUSE

We are in the process of raising funds for the building of a new house for 20 orphans, Mamma Josephine (house mother) and her 5 children. Their present house is in dire condition and is very isolated - the children have a half hour walk to school each day.

A much more accessible plot of land has been located and plans and costs have been drawn up. The UgaIrish team of volunteers who are traveling to Kamuzinda this June hope to start building the house with the help of a local builder.



Meldura House is the white building behind; it's not much better though. The new house will be better and closer to the village.

### PURCHASE LAND

UgaIrish are hoping to purchase a 2 acre piece of land adjacent to the farm on which to build a Special Needs Facility.

On their yearly visits to the surrounding community they have identified the need to provide a facility for children with physical and intellectual disability.

### WATER HARVESTING

Water harvesting will continue to be a priority with the UgaIrish Project. Each year the volunteers help to supply and erect water tanks and gutters to the buildings around Kamuzinda Children's Village.

## MARIE'S EXPERIENCE

As I stepped off the bus in Kamuzinda village, I felt my clock had turned back 50-60 years. When we visited the houses and classrooms in particular, I almost had a “deja-vu” feeling of being in some of those buildings in my early childhood.

For people who have become so accustomed to running water and electricity in our homes, it is such a shock to realise that there are still people who have to draw water and lack electric light in their houses and classrooms. Despite the fact that they have so little, I found the inhabitants of the village to be very warm and friendly people. I will never forget how often I was greeted with a beaming smile.

They are hard workers and put their best effort into their daily tasks. Their singing, drumming and rhythm are amazing. I was humbled as to how appreciative the girls in the farm school were at being taught to knit. They picked up the skill so quickly and were so proud of their achievement.

The children in particular taught me far more than I could ever dream of teaching them. As we arrived to teach them art I was very impressed by their welcome, warmth and enthusiasm. They were unspoiled and displayed great stamina, strength and spirit.

My eyes were opened many times by my observations and conversations I had with some of the Mamas. One evening I met

Mamma Sarah. She was overjoyed as she had received milk, eggs and meat from the farm that day. She informed me that for the previous 2 weeks their staple diet was beans. Unfortunately, the meat came from a valuable cow which had died that morning as a result of an accident.

Visiting the clinic where we were given a very warm welcome by that nice gentleman, Baker, shocked me to the core. He explained how AIDS and malaria were seriously affecting the health of many people in the local community. When he showed us where the drugs were stored, I was horrified to see so many empty shelves. Without doubt, Baker and the nurses are doing an excellent job, but they are put to the pin of their collars trying to meet the demands of the large numbers that show up at the clinic.

I was deeply troubled by many things I saw during my stay; the overcrowded houses which were each a home to 20-25 orphans; Juliet who is suffering from Aids and obviously in a lot of pain; baby Paul's Mamma who is also suffering from Aids and not looking at all well; the visit to the houses in the outlying community where some of the houses were not fit for animals and grannies were struggling to care for their grandchildren as their own offspring had died from AIDS.

However, I was heartened to realise that

there are so many people who really care for the inhabitants of Kamuzinda village and its surrounds. Apollo, Siobhan and all the volunteers who come to help are making such a difference to their lives. We can rest assured that even though there is still lots to be done, it is so obvious that huge progress is made year by year.

The people of the village are indeed in very good hands. It wasn't easy witnessing

the poverty, vulnerability and ill-health. I hope that our presence assured them that they were cared for and would never be forgotten.

Uganda is lush, green and beautiful. We fell asleep to the sounds of the cicadas chirping and the frogs croaking. It was music to our ears. Hopefully, with the help of God, we will make another trip and enjoy the experience again.

## NESSA'S EXPERIENCE

Uganda 2011 was one of the most amazing experiences so far. It was nothing like I had anticipated, at first it was strange and hard to get used to! But by the time Monday came I couldn't help but start to feel at home in Kamuzinda. The village is such an amazing place and such an inspiration, the people are of such a friendly nature and are so content with their way of life.

Reading back over my diary I think its obvious we all achieved so much and got so much done during our time in Uganda, but it couldn't have been done without an awesome Uglish team. We all got on so well and worked really well together, plus had a great laugh!

We were blessed that everything went so smoothly, no one got sick, the food was amazing thanks to Mamma Margaret and the gang, we had toilets and by the end of the

week we counted ourselves lucky for a dribble of luke warm water to wash ourselves!

The whole trip really opened my eyes to so much I would have taken for granted before and I have learnt so much from the Ugandans. I hope that I was able to make a small difference to them and have had half the effect on them that they have had on me.

I think when Kim, George and I went back to visit Meldura, it had the biggest impact on me. Compared to the other homes this home was really suffering badly; it was so small and not very well kept, never mind being a 30 minute walk from the village and schools. I am so glad that the decision has been made to move this home and I think it will make a great difference to the community and to the lives of the kids in that house.



## TRUSTEES VISIT TO CAMPHILL

Recently some of the Ugairish trustees visited the Camphill communities in Callan, Thomastown and Jerpoint, Co Kilkenny. They were very impressed by these communities, which live in unity with people with intellectual and physical disabilities and who see them as central to the community.

The residents learn cooking, gardening, farming, pottery and weaving etc.

The trustees think that a special needs facility run in the same way would work very well in Kamuzinda.



# EVENTS

## Fundraising

Mary Doyle, a local hairdresser from Carlow, is running six marathons in aid of Ugairish! These will take place in Rome, Paris, Cork, Belfast, Berlin and Dublin over the coming year.

## Other Events

Bag Packing in Dunne's Stores, Graiguecullen: 27th and 28th April.

Barrow Walk: 7th May (Bank Holiday).

Coffee mornings, boot sales and cake sales are also planned.

Like us on Facebook to keep up to date with events.

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## FACEBOOK

Like us on Facebook for news, updates, events and exclusive articles. Find us at [www.facebook.com/ugairish](http://www.facebook.com/ugairish)

## DONATIONS

A facility is now available on our website for online donations, and *all* of it goes straight to Uganda! Find it at [www.ugairishproject.org/help](http://www.ugairishproject.org/help)

Charity Number: CHY 18988

Chairperson: Siobhán Kinsella Secretary: Eric Stilwell Treasurer: Jonathan Jacob

Committee: Fran Stilwell, Tom King, Róisín Buckley, Joan Thompson, Austin Kinsella, Wendy Jacob