

UGANDA
BUKANAGA
FIELD REPORT
FIRST QUARTER 2015



Children Arise
Helping Children at Risk



BUKANAGA

HISTORY

In conversation with Cissy over the past few years, Terry and I have learned that she grew up on an island on Lake Victoria. While we have little detail about her childhood, Cissy herself characterizes it with the word "neglect".

A number of years ago after coming to the Lord, Cissy felt directed to move to Bukanaga and plant a community church. Since this move, some 11 or 12 years ago, Cissy has been faithful to the Bukanaga community.

Bukanaga is a small community with a population of perhaps 1200. It is physically bound by Lake Wamala and national park lands. These boundaries restrict farmlands which are needed to support families. While the population is essentially subsistence farmers, there are not adequate lands today to ensure each family is able to support themselves.

When Cissy arrived in Bukanaga, she remembers there being a lot of drunkenness. At that time, the village was primarily occupied by fisherman. These men would work when fishing was good but do very little other than drink when they couldn't fish. Changes in the lake environment over time have caused most of the fishermen to move away or take up farming. Even though subsistence farming is a challenging life, this change has been positive for Bukanaga because it has provided a more stable and family oriented community.

Throughout the years, Cissy has been faithful to establish a Christian church and has taken steps to provide schooling for the small children. Children used to walk great distances for their education. This long walk exposed them to risk from traffic or misfortune.

Today Cissy provides primary 1, 2, 3 & 4 classes, educating 74 children. As the children grow, and resources (human and material) become available, Cissy continues to expand school services.

Cissy lived in a mud-brick home in this community for a number of years. This rental property allowed her to reside with family (a daughter and grandson) and also provided shelter for two teachers who were helping her deliver education. This rental property also offered Cissy adequate space to raise pigs which provided a small personal income.

In 2013, Cissy's landlord required her to discontinue the piggery and Cissy lost that income. This loss of income forced Cissy's move from the rental property and begin sleeping in her office at the school. One small room became the school office, storage for school equipment, and Cissy's living area. The two teachers working with Cissy occupied similar rooms when the rental property was given up.

With the support of a primary sponsor (CFC in Qualicum on Vancouver Island), Arise has been funding lunches for students in Bukanaga for several years. When the school began, Cissy noticed that children had short attention spans and were not retaining their studies well. In some cases, children were sleeping in class. Cissy determined that the root cause for these issues was poor nutrition. Children would work with their families during non-school hours, sometimes for long hours causing loss of sleep. At school, these children would have a hard time focusing and even staying awake. This caused Cissy to reach out to CFC and Arise to consider funding a meal each day during school.

Since this time, nutritious lunches and education of parents about children's needs have changed the situation for students and they are now able to learn effectively. Of course, education is an important first step in these children's futures.

In addition to the funding of school lunches by Arise, Cissy has found another partner (CRI) who is funding school supplies for the children. This has enabled Cissy to provide more effectively for students as well as improve the classes and her own living conditions.

In 2014, Cissy was able to acquire a small amount of land and shared her hope of building residences for herself and the teachers as well as re-establishing the piggery to provide a small income. In fact, she has begun building and now has a functional three room home for her personal residence.

Since arriving in Uganda, Terry and I have been to Bukanaga to meet with Cissy multiple times. We have witnessed the students being fed lunches funded through Children Arise, and we have participated in chapel lessons.

BUKANAGA

NEWS / ACTIVITIES



GOVERNMENT EXAMS

In July 2014, Terry and I were invited to join the children in Bukanaga as they started three days of government exams.

The children were undertaking tests supervised by their teachers. Tests were about 8 pages long and as you can see in the picture below, children used benches as both chair and table. In fact, the classrooms are too small with inadequate light to take the test indoors, so the children moved the benches outside while they were tested.

In fact, the children have a single set of benches that they move from place to place as activities require. When using the church for chapel or classes, they place them on their heads and take them into the church building. When students are in classes the benches are relocated into the classrooms. At meal times, the children march the benches back to the place where they eat. And when I placed one on my head to help the kids move them, all the children laughed.

Along with various other needs, additional seating and real student desks need be considered to help these little learners.

STUDENT LUNCHES

As Cissy begins the 2015 school year, she does so with 74 students. This is more than previously and as 8 of her students now attend classes all day they require additional nutrition.

Arise will need to work with sponsors to consider how best to address the added needs of Bukanaga students.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

During 2014, Cissy has made good progress on developing infrastructure. Today the school has proper latrines and the church which is also used for classes has a cement stage.

The school building has also been fenced with Papyrus to reduce the distractions for children and contain them when they play outside.

In fact, the Arise car is one of the biggest distractions the kids face and our rival always disrupts classes. Unfortunately the fence has not fully resolved that issue.



BUKANAGA

NEXT STEPS

Cissy is aware that in the long-term Bukanaga needs to find local means to resource the school and other community needs. Arise has met with Cissy several times now to discuss this reality. Cissy has begun considering options that would allow her community to progress toward local funding of school lunches and other needs for their children, but this is a journey and will not be achieved any time soon. Arise will continue to encourage Cissy to build local support for her work and establish local methods for funding community needs.

We believe local education must take place to train parents and other locals to value the education of their children. Today, parents claim to see the purpose and need for education but lack a serious commitment to fund these services. Arise feels Cissy will need to address this mind-set before real progress toward local funding can take place.

The complete solution for Cissy and her community is not yet clear. We hope to see this community begin to work together to resource themselves but the actual methods have not yet emerged. One piece of the puzzle seems clear however, this community needs to become interested in themselves and their own success. They need to want this enough to back it together.

One of our goals then will be to look for ways to help Cissy engage and educate the community. It seems logical to look for ways to draw the community out of their homes to engage with each other and consider their own needs. This will hopefully be an area where we can engage visitors. Individuals or teams may be able to provide education for families, drawing them into community and giving them opportunities to learn and connect.

The actual solutions for Bukanaga need to come from that community. Arise cannot drive success for them long-term. Either they will begin to function as a community or they will continue to struggle. While important, education and engagement is therefore only a helpful step toward the solution.





BUKANAGA GET ENGAGED

Arise and its partners are working to improve the circumstances and future for children in Bukanaga. Today we are working in the following ways:

- 1) We are providing funds to ensure children receive the nutrition they need to thrive at school and achieve a primary education.
- 2) We are working with Cissy Mukisa to engage and educate the community about the importance of education to their children.
- 3) We are looking for effective ways to engage the families with each other in order to establish a community that can work together.
- 4) We hope to eventually walk with the community in implementing methods of funding their own community needs.

Further work will be required to fully address the issues in this village, however we hope these steps will lay a foundation for the future.



Perhaps you would like to make a real difference to the children and families of this small rural village. Here are some ways you can get engaged:

- Donate to the Bukanaga Student Lunches project and help provide nutritious meals for learners. You can do so by visiting the following link:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/children-arise-ministries/>

- Perhaps you have skills or knowledge you are able to share with parents and families. We are looking for methods of drawing the people together so they can begin to value education and community. You can get in touch with us at the following email address: uganda@childrenarise.net
- Perhaps you have a group that would like to engage in this community. We are able to help you consider ways your team could work in Bukanaga and plan your trip. You can also contact us using the email address shown above.

Thank you for considering how you might be part of the solution for this small group of struggling families. We look forward to discussing this work further with you!