



## 15 Suitcases and a School

This past year a small group of SEEME volunteers Spent 3 weeks in Mbale, Uganda fulfilling our dream of building the Queen of Peace Junior Academy. For many years we have been working with Judy Nalube at sites throughout Uganda. When she decided that she wanted to return to her home community and start a school in a village where few students ever go to school, we were thrilled to make this happen for her.

Our journey began in SLC, UT with a small group of 5 travelers and 15 50-lb suitcases. Inside those suitcases were the beginnings of a school, sanitary pads, sewing materials and engineering equipment. We hauled, pushed and shoved those beasts from Utah to Amsterdam to Kenya to Uganda. And once we arrived at our destination all we could do was wish we had more of everything!

We saw the land for the school for the first time and were amazed at how large the plot was. The local children quickly learned that a school would soon start taking shape in their village and we gained a who brigade of workers willing to haul water, shovel soil, and carry tools for the duration of our trip. We found a contractor who had worked with us at Byana Mary Hill and within 24 hours construction began.

While Bill was at the site working during the day, the rest of us visited schools, villages and medical clinics with our pad project, women's seminars, small business loans and sewing machines and eyeglass clinics. At each location we were met with enthusiasm and enduring gratitude. The schools were overcrowded and understaffed. The medical clinic was barren of medical equipment. We learned that the clinics were so undersupplied that women had to bring their own birthing kits to be admitted to the delivery room. These kits consist of a razor blade, a small bar of soap, a piece of string, and a small sheet of plastic. When these were prepared in Utah, it could not have been foreseen that they would be needed even in medical clinics

Perhaps the most moving of all our visits was the one to a women’s prison where rehabilitation was not just a word, but something put into practice. The “prison” consisted of small house-like structures circled around a central green area with flowers, trees, animals and places for the women to sit and work. Women were given classes in financial literacy, reading and writing, decision making and then trained in a trade. They sang and danced together, worked together and learned that life could be different with these new skills.

Today the school is up and running with classes from preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Judy has 3 Teacher-Aides and 30 students. We have a kitchen, a latrine, a shade structure and a playground in addition to the 4-room schoolhouse. Now we are working towards purchasing another piece of land for a school garden, getting supplies to the school, putting up a fence around the school, and installing solar on our trip in 2018. And we look forward to hauling those huge suitcases back to Mbale one more time.



The team with 15 suitcases departing Salt Lake City



Eyeglass clinic



Girls learning to make pads



Construction underway on the classroom block



Completed classroom block and recreation equipment



Team conducting a health seminar

Special thanks to the many people who donated their time and money to make it possible for SeeMe to provide these meaningful projects



One of the eight donated sewing machines

SeeMe is a 501(c)(3) organization without paid staff. For information or to make donations go to [seeeme.org](http://seeeme.org) or contact: **Sonia Manuel-Dupont**, [sonia.manuel-dupont@usu.edu](mailto:sonia.manuel-dupont@usu.edu), (435) 797-1340