



Spring Trip Report

2016

300 Timothy St. Sturgis, MI 49091

telephone: 269-743-9161

web: www.smpionline.org

Graduations, Graduations, Graduations

Leadership Training!

Our spring 2016 trip was filled with celebrations. The most recent three year cycle finished this spring and we were ready, along with our students, to party. Bring on the cake! SMPI provides the cake for every graduation. I am so proud of these students. They have hung in with us for three years! Wow! Every time we celebrate a graduating class I get choked up. What an honor to be able to teach these wonderful men and women and watch them grow! Unfortunately we had to suspend our training in Burundi due to political unrest. Hopefully we will be able to begin again and finish the courses soon. So that left four locations where students had finished the classes this spring and were ready for graduation. Graduation is a high time of celebration for our students. It is the culmination of three long years of studying the EQUIP leadership material. Persevering and attending classes Twice a year over a three



Kigali, Rwanda Graduation— Level 1



Cutting The Graduation Cake
Kabale—Level 1



Mbarara—Level 2



Entebbe—Level 2



year time frame causes a release of pent up emotion that no one realizes is there until we begin to celebrate with a graduation ceremony. Students have big smiles on their faces! Many classes want to wear gowns. There is a lot of hooping and hollering! Speeches are made! Thank You's are given. Certificates are handed out and pictures are taken. All total, 170 people graduated from levels one and two of the material. This graduation season marks three cycles of classes. We started in 2006 and now have trained leaders in nine different locations throughout Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. It is our plan to continue offering the EQUIP training classes. We will continue with level one in Rwanda and Burundi, level 2 in Kabale and we will offer our first level three class in Entebbe. Three years from now we will be celebrating again! We would love to have you join us on a trip. There is nothing like going and experiencing it for yourself. Plan on it! :-)

Changes at the farm!

The decision was made to clear the last portion of the farm and begin to use it to plant more crops. In addition the farm is now going to concentrate on growing valuable cash crops which will be sold. The money gained from these sales will be used to purchase the food to feed the children at TKPS. Self sufficiency comes in many ways. We have a plantation of matoke (banana) trees. They should begin to produce a regular crop of matoke this summer. This produce will sell readily and give a good income to the farm operations. The plan is to plant 1000 matoke trees. Of course the children at the school will be able to eat some of them too. Other valuable cash crops to be grown at the farm are ginger and passion fruit. Sugar cane will be grown in the valley. It is a crop that does well in wet land. The valley on the farm has water in it even during the dry season.



Removing the corn from the cobs



The matoke plantation at the farm. In the background you can see the newly cleared area where corn and ginger are planted.



Jennifer working on her Panga skills

the farm. They have been an incredible blessing! Their wisdom has helped to guide farm decisions and plan direction.



Beans ready for harvesting

These crops should produce more than enough to pay for the farm operations and provide food for the noon meal at TKPS. Ozzie and Evelyn Byler along with Jon and Ben Yoder traveled to Uganda to lend their expertise to

the farm. They have been an incredible blessing! Their wisdom has helped to guide farm decisions and plan direction.



Tasting the first ever sweet corn grown at the farm

The Sponsorship Program

Child sponsorships are the life blood of Treasured Kids Primary School. Since the school is located in a slum of Kampala (the capital of Uganda called Kosovo), most parents are unable to pay the school fees for their children to attend school. Consequently many children do not go to school.

A \$35 per month commitment will send one of these children to school. We have now been involved with TKPS for 8 years and have approximately 85 children attending school through our child sponsorship program. We also sponsor



14 teachers and administrative staff to help offset the costs for the school. Our goal is to add an additional 100 sponsorships in 2016. We have gained a few but still need many more to reach that goal.

Would you consider becoming a part of the sponsorship program? You will be able to send letters and gifts and will begin to realize how awesome it is to help one of these children start on the path out of poverty. So much for so little!

Thank you to all our partners and sponsors who are standing with us at SMPI. You are making a difference!



Love and Blessings!
Ross & Jennifer