

One School At A Time

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Alternatives to Caning— A Workshop for our 4 Ugandan Partner Schools

by Bay Roberts with Raj Gill and Kendra Rodriguez

“Violence in any form is a tragic expression of our unmet needs.” — Marshall Rosenberg, PhD

August 2013: A Ugandan teacher beat a high school student to death. Her alleged offense? Holding a placard stating “virginity is dignity” without permission.

April 2013: A Ugandan teacher beat a 16 year old girl into a coma after he found her sleeping in the dorm during class time.

Corporal punishment, tragically, is a common form of discipline in Ugandan schools. At least 81 percent of primary school children suffer caning or other forms of abuse from teachers, parents, and fellow students. Although steps have been taken to reduce violence in the classroom—the Ugandan government even banned corporal punishment in 2006—in practice, it is still widespread. Teachers simply have not been exposed to any viable alternatives to caning.

To address this problem, Hussein Tadesse, One School at a Time program manager, and Raj Gill, a trainer at the Center for Non-Violent Communication (www.cnvc.org), teamed up to hold workshops on non-violent communication. The goal was to expose participants (teachers, parents, and students from One School partner schools) to viable alternatives to corporal punishment in the classroom and at home.

All of the teachers present expressed concern over punishing the children. Some teachers were open to trying a new discipline model, while others believed that caning was the only way to maintain order. “Spare the rod and spoil the (continued on page 3)



We Listened and were Surprised!

Kassanda Boarding School and Bbinikila Primary School, two new partners in the One School at a Time network, recently completed their five-year strategic plans—a process that takes many months and many stakeholder meetings.

Kassanda Boarding School identified classroom renovation and construction of teacher housing as its top priority. What surprised and delighted us was instead of assuming One School at a Time would pay for these improvements, this school asked One School for a workshop that would enable the school administration to identify a local funding agency and to write a grant. Bbinikila Primary School’s top priority was to improve students’ math skills. The teachers want to learn new and improved ways to teach math not only so students improve their scores on government tests but so that students are able to use math knowledge in everyday life. This surprised and delighted us as no partner school had ever made an educational goal an urgent priority.

In solidarity with Kassanda Boarding School and Bbinikila Primary School, One School at a Time is raising \$2,000 for math training and grant-writing workshops for teachers and stakeholders. Help us support these proud and hard-working Ugandan schools by making a donation at 1schoolatotime.org!

Thanks to YOU another Ugandan School has a water system!

We are often asked what happens after we request support for a project. Did we raise the money needed and did the work get completed? Did your donation make a difference? In this case, our goal was to secure the funds to build a rainwater collection system at Bbinikila Primary School.

The answer is **YES**, thanks to you, we did raise the funds needed; **YES**, the water system was built; and **YES**, your donations have made a huge and positive impact on the health and well-being of 324 students, 12 staff, and countless community members and parents.



The 40,000-liter rainwater cistern being built.



We now will be able to collect rainwater that runs off the school roof and store it in the cistern!

One School at a Time has big plans in 2014. With your support, these good things can happen: student and teacher trainings, Kassanda Boarding School classroom construction, the addition of partner school #5 (Kassanda Secondary School) to our network and continued development of small-income generating businesses at all our partner schools.



Local parents pitch in funds- 70,000 shillings (about \$29) toward cistern costs.



Bbinikila girls will no longer need to spend an hour a day hauling water to school.



Marcella Mason

Kids Helping Kids, One Bowl at a Time!

Two thirteen-year old chefs from Boulder, Colorado wanted to cultivate their passions for cooking while helping kids less fortunate than they. Together, in April 2013, they created an elegant meal of homemade soups, breads, fresh salads and desserts which was rapidly consumed the day of the One Bowl event by about 40 hungry and enthusiastic guests. The food was fabulous (how about that carrot peanut soup with cilantro pesto served in a locally baked bread bowl?) and the evening was full of laughter and good times. Thanks to everyone who participated, over \$2,350 was raised to support the work of One School at a Time and their Ugandan partner schools. Mark your calendars for the next One Bowl event this coming April 2014!



Sienna Tone

Alternatives to Caning (continued from page 1)

child,” summarized one teacher. However, many agreed. “We have been told to stop caning, but don’t have anything to replace it with.”

Raj and Hussein were moved by the teachers’ efforts to create a good learning environment for their students with little resources and support. Raj asked the teachers, “Remember when you were a child and you were caned? What was that like for you?” They concurred that the beating was painful and that they did not enjoy it.

The stakes for not maintaining discipline, however, are high. If students perform poorly on government tests, the teacher could be fired or transferred. “I feel uncomfortable caning my students because I remember that I did not like to be beaten when I was a child. But I need to keep this job and in order to do that, the students have to get good grades. So I have to beat them,” explained one teacher.

Raj noticed that the teachers did not smile or laugh in the classroom because they needed to maintain their disciplinary image. Even older kids did not smile in front of their teachers. Raj asked the students to smile during the workshop, and it was hard for them to do. They are under pressure to get good grades.

One teacher shared her experience when she stopped caning. She noticed that after ceasing to enforce corporal punishment in the classroom, her students’ grades deteriorated. She asked her students why. “Teacher, you don’t beat us anymore!” came their reply. Hussein observed that the students have been made into wheelbarrows: if the teacher does not push them, they will not move! The push is the caning, and the students have fully bought into the model. The system remains intact because both the oppressor (the teacher) and the oppressed (the students) believe this is the only possible way to teach and learn.

During the workshop, Raj presented the teachers with a 4-step model:

(1) State observations, not judgments

“I notice you did not bring in your homework today.” (statement)

“You are lazy and stupid!” (judgment)

(2) Express feelings, not thoughts

“I see your homework is not in; I feel concerned.” (feeling)

“Why can’t I ever rely on you to do anything?” (thought)

(3) Identify your needs

“I need to know that you are learning your lessons.”

(4) Make a request, not a demand

“Would you let me know when you will hand in your homework?” (request)

“That homework better be in my classroom by 8 AM, or else!” (demand)



Hussein practicing his non-violent communication skills

By the end of the training, many of the teachers wanted to try this new way of communicating with their students. “You have taught us this model and demonstrated that it can be done!” exclaimed one teacher. Another teacher reflected on the failure of her previous teaching method. “I am telling them what to do and threatening them. Instead, I want to invite them to collaborate so we can work together.”

The teachers’ willingness to explore a different way of communicating was inspiring to both Raj and Hussein. Hussein has made a promise to provide long-term support to those teachers who have dedicated themselves to exploring non-violent communication techniques. The hope is that with guidance and support over many years, the teachers can model new ways of managing their classrooms that will have a positive ripple effect in their schools.

Warm appreciation to Ken Driese for use of selected photos and to Alice Levine and Kathy Buehmann for editing and proofreading.



By donating to One School at a Time, you are doing so much more than helping poor Ugandan schools. You are bettering the life of every child who attends and their families and community. A little support goes a long way.

Helping schools succeed in Uganda is not about dumping resources on problems and moving on; it is about building strong partnerships with local communities to harness the remarkable intelligence, vision and commitment that they share for education.

Join with us in this beautiful work! Go to 1schoolatatime.org and click on: How to Help. We now accept recurrent donations. Even \$5 or \$10 a month can make a huge difference! If you prefer, you can make a donation using the enclosed envelope.



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