

## Presentation by Derek Nkata, Programme Director Link Uganda

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 at Uganda House

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### LINK UGANDA PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

- **Your Excellency the Uganda High Commissioner**
- **Invited guests**

**14, 13, 11, 10**

You must all be wondering why those 4 numbers.

To understand the meaning of the numbers we need to go back in time.

This is the story behind them:

**14** years ago in **1996** I was recruited by Masindi District Local Government as their District Education Officer (DEO). My job was to ensure that quality of education in the district schools improved.

**13** years ago in **1997** Government of Uganda introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE). Like other districts in Uganda there was a massive increase in primary school enrolment in Masindi District. **137,000** children in **210** primary schools.

**My job as a DEO was seriously challenged. How could I ensure that the children for whom I was responsible got quality education.**

**11** years ago in **1999** While working on a project with MoES I met Perran (Chair Link England and Wales)

- He asked me very many questions one of which I remember to this day.
- Young man as a DEO of Masindi what is it that you really what to do?
- I told him Old Man – I want to be supported in my responsibility of ensuring that schools in Masindi provide children with a good education.
- Perran told me that was not a problem Link supported rural districts such as Masindi in the efforts to provide better education for children.
- He introduced me to Steve Blunden (CEO)

**10** years ago in **2000** Working closely with Steve we succeeded in writing a proposal and securing funding from The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) for the Masindi District Education Development Project (MDEDP) Links pioneer project in Uganda.

**Today we are celebrating 10 years of Links work in Uganda**

**What I want to emphasise is related the following 3 questions:**

1. What is Link doing in Uganda? Or Why are we in Uganda?
2. Why do we think at Link that what we are doing in Uganda is the right thing?
3. How can we be helped in what we are doing?

## 1. WHAT IS LINK DOING IN UGANDA? WHY ARE WE IN UGANDA?

A good education changes lives. It gives people the skills and confidence to lift themselves out of poverty. A good school provides this opportunity to hundreds of children, and over time this can lift communities away from poverty.

- While UPE has increased access to schools as shown by big enrolments issues of quality of education persist.
- Unless the issues of quality are addressed the enrolments will be threatened.
- While there has been a strong focus on enrolments less attention is given to how to make classrooms better for both children and their teachers.
- The challenge is now to make sure that all children get a decent quality of teaching and learning once in the classroom, to ensure the government's investment is not wasted, and all children get the decent start in life that school should provide.

## 2. WHY DO WE THINK AT LINK THAT WHAT WE ARE DOING IN UGANDA IS THE RIGHT THING?

- At Link we develop and deliver innovative solutions to problems in education. We are known for our School Performance Review model. SPR is **our unique selling point** and **identifying feature** and **value addition to education**.
- We empower communities with information. Through our **School Performance Appraisal Meetings** communities are able to access information that they can use to engage in discussing the performance of their schools.
- We understand that schools face different challenges and have different strengths and weaknesses.
- At the centre of Links work are CHILDREN - We talk of giving children a chance
- Children who need a good education and hence good future.
- Link's vision is of a future where all children and young people in sub-Saharan Africa have access to high quality education.
- We have a systemic approach where we look at the education system and its context as a whole.

- We empower stakeholders (schools, communities, local and national ministries of education) to deliver solutions across entire districts so that all schools benefit from our interventions.
- We have developed technical measures or interventions that:
  - Improve governance in the education sector
  - Strengthen school management and leadership
  - Help teachers do a good job
  - Give voice to children, communities and civil society
- Our work in Uganda has continued to expand and receive national recognition for its contribution to school and district improvement at a critical time when the quality of education continues to be a challenge under Universal Primary Education and decentralisation policies.
- We started in one District Masindi but today we are directly working with 5 districts: Masindi, Buliisa, Katakwi, Kamwenge and Kyenjojo.
- The demand for our work has led to the Ministry of Education and Sports requesting for Link to introduce its model in 17 districts and 2,100 primary schools in the Acholi, Lango and Teso sub-regions in the country.
- Tullow Oil Uganda under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme has asked Link to support them in the Districts of Hoima and Buliisa where they are engaged in oil exploration.
- Other NGO's such as SNV and Build Africa have asked us to work with them to introduce our model of District and School Improvement in the places where they work.

### **3. HOW CAN WE BE HELPED IN WHAT WE ARE DOING?**

- With 10 years work in Uganda, Link has accumulated experience and expertise and is in position to continue contributing to the improvement of quality of education for Uganda's children through its innovative and relevant interventions.
- We have seen that Government and other NGOs in Uganda are interested in Link's work.
- The challenge for us is how to meet that demand which requires increasing the capacity of Link in Uganda and for this to be done further funding and support is needed.
- Link is a small organisation that achieves big results to do this we depend on support or funding for our work.
- We could do much more for children but we don't have the all the resources that we need

- **Omumwa gwensonyi gusuza nyini gwo enjara. 'A shy mouth makes its owner sleep hungry'** we welcome all those who can support and contribute to our work in the country.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Uganda we say '**Entasiima eburu agiha**'. Translated this simply means that a person who does not say thank you, does not deserve to get more.

Let me take this opportunity to thank:

The **Government of Uganda** for introducing the UPE policy and for creating a conducive atmosphere for NGOs such as Link to work with MoES, Districts, Schools and Communities.

Let me take this opportunity to also thank all those who support Link's work in Uganda. Without funding our work in Uganda would not be possible. We have our **Funders, Former Global Teachers, UK Schools Linked to schools in Uganda and individuals. We are always grateful for your support**