

10 August 2017

Dear friends of UPLIFT!

After our bimonthly newsletters were replaced by quarterly ones last autumn, these have been irregular (with respect to the English version, an understatement!) Our intention is to send them out early in November, February, May and August. As a yearly cycle, they should fall safely – despite climate change – within the four seasons! Here, then, comes our *summer* newsletter.

So, what's new? It's been 8 weeks since our Annual General Meeting, which gathered 14 members from Harstad in the North, to Arendal in the South. Well, we think it will come as a surprise that during the course of the summer we have expanded, with a big group of new members – in Canada!



*Nursing Class of '76 (with one male participant!) – 2/3 of them are now part of UPLIFT's 'extended family'...*

This is how it happened: The “Friends of UPLIFT” chairperson, Michael Vitols, went to Canada for a big class reunion with his nursing-student colleagues. The reunion was held in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where Michael grew up. As part of his visit he gave a talk at the College where they all studied nursing. His talk was mainly on the challenges of nurses in Africa, but ended with a few words about the work being done for women by UPLIFT in Uganda. The solidarity with underprivileged women in Africa touched the hearts of the group.

Thus inspired, the coordinator for the class reunion, Mary McGarry, took the initiative

to discuss an idea with reunion group members, subsequently establishing a closed Facebook group called: "Nursing Class of '76 Bursary Club". This FB group now has 18 members, – the purpose being to receive donations and forward them each year in June to *Friends of UPLIFT*. The funds will be transferred in full to UPLIFT to support their work to train illiterate villagers in the West Nile region – dominantly women. So far, the Facebook group has donated enough to train about 150 villagers.

What makes this story especially touching is that since 2013 when we first began to send our newsletter to several English-speaking friends, the first among these were Canadians. One has long been an ‘expatriot’, living some 30 years in Africa with his Ugandan family. They are staunch supporters of UPLIFT! His relatives and other English-speaking members reside in Canada. Not least, Tom Gossen (now 83) – who was the initiator of UPLIFT in 2001 – has after living many years in Uganda returned to his hometown on Vancouver Island.



*Friends of UPLIFT (Norway) gathered at the 2017 AGM*

‘Friends of UPLIFT’ was established five years ago, initially as a Norwegian group. Now we have members residing in several countries on three continents!

Obviously, the third group picture in this newsletter – the first two from Canada and Norway – must come from Uganda.

Especially since it represents the people and driving force for our support – women in Uganda rejoicing after their successful graduation ceremony earlier this year.



*UPLIFT learners 'Class of 2016' – some of the 1.380 graduates!*

For these women, and their volunteer teachers, having friends in Norway and Canada is of vital importance.

And we feel obliged to add: *Friends with big hearts and some cash to donate.* At our AGM, and in the Annual Report we mentioned that we were lagging behind with contributions at the half-year mark. One suggestion by the AGM was to apply for membership in a Norwegian umbrella organisation for womens' groups called FOCUS (Forum for women and development issues). Membership may give a possibility of applying for funding. This proposal will be discussed at our next Board meeting.

There are also rumours that one or two of our members will be celebrating big birthdays, for which a donation to the work of UPLIFT has been mentioned, as an alternative to giving presents to someone who already has enough "things".

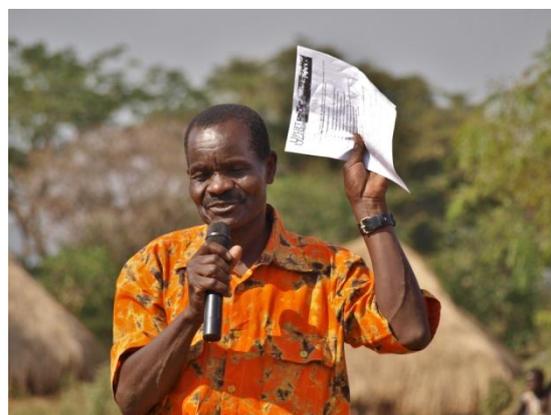
Finally, let us include an excerpt from one of Dr. Hizzaya's (UPLIFT Director) recent emails, about the formation of CBO's (Community-based organisations) by the UPLIFT students:

*"I have just come back from West Nile where I had gone for the refresher training. Mark will soon send you a detailed report on the refresher and finance. I also visited 3 community based organizations in Zombo district, namely Angaba involved in tree planting, Okongo dealing with maize growing and Tholith concerned with savings. Angaba has planted 500 trees. Okongo had a very successful maize production this year for which the government awarded them with 8 sewing machines. A government sponsored training on how to make clothes has been scheduled to start in a few months to come. Tholith has saved 3 million Ugandan shillings [850 \$] which they use to give loans to members. To ensure the money security they have a box with 3 padlocks to make sure it is not stolen by any of the 3 caretakers of the money. [..!]*

*The teaching work is very encouraging. All the mentors and the coordinators are very active."*

With best wishes to all for a continued great summer (already drawing to an end in Norway), on behalf of the Board of Friends of UPLIFT,

Gunnar Lange-Nielsen (secretary)



*Dr. Hizzaya Hissani, UPLIFT Director and chief trainer*