

February 15, 2015

Dear friends of UPLIFT !

To come straight to the point:

2015 was the year of a home team win!

Picture this: A newly formed sub-county, Ndéwu, becomes a player. Eight villages join forces to host the game. One thousand seven hundred and fifty participants (if not all present) 'line up'. Twice that number gather for the festivities. Troupes counting some 120 dancers, singers and musicians from all learners' communities in 2014 vie with each other in the build-up to the moment of victory, when the UPLIFT Cup is to be awarded the sub-county with the highest literacy examination score. The suspense is tangible. The Cup is lifted. Mark Ssemukasa reads out loud: "And the winner is: ...NDEWU!"



Welcome, UPLIFT! Welcome, Norway vis'tors!

It goes without saying, African dance is a powerful way of expressing togetherness, joy and pride – in one word: Celebration. But with the announcement of this year's result, just as a troupe from the hosting sub-county had finished their performance in front of the guests of honour, songs and dance steps and elbow-and-hip shaking all fell short of adequate expression. Quite devoid of rhythm, the screaming winners threw themselves about, like calves let out of the barn in spring [after a Norwegian winter], others rolling on the ground, one running off with arms flailing, like a half-crazed footballer after scoring. The chaos of movement and sound made the man with the microphone tie his tongue for a long interval in the proceedings. The applauding audience was readily caught into the mood, while the few who had dozed off after the three-hour ceremony and too many long and fully translated speeches were left slumped in their chairs, with tentative smiles and dawning discovery of what was actually going on.



For a moment, displaying the 'other side' of being now literate: Uninhibited joy, bordering on chaos!

It was truly a moment of victory for all; learners, mentors, and coordinators, and once more, for UPLIFT. No one would have expected the 2014 batch to surpass the preceding year's all-time record. But this time, out of the 1.756 learners enrolled, only 2 dropped out (and one died) while 1.753 completed the full 9-month course! Of the 1.748 learners who sat for exams (a record of nearly 100 %), 1.681 (96 %!) graduated with certificates.* Enough to make even a biased supporter suspicious, we have asked this time to have translated from *alur* a representative exam paper, questions and answers and all..!

[Cf. the UPLIFT statistics summary under Articles and Reports in the Friends of UPLIFT website.]*

This year we were only three Norwegian 'friends of UPLIFT' visiting, along with our 'cousins' from Kampala – among whom was mama Edith Senoga, the UPLIFT founding Subscriber who has been a guest of honour in most graduation celebrations since the beginning in 2001! (you will 'find her' in the recent November letter). Like on earlier visits, with the profuse showering of gratitude to UPLIFT (the Star), our supportive role was gratefully referred to by speakers from local and district authorities as well as the inter-changing 'dancers/choirs' and, not least,

the respective front singer-callers of two of those choirs who rather took the breath away from the guests of honour. What a treat!



Words of praise from LC3 Chairman Mr. Unene

And then we were treated also to gifts from the freshly graduated learners. Truly, to be able to take part in this wonderful celebration of new-found literacy is such a privilege!

Another achievement to celebrate this year, is the formal 'shifting' of UPLIFT, as an organization, to Nebbi. The first 'localized' Board of directors, with Dr. Hizzaya as Chair, was established the day before the graduation ceremony. The following morning a joint meeting with representatives of Friends of UPLIFT was held. And very soon, a fully revised Constitution will be registered with national authorities.

The Friends of UPLIFT in Norway have contributed their pledged 10.000 USD in 2014, while the remaining 1/3 of the budget were donations from friends in Canada and Uganda. The efforts of these friends are wholly volunteered services and contributions, given in the same spirit as all of UPLIFT's work in the field as well as in its administrative functions. Hopefully, the generosity will be sustained in 2015 so that the UPLIFT adventure may spread to new groups of learners in Nebbi and Zombo.

Warm greetings on behalf of
the Board of 'Friends of UPLIFT',
Gunnar Lange-Nielsen



Listeners, in the periphery -



- and spectators young and old, close up.