

Dear friends,

I just checked; this afternoon we have the same weather here in Lillehammer (altitude 200 m) as they do in Paidha (alt. 1.440 m) – light wind, sunny, 25 degrees C. Two days ago, the same, plus a thunder shower. Each.

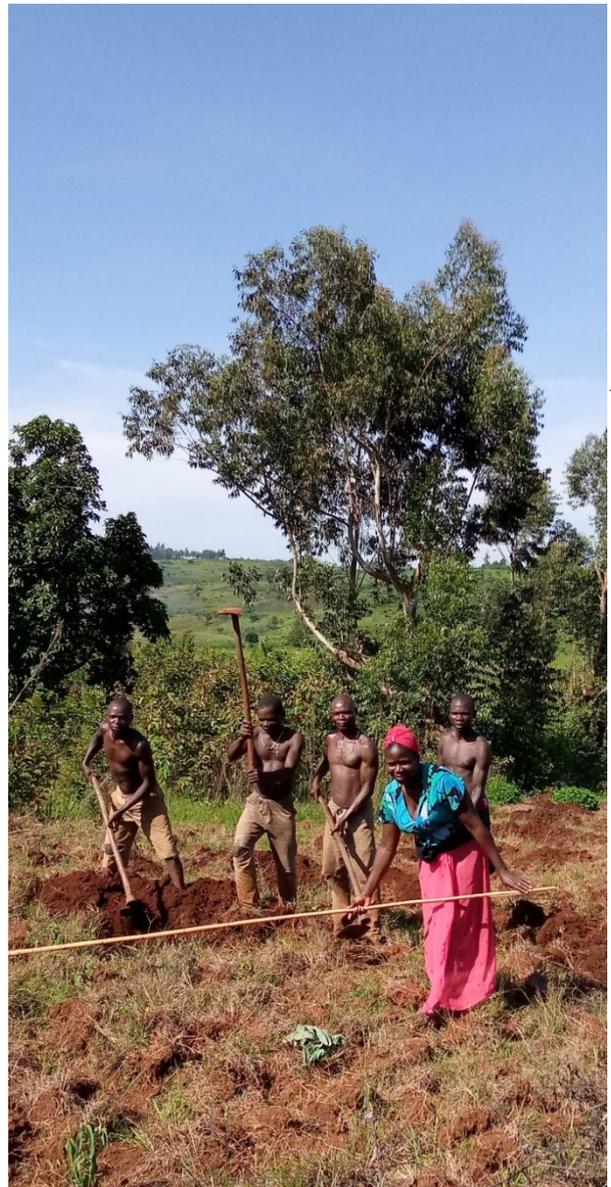
Why this frivolous reference to weather, when there's more important stuff to write about?

Three reasons: One gets tired of starting a letter by referring to the Covid-19 situation (now more common than talking about the weather). Secondly, the impact of weather, a.k.a. climate change, on daily life – whether in Uganda or Norway – is far more serious than it was 50 years ago (or during my boyhood summers in the fifties). But more specifically, right now, the weather in Nebbi and Zombo districts (i.e. 'UPLIFT territory') directly affects the *learners* of the program.

During the seasonal changes (being now at the end of the 'long rains'), it is time for crop planting. In a report last week from UPLIFT we were told that the number of learners in the classes, normally 40, had been down to 28 on average because more family hands were needed for the intensive planting period. A friend in Paidha (among the face mask tailors, last autumn) called on Sunday and said that "tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. she was off to her little plantation ('garden') to plant bananas ('matooke'). Two weeks delayed after taking last season's crop to the market.

Such temporary break-away from 'class' is not unusual; at times, subsistence farming takes priority, and the literacy training shifts to lower gear so that learners who have missed classes (only twice a week) are able to catch up and sit for exams when that time comes.

As we know, the 2020 batch (started only in February!) ran into a very different year. After the first Covid lockdown at the end of March, it took 4-5 months before resuming. The good news is that the training has gone uninterrupted since August. As of this week, however, Uganda entered a new lockdown, at the outset for 42 days, with closed schools and restricted gathering. Come January, the 2020 batch may graduate—as "class of '22"!



to write ab

Proscovia Atimango – 'temporarily self-employed'.



Premium: Not banana, nor 'irish' (potato), but cassava!

Health-wise, the restrictions may shield West Nile from the 'second wave' that has now hit Kampala and adjacent Wakiso district. For one dependent on employment (e.g. teachers) and without access to own crops to feed a family, however, this is a setback to square one.



The greater picture': not just four young 'diggers' but five! Face mask or plantain—Prossy takes charge of measuring.

At this very northern latitude, one might suggest that the 'stop and go' operation of the UPLIFT training is mirrored, to some degree, in the broader functioning of the Friends of UPLIFT. Perhaps 'paralleled' is a better word – with the pandemic it may be hard to point specifically to cause and effect. The fact is, however, that in the course of last year our organization did not succeed in achieving the financial contribution goal set in our delayed 2020 annual general meeting. Perhaps a shared wish to encourage UPLIFT to keep the programme running (along with the opportunity to buy two much needed motor cycles at a very good price!) made us overly optimistic, so late in the year.

Concretely, the figures for 2020 show that we were short of 3/4 of our goal – USD 8.750 versus USD 12.000 (achieved in 2019). As of this year, by the beginning of June, the result looks even weaker; 475 USD per month, appr. 60 % of those five months in the year before.

As a consequence, coordinators as well as mentors had to wait patiently for accrued allowance, several months in arrears (though

well-known in Uganda). A budgetary consolation: There was no need for printing a new set of learners' books in February!

Without further attempt at analysis, let us conclude—in this English version of the letter to our Norwegian members—that more of these friends were encouraged to join those who have already arranged to contribute via automatic monthly bank transfer. That has become our rock foundation! And some of you are welcome, of course, to join our 'Canadian cousins' with a contribution via www.upliftvenner.no

Under the circumstances, the board of Friends of UPLIFT will not propose an annual pledge to the AGM in August, but leave the question open for discussion, after receiving additional and adjusted calculations toward an 'after-the-fact' budget for 2021. The aim, of course, will be to make UPLIFT fit and ready to once again launch its ordinary training programme at the beginning of 2022.

Best wishes, on behalf of Friends of UPLIFT,
Gunnar Lange-Nielsen (secretary)