

December, 2013

Dear friends of UPLIFT!

Let me begin this December letter from “Friends of UPLIFT” by sharing some thoughts about distress and necessity, for the world has many dark clouds on the horizon.

When someone is in distress it is natural to want to help. When distress hits a population in the form of disaster, there may be need for a coordinated, global response. We are used to helping out when catastrophic situations occur. Events in the past few years, however, seem to indicate that this need is occurring more frequently. Recently, in the Philippines 13 million people were affected by the typhoon.

At the same time, when looking at the needs of disadvantaged people, we can find interventions and projects that give rise to hope and optimism. The story of UPLIFT is one such example. Here, we experience “need” in a different context. Not catastrophic in nature, but rather an urgent need for knowledge, – of a kind that can lift individuals and communities from the quagmire of poverty and despondency, enabling them to help themselves and one another.

In the world of international aid and development, there is a distinction drawn between emergency aid and relief, and long-term development.

Emergency aid is help given in acute disaster situations, whether man-made or caused by nature, or both. In such cases aid takes the form of providing security, shelter, food and clean water, and medicines – to maintain life and health among the affected and help rebuilding the community.

Longer-term development aid aims at helping impoverished people improve their daily circumstances. We can provide a helping hand, but it is they themselves who need to find the knowledge, inspiration and motivation necessary to bring about lasting change. As such, aid becomes also preventive, in fending off future distress. As friends of UPLIFT we have seen the benefits of this type of development partnership.

Yet, let there be no mistake; there is no conflict of interest between these needs. With the role of world citizen follows a dual responsibility. When faced with the needs of others, be it distress or necessity, we know that the earth is home to the entire human family, and true solidarity dictates that both needs must be met.



UPLIFT recently informed us that this year 2,005 adults have sat for the government exam to confirm their newly-acquired literacy skills. This number is the highest since 2009. We know that the ability to read and write is a door-opener to a larger world. The dynamic relationship between acquiring individual skills and community development provides for new possibilities and wider horizons.



In January 2014 eight of the “Friends of UPLIFT” will be privileged to participate in the graduation ceremony and talk to some of the new graduates. They are expecting us and are curious to greet these “strangers” who have decided to help them with no thought of recompense.

Naturally, we shall bring to them greetings from the steadily increasing Norwegian “Friends of UPLIFT” family, - following the progress in West Nile ‘from a distance’!

On the eve of our departure to Uganda, I have been thinking about what our motivations are, as “northern benefactors”. Why UPLIFT? Why this microscopic programme in a remote area of a small country in Africa? After all, there are so many ideal organizations who cry out on behalf of millions in need. Is it because learning to read and write is a basic human right? Or is it because UPLIFT has developed a systematic and cost-effective approach that would seem unparalleled? Or is it because integrated literacy training of this kind connects directly with the daily activities and needs of the local community?

Obviously, the questions are rhetorical. The answer is to be found precisely in this unique combination. But equally important is the sense of kinship we experience as we stand heart to heart with the many UPLIFT volunteers who work tirelessly in the field. Add to that the fact that such reasons meet our need for the confirmation everybody wants – to be able to say: This works.

On a personal note, I have learned much through my “adoption” of Daniel in Uganda. Simply put, once in a while, when paths cross, you stop and say: this is one opportunity which I won’t let just slide by. Twelve years later, the commitment was much the same with UPLIFT, – as if I was saying again: Yes, I choose Daniel.



Before penning off, here's a short update, "to whom it may concern", about contributions from the Friends of UPLIFT toward the end of the year. Ten members have now arranged for monthly contributions through internet banking. This is a welcome development and will, in time, provide better predictability. However, with our still limited membership we would not be able to meet our pledge without the larger "one-off" donations. At this moment of writing – when UPLIFT is about to print the learners' certificates – we can optimistically hope that Friends of UPLIFT will succeed in reaching this year's goal of sending USD 10.000 to UPLIFT.

To one and all, a heartfelt "thank you" – on behalf of the 'the UPLIFT famiy' in Uganda.

Holiday greetings from 'Friends of UPLIFT'

- for the Board,

Gunnar Lange-Nielsen