



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

Based in the Vale of Glamorgan, Vale for Africa works in partnership with Advancement for Community Empowerment in Tororo, ACET, to improve healthcare and education through the development and funding of appropriate projects and support.

Projects

ACET works in the Tororo District of Uganda to deliver a number of projects that are funded by Vale for Africa, along with other funding partners. The projects have concentrated on healthcare, particularly eye care, and education through the provision of a local library, installing fresh water supplies to local primary schools, and recruitment and support of scholarship students at UWC Atlantic College. More recently, ACET has been supporting two local hospitals in the area with the provision of supplies to assist with the treatment of Covid-19 patients – both in the short and medium term.

Eye Care Project

The project began in 2013 with a scoping exercise to determine the eye care needs of the Tororo community. The team established that Tororo district could benefit from outreach eye check-up/refraction 'camps' in the community, and eye operations at the Benedictine Eye hospital (BEH). Following discussions with the Tororo local government, permissions were granted for outreach camps run jointly by a team of optometrists from Wales, the Benedictine Eye hospital (BEH), and Tororo district hospital. Gwaragwara Health Centre is the centre for the project, but the camps also take place in primary and secondary schools. Each camp lasted five working days, except 2018 where a four-day week was trialled but not pursued in subsequent years. During the camp week, the optometry team trained village health teams and hospital staff on the use to equipment to diagnose eye problems and eye health.

In terms of impact, over the six-year period (2014-2019), the joint eye care team saw over 3,000 patients, provided treatment, dispensed spectacles, and arranged for cataract and related operations to be undertaken at the BEH hospital. This intervention has saved people's eyesight and made them aware of the importance of primary eye care.

Eye care activity	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of patients screened	421	750	1,064	1,365	709	1,116
Cataracts & other surgery	N/A	75	106	196	128	149
Reading, prescription glasses	N/A	100	100	722	452	695



Figure 1 Ted (Optom) examining patient



Figure 2 Village Health Teams doing visual acuity training



Figure 3 BEH & Tororo dispensing team

ACET Rural Community Library Project

ACET rural library is run as a joint Vale for Africa-ACET project. Since its inception in the 1980s as a resource centre for agricultural training, it has grown to serve the community. Following the launch of Vale for Africa in 2008, Jane Hutt (MS, Vale of Glamorgan) began to support the TOCIDA rural library which at the time was not fully utilised/operational due to lack of staff to keep the library open. Jane paid salary for the library assistant for four years.

Since 2009, the library is staffed six days a week, giving a safe reading space for school children and leading to a growth in readership. For example, in 2009, there were only 21 registered library users, but by December 2010, the number had grown to 372. By 2022, the number of registered users now stands at over 2,500. The increased readership is testimony to the success of this project which has seen library users improve their educational attainment through a more embedded reading culture. To put this into perspective, in 2014, one year after the library was fully operational, Tororo was one of several districts in Uganda with no pupils in Division 1 of the 2014

Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).¹ This figure included ACET rural library users. With the hard work of the ACET volunteers, and library assistants in promoting the library, the user's academic performance improved. For example, in 2017, of the 22 library users who sat the PLE, 8 pupils scored Division 2 (merit), 12 pupils scored Division 3 (pass), and 2 pupils scored Division 4 (fail). There was no first class in that cohort. By 2019, out of the 39 library users who sat the PLE, 3 pupils attained Division 1 (distinction), 26 pupils scored Division 2 (equivalent to a merit) and 10 scored Division 3 (pass). There were no fails.

Other charities have also supported the library. For example, in 2014, the Rotary Club of Cowbridge club paid for 40 chairs that are still in use in the library (see figure 6 below). In 2020 at the height of the pandemic, SAFE foundation paid for items to support washing of hands and sanitisation facilities which enabled ACET to meet the Ugandan Government's strict standard operating procedures for public education facilities.

In 2021, Vale or Africa paid for the refitting of the two adjacent rooms to re-home the library that had been previously housed in a community hall (see photos below). The impact of these developments is that ACET has brought educational resources closer to its rural population, increase the reading culture, and contributing to improved pass rate in the national examinations.



Figure 4 Renovation of one of the library rooms



Figure 5 Refurbished library

¹ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/5-000-schools-register-no-candidate-in-first-grade-1564772>.



Figure 6 users in the refurbished reading room



Figure 7 washing hands before library use

Water For Schools Project

Over the last 9 years (2013-2022), the Water for Schools project began by the Rotary Club of Cowbridge, and later joined by the Rotary Club of Meissen from Germany, has provided clean water to over 24 schools in Tororo district. ACET, the local partner, works with the National Water and Sewerage Corporation to connect a water mains pipe and a water meter to primary schools and nurseries that have no access to clean drinking water. In 2021, Rohit and Geeta Patel, local supporters, paid for the connection of water to 4 schools and extended the water connection at Okwira nursery to bring it closer to the kitchen. The Patels also paid for the engraving/marketing of 16 water tanks previously supplied by Cowbridge, at the request of the schools.

Between the Rotary Clubs of Cowbridge and Meissen and the Patels, 33 schools have been connected to water connections (see list below). The impact includes the provision of clean drinking water and school dinners for over 8,000 pupils, and the prevention of water borne diseases. In addition, the girls are saved the long trek to fetch water for school use during class time. This means that the project has lowered the attrition rate for girls as they do not miss classes because of travelling to and waiting to fetch water. ²

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2022/02/15/time-spent-fetching-water-keeps-girls-out-of-school/?sh=2b4efaaf3cbf>



Figure 8 Pomedede primary water tap 2014



Figure 9 Maundo water tank 2021

List of beneficiary schools (2014-2022):

1. Abongit primary school and Nursery (Cowbridge)
2. Abweli primary school (Rohit and Geeta Patel)
3. Akworot primary School (Cowbridge)
4. Apokor primary school (Cowbridge)
5. Aputiri primary school (Cowbridge and Meissen)
6. Archbishop Yona Okoth primary school (2022, Cowbridge and Meissen, ongoing)
7. Atipe Rock Primary (Cowbridge and Meissen)
8. Barinyanga primary school (Cowbridge and Meissen)
9. Buyemba Primary (Cowbridge and Meissen)
10. Gwaragwara primary school (Cowbridge)
11. Magola primary school (Cowbridge)
12. Maliri primary school (Cowbridge)
13. Maundo primary school (Rohit and Geeta Patel)
14. Mawele primary school (Cowbridge)
15. Morkiswa primary school (Cowbridge)
16. Mwello primary school (Cowbridge)
17. Okwira Nursery school (Cowbridge; Rohit and Geeta for extension of water, and tank)
18. Okwira Primary school (Cowbridge)
19. Orago primary school (Cowbridge. Rohit and Geeta for rainwater tank)
20. Osia primary school (Cowbridge)
21. Pagoya primary school (2022, Cowbridge and Meissen, ongoing)
22. Petta primary school (Cowbridge)
23. Podut primary school (Rohit and Geeta Patel)
24. Pomedede primary school (Cowbridge)
25. Poyameri primary school (Cowbridge)
26. Rugot primary school (Cowbridge. Rohit and Geeta for rainwater tank)
27. Segere primary school (Cowbridge and Meissen)
28. Siwa primary school (Cowbridge)
29. St Agnes Mella primary school (Cowbridge)
30. St Jude Malaba (Rohit and Geeta Patel)
31. St Jude Nambogo (Cowbridge and Meissen)
32. Tuba primary school (Cowbridge and Meissen)
33. UTRO primary School (2022, Cowbridge and Meissen- ongoing)

Covid-19 Support Project

In March 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic was declared in Uganda, and the country went into a strict lockdown with very limited travel permitted into, out of, and within Uganda. As a result, the Vale for Africa's eye care camp could not take place as neither the Vale for Africa optometry team nor the Tororo based eye care team could travel to health centres to arrange for the eye checks and treatment. In the meantime, both BEH and Tororo hospitals were faced with increasing number of patients including with COVID but with limited resources to treat them.

Val for Africa and its supporters decided to provide support to the two hospitals as both were handling all types of patients not just eye patients. Vale for Africa collated the financial resources and provided financial support to both hospitals in 2021, and more recently in 2022. The money has been used to purchase equipment like coveralls, surgical gloves, oximeters, oxygen concentrators, masks, and sanitizer. Between them, both hospitals have used the equipment to protect over 100 health workers, save lives and treat those who are very ill. These life saving benefits cannot be underestimated.



Exchange Visit Project

Vale for Africa sponsored one exchange visit in 2014. The guests were Dr. Thomas Ochar the medical superintendent of Tororo District hospital, and Dr Proscovia Arach, the medical director of the Benedictine Eye hospital in Tororo. Members of the charity accommodated the doctors gratis. During their visit, the doctors observed things like stock rotation, ward administration, and medical processes, and met other health professionals at The University of Wales Hospital.

In terms of impact, Drs Ochar and Arach were able to transfer knowledge gained to improve service delivery in their hospitals.

UWC Atlantic College Scholarship Project

In 2010, the Principal of UWC Atlantic College, based in the Vale of Glamorgan, offered its first AC scholarship worth £24,000 per annum at the time to enable a student from a low income family from Tororo district to study for two years at the College in St Donat's, Llantwit Major. The first scholar Batholomew Gavana arrived in 2011 and was later followed between 2013-2021 by four other students - Isaac Onyango, Jackie Obbo, Patrick Oketcho, and Josephine Nyachwo. Although all five students had excelled at the Uganda O-level examinations, they had to pass a series of stringent entrance tests to be eligible for the scholarship. They all excelled. Typically, these

scholars had not studied abroad, as their parents were too poor to afford such international fees let alone national fees.

Vale for Africa covered the ACET budget for awareness raising about the scholarship via radio announcements circulated before and after the release of the O level exam results, and meetings with schools, parents, and students. in the Tororo media. The charity also covered the cost of student recruitment, and of study support and maintenance costs (like warm clothing, laptop, and toiletries) for the scholar while in the UK. At the end of their studies, Vale for Africa covered the scholar's visa costs and travel to the airport for their onward flights to the USA for university study.

The scholarship has enabled five students from low income homes to pursue a high quality education at the United World College, graduate with an International Baccalaureate, and pursue university education in the US. In addition, the scholars have given back to Tororo community as they had to choose a project that would directly benefit the communities and implement this project in Tororo over the summer of their second year. Some chose fish farming, others supporting peer learning and yet others reading skills. Apart from supporting development in Tororo, the scholars publicised the benefits of studying at the United World Colleges to Tororo residents. Importantly, all the money that would have been spent on the student's A level tuition fees for two years, was re-allocated by their parents to pay for the scholar's younger siblings' education. Given that each scholar has over 6 siblings, it is safe to assume that at least 20 children have been kept in school because of the AC scholarship. Future benefits include the scholar supporting their own families, and their wider community including people of Tororo, Uganda and Africa as a whole.

ACET governance

Vale for Africa has been funding changes in the governance of ACET to ensure that it is fully compliant with the third sector regulators in Uganda. For example, it covers a range of costs that relate to the legality of ACET and the work that it does including paying sitting allowances for board members, auditor fees, tax advice, and annual returns. Funding from the charity has also enabled ACET to develop a governance system that is better able to support Uganda's development strategies as set out in Uganda's *Third National Development Plan (NDP III) 2020/21 - 2024/25*. Supporting the government's development strategies is an obligation of all non-governmental organisations in Uganda.³

So far, ACET Board of Governors has been able to evidence its support for the Uganda government's strategy of education service delivery via the rural library and UWC Atlantic College scholarships. ACET has also supported the government's health service delivery thorough the eye care project and the COVID-19 support to the BEH and Tororo hospitals. Contribution to the national programme on water management has been achieved through the Water for Schools' projects funded by the Rotary Clubs of Cowbridge and Meissen, and the Patels.

³ As stated in the Third National Development Plan, the Government intends to increase the co-ordination of development initiatives by (among others) NGOs to ensure that "all resources are deployed in the implementation of the same set of development priorities." (para 4.6.21)

Funding

Funding in support of activities in Tororo comes from several sources. As well as regular contributions from supporters, fund raising events have been the backbone of Vale for Africa funds. In addition, one-off donations in support of particular projects and some grant funding have supplemented the charity's income.

Partnerships

As well as donations and fundraising, Vale for Africa has been supported by the Rotary Cubs of Cowbridge and Meisen in the provision of water supplies to schools and by UWC Atlantic College in the provision of a biennial scholarship for a student from Tororo.

Vale for Africa

Having operated informally in its early years, Vale for Africa has been registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales since November 2013. The charity has a maximum of 12 Trustees.

Advancement for Community Empowerment in Tororo (ACET) Ltd

ACET is incorporated as a non-governmental (indigenous) organisation (NGO) with limited liability in Uganda with Registration No: 80020000639782. It is also registered with the National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organisations with Registration Number: 1011

ACET employs a library assistant on a full-time basis and pays for cleaning and security of the library and the chairs, desks and books in it. ACET relies on trustees and other volunteers to carry out executive responsibilities. Their contribution covers a wide range of activities like mobilising members of local communities, conducting selection and verification of schools for the water project and overseeing connection of water to schools and so on.

ACET began life in 1991 as a community based organisation called *Piny dongo Ri Wegi* which in Dhupadhola language means "[a] community grows through its people". With funding from *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband* (DVV) - a German Adult Education Association, the organisation expanded its operations from the village of Kisoko to three former districts of Tororo (Budaka, Butaleja and Pallisa). This geographical expansion meant that *Piny dongo Ri Wegi* could no longer be classified as a community based organisation. With the support of DVV, the organisation was registered as an association with the Registrar General of Companies in 1992, and as an NGO with the Non-Government Organisations Board in 1994. The change of name to Tororo Community Initiated Development Association (TOCIDA) took place in 2002. After 16 years (in 2018) the name of the organisation was changed to Advancement for Community Empowerment in Tororo (ACET), and it was registered as an indigenous NGO under the current laws. The name is still in use today.

ACET's future priorities (short term)

ACET is committed to attaining social change in rural and deprived communities and to align its activities with Uganda's National development plans as required by law. In addition to the above projects, ACET would like to undertake a project that supports the national development delivery strategy of "*promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation as well as ICT*" (para 4.6.17) and "*improving access and quality of social services*" (para 4.6.12) through the provision of an online library service to supplement the provision of physical books.

Vale For Africa is a registered charity in England and Wales, charity number 1155642

The second is a proposed Tuition fee project that would offer six scholarships to final year students pursuing a Bachelor of Science Education degree at Nagongera campus of Busitema University. The campus is in Tororo district. A scoping exercise has been funded by Vale for Africa in 2022, and the team is working on establishing legalities and the feasibility of the project. Once this is complete, the findings will be submitted to Vale for Africa for further discussions and with a view to possibly funding scholarships in the academic year 2023-24.