

## Storyline – Education for Sustainable Development in Entebbe, Uganda

Text: Ylva Lundin

**From the 10th to 19th of October 2008 I had the privilege to visit the fantastically beautiful and hospitable country of Uganda. The purpose of my visit was to give a full day workshop on how Storyline can be used to reach learning for sustainable development. The workshop was part of a conference for head teachers from Uganda and Sweden.**

The conference is one of three in a school development programme between Entebbe Municipal Primary Schools Head Teachers' Association, the Swedish Head Teachers' Association, Forum Syd and The Global School in Sweden. The first conference was held in Entebbe in May 2008 when the Swedish group of seven head teachers and 20 Ugandan head teachers met for the first time to cooperate on education for sustainable development. The second meeting to which I was invited was held in October 2008.



I flew via Amsterdam and Nairobi down to Entebbe where I landed on a Saturday morning. To leave a rainy and fairly cold Sweden for a sunny and warm Uganda felt like a privilege. I was picked up at the airport and driven to a small hotel in Entebbe. When I had left my luggage in my room and had a shower I went out to have a look around in the city. I have been to Africa several times before but never in Uganda and so of course I was curious. What struck me most was how incredibly beautiful it is. Entebbe is green and flourishing and is situated at Lake Victoria. Banana plants, pawpaw and mango trees grow in the gardens. I spent the day walking around as much as I could to get as clear a picture as possible.

The second day Lennart, one of the Swedish head teachers and I went by bus to Kampala. It was an interesting journey in a traffic system that is far from sustainable. The minibuses drive very fast in a never ending row on a road which is built for much less traffic. Many of the cars are in a poor condition and traffic accidents are common. Potholes in the roads and the high speed gives the cars a rough time. Many emitted big black clouds from their exhaust systems. When the bus reached



Kampala it was stuck in a traffic jam where the pace was very slow but finally we reached the bus station with hundreds of identical minibuses. The traffic was horrible and we were there on a Sunday when the traffic situation is relatively calm according to the Ugandans we spoke to. The picture above from Google Earth can give a little hint on the traffic situation in Kampala.

The overall impression from these two days is that there is a great span between how people in Uganda live. Some people lead a good life with nice houses and cars while many people have a rather tough situation. My impression though is that most people in Uganda have food for the day to a greater extent than what I had witnessed in Kenya.

Monday and Tuesday I got the opportunity to visit Nyanzia Army Primary School. That was a overwhelming experience. I was well received and welcomed into the classrooms. The students were happy to have a visitor and they had a lot of questions about Sweden, about our climate, culture, religion, child abuse, crops, HIV and our schools. It was a nice ethos at the school and the students sang a lot. In two classrooms I was asked to sing



the Swedish National Anthem and I was very glad no one except me knew how it should sound. The number of children at that school was up to 75 in each class which makes individualisation and group activities difficult. Very often there was only one book in each classroom and then a notebook for each child. What should be learned was written on the blackboard and copied by the students. But I also saw examples where the teacher had written signs on banana leaves that the students tried to combine into new sentences and constructions where material from the school yard had been used to visualise and help the children to understand what they should learn. The inventiveness was great. Another thing that impressed me was that in Uganda a lot of different languages are used but the students all manage to use English as the language for learning. There were also examples of classes where the local language was used to learn English. The overall impression was that the teachers, with a salary of 64 pounds a month, were very eager to do a good job with their students.

On Tuesday afternoon it was time to meet, for the first time, the participants who would attend my workshop on Thursday. We met for group discussions where the participants discussed what they had done since they met in May. Many of the Ugandan head teachers had implemented a lot of the ideas that had been created at the last meeting. One school let their students make necklaces of paper; others had started school gardens where they grew vegetables. The products of these activities were sold to give the school an improved economical situation. The head teachers told us that the activities also had had an impact outside school since several of the students had started to grow more vegetables in their homes after having learned how to do this at school. The result should

probably be a more varied food supply and maybe even a better economic situation. In one school the students had used waste material like paper, net and wood to make bill boards to hang on the school walls for posting things. The Swedish head teachers told of participating in different projects like "The green flag"



On Wednesday Iann Lunnegård and Thomas Krigsman from Stockholm let the participants take part in different group and evaluation activities in which they were discussing which type of education we seek if we want to reach learning for sustainable development. They started a lot of good discussions both in the Swedish and in the Ugandan groups and I felt there were a lot of things said that I could build on in my workshop on Thursday.

Then on Thursday it was time for my workshop. It felt good to have had four days in Uganda before the workshop so I at least had a little chance of understanding the context which I now should try to influence. I felt humble after seeing the enormous job that Uganda puts into trying to give all children access to primary school (Uganda has 28 million inhabitants and very many of them are of school age)

The participants were placed in groups of 4 or 5 with both Swedish and Ugandan participants in each group. The first task was to construct a Ugandan family by using a collage technique. It was thrilling to see how the task was received and after a short while you could tell that the participants enjoyed themselves and there were a lot of discussions on what a Ugandan family really looks like.



After the families were completed each group was asked to make the families' houses. There was a great variety in types of houses from a fairly luxurious two storey house to a more traditional home of 6 small round houses where each house could be seen as one of 6 rooms and where the yard is the actual living room. There were many interesting discussions. All houses were displayed along a road on the wall in the room. In the yards you could see gardens of vegetables and banana plants. I think many of the Swedish head teachers learned a lot about the housing in this country during these group activities.

The groups were then challenged to think about in what ways the members of their imaginary family lead a sustainable life. They were asked to try to include economic, social and environmental factors in their discussions. From these discussions they then thought about what the family could do to improve their way of living. The ideas they had were drawn on big charts. After a while I moved around the participants so that they formed new groups with one participant from each family in the new group. Each group gathered around a chart of drawings and the participant that was from the family that had made that chart told the rest of the new group about the family's plans. The participants listening were then to try to bring as many good ideas as possible back to fill out their own family's chart. Thereafter the family groups told about the ideas and plans of the family.



Along the street there was an empty plot where trees grow and where the families used to get firewood and where the cattle feed. It was also a place where the children played. Now the participants got to know that the municipality were thinking of letting a bar be built on the empty plot. The participants were then to imagine what their character would have written in a diary if they had got to know about these plans. The reactions were written down individually. Thereafter all participants took down their character from the wall and walked around in the room trying to find other characters that reacted in the same way as their own character. According to their views they formed new groups. It showed that nearly all characters were against the bar even if it might give new job opportunities and possibilities to sell products from the garden. Worries over health and of how the bar would affect the children were greater.



We then discussed what people could do if they were put in a real situation like this. The participants suggested that you could write to the newspaper or to the mayor among other things.

The aim of the workshop was to show how a democratic way of working could give the students a possibility to think about what sustainable development could be, a way of working that starts with the students own conceptual model of what sustainable development could be, a way of working that gives the students a chance to discuss their ideas and values with others to solve problems and make them ready to act in their own lives in the future.

The last day of the conference was used for group discussions about how to move on towards the next meeting that will be held in Sweden in May 2009.

The aim of the whole project is to give the head teachers a possibility to learn more about how you can work with education for sustainable development. The meeting between the head teachers from the two countries is at the core of the project.

After the actual conference I had two more days in Uganda to reflect on my experiences before it was time to go back to a rainy Sweden. Problems with diseases and a growing population are great in Uganda but from a global perspective the question is which part of the world is the longest distance from leading a sustainable life? My flight to Uganda alone led to carbon dioxide emissions equal to 24 Ugandans yearly emission.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2002 each Swedish person emitted 5,9 tons of carbon dioxide per person a year. The same figure for Uganda was 0,1 ton carbon dioxide per person a year  
<http://www.prb.org/Datafinder/Topic/Bar.aspx?sort=v&order=d&variable=22> summan gäller 2002