



Shadows of Shalom

Newsletter from Paul and Joy Vliem in Uganda

The Power of Ownership

by Paul

Over the past two months we have visited almost a dozen organizations in order to learn various development methods being used in Lira. From these visits the most significant point we've taken is the increased strength of organizations that implement projects that ensure the community is invested in its ownership.

For example, many communities in our area have no access to clean water. Some organizations go into communities that need clean water, dig the well, and leave. On the other hand, other organizations consult clan leaders and community on their needs and strengths, create an action plan with the community for how the well will be maintained, and mobilize the community to contribute in the planning and resources for the project. If you took a picture of this well and of the well completed by the first organization, it would look very similar. The difference is in the details, where a community commits to a project and thus ensures that it continues to

provide them with clean water *because it is their well*. Although we would like a community to put in the effort to keep the well going in the first example, studies have shown that they usually don't, and quite understandably so. It is difficult to contribute out of your own scarce resources to a project you had nothing to do with and might not even need. There are wells, tractors, tools, and so on, littering the countryside that were

given by well-meaning organizations who did not realize that ownership is not a given, but a process. As we continue our work in Lira, we hope to practice development that engages communities in this process of development, and we thank you for your prayers and support in that process.



Women pump water from a well near the church in Aduku

April 2009



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In My Neighborhood...

by Joy

I first met Grace on a hot January afternoon while I sat waiting in the café for my turn to use the internet. She approached me with the all-too-familiar request to help her find a 'friend from outside.' Loosely translated this means a 'Western donor to pay school fees.' Yet as I listened to Grace's story, I realized she was looking for more than financial assistance. Grace introduced herself as an orphan with no place to live. While a kind family had housed and helped her through her sophomore year of secondary school, they had recently dismissed her when they discovered that Grace was pregnant after being raped.

Grace longed to return to school, yet she was now alone, a homeless child about to become a mother. Through a series of conversations, I was able to listen to Grace's story and share her burden. Reflecting on God's presence in the midst of her sufferings, I discovered Grace's deep faith and her struggle to see His hand at work in her life. Over time Grace and I have prayed together, gone for HIV and AIDS testing, met with youth-focused NGOs, and discovered a program that will assist her to return to school in one year. Grace has also found a woman who now gives her a place to stay and helps her with plans for the baby. Encouraged by these hopeful events and the God behind them, Grace has persevered through her pain. Though Grace faces an unsure future, we have formed a present friendship that teaches us about God's plan for right relationships and how we, as believers, can incarnate His love and hope to one another.



Praises & Petitions:

- Praise God for the work he is doing in and through his church in Uganda
- Thank God for his transforming grace that gives our lives hope and purpose.
- Praise God for the creativity and humor that he gives us for the challenges and opportunities of each new day.
- Ask God to give us wisdom, understanding and grace as we work with our fellow Ugandans.
- Pray for those living with HIV and AIDS- and all of those in the fight against it.
- Ask God to intervene in the lives of those who struggle to send children to school and feed them at mealtimes.

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