

Uganda has a long history of colonialism from 1886, when it was first declared a British protectorate up to 1962 when the Union Jack [the British Colonial flag] was lowered and replaced by the Ugandan flag for the first time. Many people may not understand the impact of such cultural infiltration through education and religious denominations. Africans were made to feel that they were inferior, inadequate, and disorganized. They were never to question any orders from their superiors and should simply accept whatever they were told. This attitude continues today as employers and governments treat workers as commodities without rights.

AHI has had to struggle with these issues as well. Thank God, Miss Maggie came with a totally different attitude towards workers in our community. Using a 'Freedom based' work environment, AHI encouraged fearful Africans with little or limited education to begin to build and operate an organization. AHI gave us room to make mistakes - from them we emerged strong because we began establishing our own ways of avoiding those mistakes.

Most charitable organizations put all of their focus on the direct beneficiaries / children / students they work with and often neglect the needs of their staff. AHI has put attention on the life of every worker. We feel just as important as the students we serve. We were given better housing conditions, medical care, meals and better salaries compared to some of the workers in the community. This increase in salaries has lifted most of us; enabling many of us to construct housing of our own, pay school fees for our siblings and start our own small businesses on the side.



The life of a child in Africa is very hard to explain – it is so dependent on the life of their parents for survival. Unfortunately, their parents are never sure whether they will live tomorrow or not – the causes of death are as many as the number of people living in Africa. Imagine the 76 people who died in the random bombing during the finals of the World Cup in July. Every day children, whether born in good families or not, are at risk. These risks eventually catch up with most of the children – one day attending school well dressed then all of a sudden must stop school and begin walking around half naked. AHI came and began to change the lives of these children – most of them aged 15-25 years with very few opportunities and limited hope.

AHI has given our students and staff a chance to exercise the freedoms that the cultural settings have denied. They are taught to live life deliberately as though they are meeting their creator and anything they do is on purpose. The first class of 2008 has proved successful and we hope the best for their future as they gain the needed experience and even make more friends. Harunah and Kasi Charles are starting their own business. Allen works in a restaurant in Wobulenzi, Edward and Cissy found work outside of the hospitality industry but are well liked for their hard work and solid work ethic. Evelyn works at one of the best guesthouse/restaurant in Kampala, Mamba Point. They now all support their own lives and even help their families. All of them stay in contact with AHI and have even come and talked to our new class of students.



AHI has been so different than many of the other NGO's working in our community - many people in our community are trying to figure out how to come work for AHI! This is due to the humble ways we normally do our work and offer unpaid advice to new missionaries. AHI also joins the community in times of trouble – for example many people lose their beloved ones at a point when they have no funds. AHI has chosen to help during these times with free will gifts or affordable loans depending on the situation. Bogere and Patrick, staff members, both lost their mothers this year. We determined that over the last year, every one on staff at AHI had lost a close family member, over 16 deaths in one year. One may not understand how important assistance is unless they are willing to put themselves into the shoes of the poor – caring for a parent suffering from AIDS, depleting all funds and dying without any ability to buy a coffin. AHI has always been actively involved at such moments.

A good example of how AHI works was when a young girl in the neighborhood was reported dead early in the morning due to malaria. The family and friends gathered around the body screaming. A man came by to see what had happened when he checked her cold body and felt a weak pulse. He insisted that the child was still alive and carried her out of the house when she opened her eyes. I personally carried her with her limbs turned stiff and foam in the mouth rising big bubbles, a usual sign of a dying person, when we rushed her to the local ranch clinic. The clinic could not help her as she was in a coma and there was no way anyone had money to send her to the hospital. AHI provided the \$50 to take her to hospital. She remained in a coma for one week, but then began healing. Three weeks later she and her mother came to thank Maggie in person. She is now normal and back attending school. In Uganda many children still die from malaria because they do not have the \$7 to buy the treatment.



The presence of AHI has been a big blessing to the elderly in our community as well. Visiting short term mission teams from America are eager to work out in the nearby villages. One of the AHI team projects that have become popular has been mudding the huts of elderly people who cannot do it on their own. Together with neighbors and friends, AHI teams repair these homes – it is a blessing I hope continues as it has a tremendous impact upon the lives of our poor old friends.

AHI has also created team projects that raise funds to repair water wells in nearby villages. People are forced to use swamp water when their well breaks as repairs are so costly. There are many water born diseases that affect our villages when water wells are broken, especially the deadly typhoid fever. AHI works with the villages in partnership - the villagers are required to raise a portion of the funds needed as well as provide much of the labor. At least two wells were repaired this year. There are four more in need of repair.



AHI also decided to hire local builders for all construction work. This year, AHI created employment for over 20 youths who labored to construct the new guesthouse addition – most of those youth have families they were able to help support during the 6 months of construction. The life of a builder is hard; they are poor and not paid well. It was so appreciated that AHI paid well and on time. Most of the materials we used for construction were also made locally – sand, hard core, timber, bricks were among the many local families who benefited. And the majority of the furniture was built by a local young man who has started a small business as a carpenter.

Finally, AHI has impacted the entire community with its passion to teach business. What began as staff training on basic business principles has overflowed onto the community and into micro finance of small businesses. Maggie has provided small loans to many in the community and others have raised enough capital on their own to start small businesses. People like Leslie Eggerling have challenged us during their visits and business trainings - most of us began to believe that we could do something to help ourselves live better lives. Many of us in AHI and now many teachers at the ranch schools have opened small businesses:



a piggery, gardens to sell vegetables, room construction for renting, a carpentry shop that build furniture, a small chapatti bakery stand, a used clothing store, a hair cutting salon. We teachers are even working together to teach this material to the herdsmen and local villagers so that everyone is given the opportunity to succeed as more and more of us learn and come to believe that we Africans can care for ourselves - that we are competent, hard working and want ethical businesses.

AHI has brought much hope to our community and we now feel that we do have a future worth living - the sky is the limit. Thank you AHI. Thank all of you FAHI supporters that have sacrificed to make our dreams come true and to give us a future with hope.

For more information on African Hospitality Institute, Uganda go to www.ahi-ug.org