

Dear all,

I wish to greet you all and thank you for supporting people of Mbale in the fight against poverty through our programme Partnerships Overseas Networking Trust and Mbale Coalition Against Poverty.

This year has been I would say the most productive year in the life and family of PONT/CAP.

The year began in January with the blessing to our 20 community health workers (OPLS) who were trained in November / December getting 20 bicycles, umbrellas, gum boots, rain coats, record books, pens on addition to the books where there is no doctor and t-shirts supplied to them at graduation in December. This was the first programme in our Mbale region to facilitate the community health workers with such a resource. This gave great motivation to them and they have done tremendous work in the community.

In February, we set up the Mbale Coalition Against Poverty; we worked on the constitution, set up an executive committee, appointed an acting coordinator and opened a bank account. We also came up with our yearly work plan that we finished in May.

During the process of setting up of Mbale CAP, we were joined by a volunteer from PONT who came over to help with the set up and worked as an advisor and consultant for the organization for six months, he is Rob Rowland.

Rob was a great resource to Mbale PONT and CAP that his input to the programme brought great success. He visited the NGOs, held dialogues with different local governments in the region, hospitals and the local university.

He participated in our second OPL training programme that we held in March to April.

The organization was blessed by a grant from the Welsh Assembly government of 47,800,000= (Forty seven millions eight hundred thousand) that helped to train and equip with kits 40- community health workers from across Mbale region.

Volunteer from the Garmogan University in Pontypridd Wales UK, Alywn Pugh, also observed the training. He took some sessions in the training and visited the communities to acquaint himself with the impact of the programme on the ground, in his report he was impressed.

After this training our communities were highly resourced with ready manpower. The health centers in the communities where the OPLS work, have had increased number of people seeking medical services than those in other areas. Incidences of malaria in those communities have greatly reduced.

As PONT, we hired Robert Mafabi as assistant coordinator to help in the running of the programme, he resumed his duties on 1st of April. Robert has been very helpful to the programme and me, as he is more full time worker and gets around the communities to ensure that the programme is being implemented well.

In May we were able to give out 1500 mosquito nets to our 60 OPLS

In June (29th June to 9th July) we hosted a team of 39 people from PONT who were basically a church team most of whom were young people. It was led by Rev. Chris Burr and assisted by Allun; the chairman of PONT, Keith Lewis, also accompanied them on this visit. They were

involved in our community work, worked on partner church projects and in hospital and health units in the villages. The chairman held meetings with different departments to discuss the future of the programme. He particularly streamlined the OVC programme after consultations with Farm Africa and Bob Arnold.

They climaxed their visit with a big youth conference that attracted close to 500 hundred youth from around Mbale region. They marched around Mbale town to sensitized Mbale about PONT programmes and also socialized in the foot match between the youths of Mbale and Pontypridd with the PONT team winning.

July 14th to 23rd we hosted Doctor Geoff and Dr. Simon and their families. These two families and are very instrumental in the work of PONT and their visit created a lot of impact. They visited communities and joined the OPLS to do community work. Dr. Geoff continued to do his mobilization work of encouraging more partners come on board for PONT work. He particularly had meetings with the chairmen of Manafwa and Bududa district and their DDHs to discuss the active involvement their local councils in PONT programmes especially to support the community health workers. Since his visit those respective councils have been very supportive to PONT programmes.

He is also joined the Mbale committee to discuss the possibility of bringing on board Jenga and Salem as full partners which we did in August.

Jenga and Salem NGOs became full members of PONT in August bringing the number of partner NGOs to five added on the earlier three, SAO, UWCM and FDNC. This will help cover many sub counties in the three districts faster than if we had remained with the first three.

The issue of Bringing on board Bungkhko rural development as a full member was also discussed and it is in its final stages to coming on board especially to help with the goat-breeding programme of OVC PONT.

He was, accompanied by three Americans, led by Pr. Jonathan who is very keen supporter of PONT

Dr. Simon and Sian and Alwyn concentrated on the OPLS work, evaluating its impact and data collection process. They also held a refresher training for the 60 OPLS at St. Austin hall for one day. A lot of resolutions were reached and gaps we identified which helped to form the basis of the next refresher training done by Dr. Cath and Carl in November 2007. At the end of this visit particularly the OPLS were equipped with more knowledge in data collection and community health work.

In September 17th to 25th, as a follow-up of the July visit, the two DDHs of Manafwa and Mbale Dr. Francis Abwaimo and Dr. Gideon Wamasebu were invited to Pontypridd Wales UK by PONT in conjunction with the health board of the of Royal Glamorgan hospital. They participated in the partner's conference at the university of Glamorgan and held different talk shows on radios and held meetings with different partners to promote awareness about the work of PONT as a result of the visit a big team of nurses visited Mbale in November to follow up with hospital link programme.

A young energetic girl, Rhiannon Lewis, volunteered with PONT, with Mbale for six weeks and her involvement in PONT programme gave us a lot of strength as she was very industrious and creative. She is a medical student and I pray that she comes again and give PONT new face.

October 27th to December 2nd, was a very historical period in the family of Mbale PONT. The region was graced by a historical visit by Welsh Assembly minister of housing, environment and Sustainable development and also a member of parliament in the Welsh parliament representing Pontypridd, Jane David son.

Jane and the team of teachers, politicians, engineers, university professors and Doctors(17 people), were hosted by Mbale CAP under the chairmanship of Mr. Stephen Ouma the CAO Mbale district local government.

The minister and the team created a lot of awareness of the work of PONT/CAP in all sectors, education, health, NGOs, Civil and political.

Mbale CAP/PONT had the opportunity to visit and have the first dialogue with the vice President of Uganda, His excellence Gilbert Bukenya and discussed PONT programmes and the way forward reached that there was need to diversify the programmes of PONT to include agricultural products like upland rice and exotic cows for milk to help fight poverty and also improve the cognitive capacities of children.

The visit to the Makerere University was very helpful as the vice chancellor Dr. Luboobi, opened the doors for further partnerships in all faculties between Makerere University and the Glamorgan Universities. The team also visited Mukono and Islamic universities in Uganda and discussed the areas of partnership. This has given a university link programme life.

The meeting with the minister of health by the minister and Mbale team was very productive as the work of OPLS was recognized by the minister to which he pledged support. It will be now easy to lobby for government support toward the support of community health workers in whichever name we call them.

Namatala slum was visited during this, David the professor from Glamorgan University held consultative meetings with the residents and the local leaders about how the slum can be developed. As a result David has put in a bid to the university to see if more university professors can come over and carry out a conference with other Ugandan professors with all stakeholders to see they can help develop slums.

The engineers explored many ways how to help improve the lives of people through appropriate technology methods and use of sun baked bricks for building to cut down on destruction of trees to burn bricks. They also helped in the repairs of hospital machine equipments, which had broken down.

Dr. Eryl Hicks, a consultant Doctor, particularly instrumental in getting the hospital link programme over ground by spending the whole week in Hospital dialoguing with hospital staff on how to use the expertise of the her hospital back home to help train the Ugandan counter parts do their work better.

She participated in the hospital conference and also together with the hospital administration helped organization the hospital conference in November where the nurses from Royal Glamorgan hospital came later to take part I the training.

Mbale regional Hospital is now in high gears with the partnership. Doctor Olupot Olupot Peter is very using coordinator for that partnership on behalf of Mbale Regional hospital

The teachers led by Phil and Kath Rikards, were very busy during this visit. They visited most schools in the partnership and taught in classes and participated in the extra curriculum activities.

This visit by the teachers was very important, as the school link had weakened so greatly with little communications going on between the partner schools.

The conference was organized by the PONT education committee and the Education officers of Mbale November 1st at Mt. Elgon Hotel and was grace by the minister from Wales and was attended by all the chairmen of the three districts Mbale, Manafwa and Bududa. The minister opened the conference and gave good encouragement to the teachers and the district leaders. She also pledged her support to the Education department.

The head teachers under guidance of the DEO Mbale Fabian Wakholi and Pastor Phil, Rikards, Kath and Jane Brencher, steer the conference to great success. There was evaluation and sharing of the ideas about the future of the school-to-school programme and especially how to improve on communication. This raised a lot of concern and PONT is planning to help set up communication centers if possible with Internet connection to help improve communications. Science teaching and equipments will be improved as a result. Great success!!!

Dr. Geoff, Rosa and Francis Hunt helped to revive the struggling the church link department in PONT on Mbale side. The held meetings with the Mbale subcommittee under pastor Vincent Munyosi. This department has picked up and wonderful plans are in place to carry forward.

To conclude on this particular visit, I thank all who were involved to make it a success, the Minister from Wales, The PONT team, the LCVs of three partners districts and their respective staff, the NGO leaders who availed your communities for the team and your staff to take them around.

November 24th to 2nd December, we were honored to host a medical team of 12 people led by Dr. Cathy Taylor, the chairperson, medical committee PONT. They were primarily medical workers, nurses, Doctors, medical students and teachers and engineers in hospital.

This was a follow-up on the visit of the DDHs and the Dr. Eryl Hicks visits and the need to strengthen the hospital link. This was the first time we have had such a big delegation from the Hospital in Pontypridd visit Mbale regional hospital.

The team visited the communities early in the week to acquaint themselves with the health situation in villages and be able to prepare appropriately how to interact with the health workers in the trainings.

They had chance to interact with OPLS and community health promoters in village who have been trained by PONT. They also visited health centers where these OPLS refer patients and looked at medical facilities at sub county level.

They held a medical conference, which attracted 80 health workers from Mbale regional Hospital, Mbale, Manafwa and Bududa health services.

Ugandan, Doctors and the nurses presented various topics. Nurses from royal Glamorgan Hospital Pontypridd Wales also made presentations. The full report is in medical conference report by Dr. Olupot Peter.

The conference was also held for the OPLS at the end of the week. This was refresher training as a result of the July conference and the needs identified therein. It attracted 70 people, the Doctors from Mbale and PONT facilitated.

Data collection was discussed and new forms were designed.

Many resolutions were reached at the end of the visit especially in the areas of training and future hospital link collaborations. The report about the resolution reached can be got from Dr. Cath and Chemuko Fred.

The programme has generally picked up and many people both in Uganda and Wales have picked interest in it.

A lot of improvements in the programme were done this year:

- a. There is a proposal being followed by OVC project
- b. PHC has a work plan and budget for proper implementation
- c. Mbale CAP has been registered and operates an official Bank account
- d. The Assistant coordinator appointed
- e. University link programme fully established.
- f. All the three districts in CAP are fully on board and supportive
- g. The church link programme gained the new face and is active.
- h. Education programme fully established and ready support- 33 schools already linked.
- i. Hospital link became fully operational with reliable coordinator
- j. Engineering department in final stages to get mechanical workshop
- k. New NGOs came on board- Salem and Jenga
- l. FDNC under Justin, up to date with PONT programmes
- m. Gained international and local recognition with the coming of the Welsh Minister

Appreciations

I wish at this point say we are only three years into the programme and a lot has been accomplished already.

As a coordinator, I would not have managed without your continuous support and involvement in this programme. I cannot at this point to mention names or groups that have been involved or else I risk forgetting others.

I look forward for your further involvement and support. The programme solely relies on you and don't get tired. Next year will be busier and will require a lot of your efforts and support to succeed.

Nadolig llawen (happy Christmas) and happy New Year

Thanks

Mwenyi Apollo
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