

Towards ‘Health for All’ in Uganda

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In 2014, under the banner of our Movement of Life campaign, the Dr. Rath Health Foundation launched a project to bring the message of natural health to some of the people who are in the greatest need of it: school children in poor areas of Uganda in Africa. Led by Gyavira Mwesige, our Movement of Life national coordinator in Uganda, our goal was to teach children about the health-promoting properties of the fruits and vegetables they could grow in their own gardens, both at school and at home.

Instead of expecting their futures to depend upon aid money from the big global institutions and international aid charities, we wanted to teach the children how to help themselves through learning about Cellular Medicine – the scientific discovery that deficiencies of vitamins, minerals, and other micronutrients are the primary cause of today’s most common chronic diseases.

Progress was slow at first, and along the way we faced many challenges. But by mid-2019 our project had grown to the point that a total of fifty schools were involved. At this point I decided it was time for me to visit Uganda, to get a first-hand impression of the impact our work was having there. What I saw and learned during my visit was deeply moving, and at the same time incredibly inspiring.





Project approach based on four key elements

The approach we are using in our Uganda project has four key elements.

Firstly, the children are taught about nutrition and health in the classroom. Using our educational materials, they learn about the central principle of Cellular Medicine, that micronutrient deficiencies are the primary cause of chronic diseases. They also learn how fruits and vegetables are good sources of these essential micronutrients. And they discover how heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other health problems can be prevented through a micronutrient-rich diet.

Secondly, the children set up a fruit and vegetable garden at the school. These gardens become real-life laboratories where the children turn theory into practice by growing the fruits and vegetables they are learning about. Medicinal plants are also grown, which are used to provide natural healthcare remedies for common ailments at the school.

Some schools are also rearing livestock. This has helped improve not just their micronutrient intake but also their macronutrient intake – of fats, proteins and carbohydrates – as well.

Thirdly, the children set up what we call a School Health Parliament. The School Health Parliament consists of democratically elected representatives from each of the school's classes. Its members meet regularly to discuss, plan, build and maintain health-related projects at the school. Watching parliamentary sessions at the schools I visited was an unforgettable experience. The maturity of these children, and the passion and intelligence they

exhibited when presenting their arguments and ideas, was incredibly inspiring.

Fourthly, one of the key objectives of the School Health Parliament is to spread health information not just in the school itself, but also around its local community. This means the schools act as nerve centers for sharing Cellular Medicine education and improving the health of the local population.

I met parents who were excited to tell me that our project had made a big difference to their lives. Showing me the gardens they and their children had set up at home, they described how even the children's academic performance at school had improved.



Challenges to overcome

But while we've made a great start with this work, there remain many challenges for us to overcome. When I was young, I had assumed that health and education were indisputable human rights. After all, this is what the United Nations had proclaimed three-quarters of a century ago. When visiting Uganda, however, I was reminded again that, in many parts of the world, these things are not given to children for free.



Uganda is one of the world's one hundred poorest countries. Many of its people are significantly undernourished and survive on as little as one meal a day. Not only does this result in numerous negative health effects, in the case of school children it also affects their concentration and ability to learn. This means that under-nutrition has a direct effect on a country's economic potential.

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But a lack of food is far from being the only challenge faced by people in Uganda. Many of the schools and classrooms I saw during my visit were very different to those that I was used to seeing where I live and work in Europe. Teachers still give lessons using blackboards and chalk, for example.

Not only were there no computers in the classrooms, some of the classrooms didn't even have desks or chairs. And the school toilets sometimes just consisted of simple holes dug in the ground.

For many children, even just getting to school presents a challenge. I met children who walked, barefoot, in all types of weather, for up to two hours to get to school. And then, after a full day at school, they walk for another two hours to get home again. At certain times of the year they are walking in the dark. Their journeys put them at risk of snakebites, malaria, and other potential dangers, and yet still they are determined to get to school and learn.

My visit to Uganda showed me that, if given access to information about Cellular Medicine, children will use it to improve the health and lives of themselves and their families.



Helping the world to feed itself

I saw many inspiring examples of how our work in Uganda is changing people's lives. One girl I met, with the help of her uncle, had set up a passion fruit garden at her home. She originally started with just fifty-four seedlings. Today, from selling her produce she is earning enough money to pay her school fees. This showed me that, economically too, our project has huge potential.

In some schools, so successful have they been in growing fruits and vegetables, they now make an income through selling the surplus food they produce.

After visiting Uganda, I realized that the model we are developing there can pretty much be implemented in any school, in any country in the world. I also realized that, to adapt an old saying:

If you give a person some food, you feed them for a day.

But if you teach them to produce their own food, you feed them for life.

If we can help the world to feed itself, 'Health for All' will become possible.

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