

Travel report 2022 Highlights

UECD *Ugandan Empowerment & Career Development*

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Six sponsors from Switzerland, three board members UECD CH, and film crew meet students and board members





"I was able to personally meet the student I have been supporting for 2 years."

Marianne Madörin, Sponsor

It all turned out quite differently than planned: When I learned in August 2019 that the student we were newly supporting was named Faith and would be studying Education, we were only six months away from our trip to Uganda. Christmas 2020 would have been the plan to travel, but the pandemic prevented our departure. It was not until the summer of 2022 that the meeting between students and sponsors could finally take place in the so-called Pearl of Africa.

In order to get to know each other a little in advance, we held regular Zoom meetings, which initially posed a certain technical challenge for everyone. Before my visit, my picture of Faith consisted solely of WhatsApp chats, Zoom meetings, the biography and some written information. How great was my joy and relief when I realized in Uganda, that my concerns about her shy demeanor regarding her choice of studies were completely unfounded. I got to know a clear, strong, headstrong young woman whom I can very well imagine as a competent teacher. That I am Faith's Sponsor is a particularly fortunate coincidence for me. My enthusiasm for the teaching profession has been with me since I was a child and it still is today. So our exchange was one of mutual interest.

But it was not only our common professional interests that connected us: by being together for two days in one room at Yebo Camp, we came closer to each other in a natural way. The mutual exchange about our lives, about religion, which is an important topic for both of us in different ways, or our different cultures, I found very valuable. We also often talked about the many expectations that a young modern woman in Uganda should fulfill. From I know from hearsay that every mother perceives her child as the most beautiful and the best. This is what happened to Faith, when she came to the workshop with conviction, great presence and little humorous interludes. At that moment I was convinced that she is capable of much more, that she has a wonderful future ahead of her and that she will make it in life.

For me, the times of getting to know Faith and being with her were clearly the best moments during my stay in Uganda. I hope that the contact will remain so lively and light-hearted, even if there is great geographical distance between us is.



Safari in Murchison Falls National Park

Eva Winizki, President UECD Switzerland, Sponsor

Six days safari in Murchison Falls National Park is a shared experience and offers many opportunities to get to know each other better. 11 students, 4 members of the board of UECD Uganda and 6 Swiss participants – among them sponsors and board members. This time we will also be accompanied by a two-person film team. We have the Yebo Safari Camp for us and live in the bandas, which are comfortably equipped with showers, toilets and several beds.



With three open top safari vans; by boats and on foot we explored the wildlife and landscape in the park. Compared to the trip in 2017, we noticed that we could no longer find all the animals from back then. No zebras, only a few Elephants, a lion and a single crocodile. Meanwhile, we observed many giraffes, waterbucks, buffaloes, kob-antelopes, hippos, discovered jackal, a leopard and a king python in the middle of our footpath.





We wondered why. There are two reasons we found out: the climate and the oil drilling. The crocodiles, of which we saw many five years ago, disappeared because in 2020 a lot of rainfall raised the water level of Lake Victoria and thus of the white Nile below Murchison Falls meant that there were no more open sandbanks. Crocodiles love to bask on dry sandbanks. Now, however, they can't even find room to lay eggs. We could observe how on long river banks the trees stood dead like skeletons in the water and thus nesting places for birds are lost.

Meanwhile, elephants, zebras and lions probably migrated to the eastern part of the park. They left their home after oil drilling began in Lake Albert and in the savannah part of the park. These are also changing the existence of the animals. For example, a four-lane highway recently cut the park in two. The rangers suspect that especially the traverse caused difficulties for the animals. Because on the one hand there is a lack of over- or underpasses. On the other hand, the smell of diesel, from the large trucks that now race from dawn to dusk to the construction sites in the savannah section of the park, could also be a reason for the displacement. Scientists investigated for the French energy giant involved in the drilling, Total Energies, how elephants change their migratory behavior as a result of the test drilling. According to their analysis, the elephants responded to boreholes and seismic respond activity by moving away from them. As the park rangers told us at least two baboons are run over every day, sunbathing on the warm asphalt in the morning and not expecting the speed of the trucks.

However, these observations did not diminish the shared experience of this safari. It was for the students impressive as well as for the Swiss to experience this nature together and to exchange ideas about it. Selfies and group photos were taken, exclamations of astonishment as well as moments of quiet observation and happy chatting gave the carpet of togetherness.







Visit to Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom

Eva

Four managers of the king (Omukama) of the kingdom Bunyoro Kitara give us an insight into the status of the oil drilling in the Lake Albert. They are Jonathan Mutiti (Deputy Prime Minister), Robert Rukahemura (Engineer), Alex Katusabe (Manager Oil and Gas/Chief Administration) and Francis Mugerva (Communications Officer). The Midwest Kingdom Uganda has to reposition itself due to the discovery of oil deposits in Lake Albert ("Presentation of the Engineer, Kingdom Bunyoro Kitara", website www.uecd.ch News). Until recently, the region had no airport and no good roads. This also meant that agricultural products could not be exported. The region is home to the largest national park in Uganda – the Murchison Falls National Park – and was thus until now solely dependent on tourism. The oil deposits have now increased land prices. Many wealthy Ugandans, including parliamentarians, have bought land. However, fishermen and farmers in the area lack the money to buy land themselves. Article from the "Tagesspiegel", website www.uecd.ch News.

A manager guides us through the Hoima airport, which is still under construction. Kabaale International Airport is being built primarily because of the new oil refinery that will begin operations next to the airport.

The initial idea was to use this refinery to meet the petroleum product needs of Uganda and its regional neighbors. Today, however, only a small refinery is expected to operate. Most of the oil flows through the longest heated oil pipeline (1,443 kilometers) to Tanzania, where it is loaded onto tankers at the Indian Ocean. The airport will now primarily serve trade and secondarily for tourism. The oil drilling is a gigantic 10 billion dollar project.



First meeting with agricultural technology student Beatrice

Brigitta Loretan, sponsor

It is 10 o'clock and while I am waiting for Beatrice, excitement and anticipation are rising in me. I am convinced that it will be an intimate moment, this first contact! Beatrice, the student I am supporting, and I have exchanged e-mails several times before this trip. She welcomed me to Uganda with a very touching letter, and I have already recognized her as a gifted as a talented, creative writer. Beatrice has begun her undergraduate studies in agricultural engineering at Makerere University. She has big ideas for her professional career in the environmental field. The interest and anticipation in cultural exchange is palpable.

Beatrice grew up in northwestern Uganda as the second youngest of five children. Now here comes Beatrice, standing in front of me laughing. We stretch out our arms and hug each other fiercely in greeting – a touching moment. She is immediately likeable to me, somehow perky her expression. With alert eyes and an attentive gaze, she is a young woman with an open friendly appearance. With the first impression a warm happy feeling spreads in me. Beatrice was only on safari with the group and did not have me, her new sponsor, by her side during this time. All the more joyful is our long-awaited meeting. There is much to tell and exchange. The exchange is easy for both of us. And we will have the whole day for it, while we explore Kampala. Beatrice leads me first to Makerere University. I am particularly interested in the library. Then we pass halls, bunks, the music pavilion and an Anglican church on the campus. We talk to students, Beatrice shows me where she attends her lectures and where she lives. The young woman speaks good English, an advantage for our communication. Our stroll remains stimulating. Many questions meet with enriching answers. It is time for a coffee break. Our driver Dschamil leads us to a beautiful garden café, a cozy oasis with excellent espresso and a large portion of cake to satisfy our ravenous appetite.

Next destination is the visit to the older sister Grace. Our driver unloads us in front of a bridge of a quarter. I don't know what to expect, feel a certain uncertainty. It is hot and stuffy as we follow a small footpath along a gray, greasy cesspool. Children run around us. The stench of dirt and garbage flies towards us. Around the corner, through a wooden gate and we arrive in front of a very small, neatly organized cottage. I hide my astonishment about this place. Grace is waiting for us with her ten-month-old son and welcomes us warmly. Inside everything is cramped, the TV is on. We sit down at a small table, where we soon have in-depth conversations, look at photos and answer each other's questions about everyday life.

I learn, for instance, that the family originally comes from the Batooro Tribe and that their mother tongue is Rutoro. I don't understand a word of it, but the sound of the language is bright and sonorous. Grace is rather reserved in conversation. Baby Imran looks skeptically at first, then rather astonished at this Muzungu with the pale skin, gradually becomes more trusting and wants to sit near me. After a while, the hostess prepares wonderful fruits for a shared feast: a fresh pineapple, mangos and bananas. We eat the delicious slices. Also a photo session is part of the program, now that things are getting more familiar and cozy. It's fun to capture such moments. The Sisters show me a thick, small-format photo booklet with pictures of the family. During this visit I experience a warm-hearted hospitality. A special kind of attachment accompanies me on the way back to the cab.

In the evening, we have tickets to a great African ethnic dance show. But there is hardly any time for refreshment, because we get stuck in a wild traffic chaos. Annemarie, Elisabeth, Beatrice and other interested people visit the open arena where the event takes place. It is a great, unique experience. We are impressed by the rhythms and the musically and scenically extraordinary performances. At the end of the show, we are suddenly all on the stage and dance, while the Luna shines round in the sky. What a magical atmosphere. I have now arrived at the African rhythm – full from the first day of my stay, the valuable experiences and the colorful, invigorating introduction to this culture. The curiosity for the following activities with the other students and UECD members dreams along with me.



As I write, I realize how lucky I am to be able to participate and be a part of such an important intercultural exchange thanks to UECD. I am also happy that I can support and accompany Beatrice, who has meanwhile become my "African daughter", in her developmental steps. I am certain that this trip to Uganda will bring me closer to the African soul. A proverb sums up these feelings: "You run faster, when you are alone - you run further with others!"

Brenda invites us into her family

Annemarie Vogt with Elisabeth Gerber, sponsors

On Wednesday of the second week, Elisabeth and I get to visit Brenda, the law student we are supporting, at her home. With us is the film team Roman and Diana. When we arrive, Brenda's parents are already waiting for us - beautifully dressed and delighted. The cottage is located on the outskirts of Kampala. The drive there takes quite a while. There are no more paved roads here, only dusty little roads. Everything seems narrow and cramped. I imagine what it looks like here when it rains.





The parents lead us into the small living room. The meeting looks solemn, both are elegantly and nobly dressed (Image). Also Brenda looks cheerful with her turquoise top and matching colored jumper. We both take a seat on the sofa, the father on the only armchair, and the mother and Brenda sit down on the floor - her sister also sits down in a pretty red dress. Also with them is little Tresha, a nine-month-old girl of a friend who is being cared for by the family, so that the mother can go to work. A striking number of women are single parents and have to bring up their children without any financial contribution from their fathers. Often the only support they receive is from the woman's family or perhaps from the paternal grandmother.

We talk as best we can. Brenda's mother apologizes for her poor English: "No, school," she says. But she can do math! We laugh when I ask her this question, because she runs a small business roasting peanuts herself. She sells them to a customer base and at the market. With this she entertains her family, with the help of her father who works as a night watchman. Brenda helps her mother with her work on weekends. Teamwork is a prerequisite here in order to survive.

I talk about my life as a girl growing up with five siblings on a small farm in a Swiss village. It's a link to my life, and I want to show them that there are also simple ways of life here as in faraway Europe and that you can become a teacher or study at a university. They listen with interest. Elisabeth also talks about herself. Our exchange takes place on a warm, cordial level. Then we have tea, bananas and nuts to eat, and we take a few photos. I also chat with the neighbour, who is sitting in front of the door of her cottage and at the same time making Matoke, a specialty made from plantains, is cooking; washing clothes and greeting her daughter who is returning from school. A simple life – everyday life in Kampala, where it feels more like being in the countryside than in a big city. Brenda's parents want to return to their original home in the country soon. This is in the north of the country, in the Acholi region. So Brenda's mother tongue. When I ask them why they want to go back, they say because they are old. They own a house there and a little land that they can then cultivate.

For me it is an interesting and touching encounter - so in the middle of Africa: On the one hand, so simple, clear and everyday – on the other hand so strange. Their gratitude that we are making it possible for their daughter to study law is enormously palpable. I am glad that I had the opportunity to make this visit. Now I have a clearer idea of how Brenda grew up.

Alumnae Adah's new home

Elisabeth Gerber, sponsor

We visit Adah in her new home. The film crew is there.



She is a former UECD-supported IT student and now does a wonderful job as Vice President on the Board. In two break-ins in her apartment, her PC, TV and cell phone were stolen. Now she has found a safe two-bedroom apartment. In this case, secure means that the house has a lockable gate and is supervised by a security guard. Adah had just moved the day before. The small family, with son Xavier, a niece and a nanny is still busy setting up their new home. Never theless Adah finds time to squeeze us a fresh fruit juice.

Adah recently got a new job as an IT specialist at one of the country's largest telecommunication companies - thanks in part to her master's degree. In the future, she will earn 800,000 Ugandan shillings (about 200 Swiss francs). A quarter of this will be deducted directly for taxes. Half of the remaining salary goes to rent. That leaves her with only 300,000 shillings, or about about 75 francs, to live on. That is not much. But Adah is convinced that the job will pay off for her in the long run. Because a company of this size offers \$many opportunities for career advancement. Adah also helps her niece to set up her own tailoring business. She is supported in her day-to-day work by the nanny who looks after Xavier when her mother is at work. Adah's situation makes it clear how challenging life in Uganda can be for a single mother. But the young woman stands to her situation with optimism and a dazzling cheerfulness.

Visit with law student Monica

Elisabeth

Monica begins her LDC program to become a lawyer at Kampala International University (KIU) in September. Her room, which she shares financial reasons, is within walking distance of the university.

The short walking distance is important to Monica because at the beginning of her studies she had a boda boda accident (motorcycle cab) that left her in a coma for months and subsequently involved major surgery. Last year, she had another accident when a government bus she was riding in overturned, and people fell on top of her. Again, operations on the knee. The extremely ambitious student has no interruptions in her studies despite the breakdowns, but continues to attend physical therapy and trauma therapy

Monica invites us to visit her accommodation. We are amazed at how one can arrange oneself in such a small space. The perfect order allows the student to give her place to everything she needs to live and study. This also includes a small fruit juice machine, with which she has prepared a delicious juice for us from passion fruit and mango. In addition, she serves us bananas, which have an intense flavor that only freshly harvested fruit can have.



Strengthened, Monica invites us to visit the KIU. For this we need a permit, which Monica has already obtained. She has also registered us for an interview with the president of the student body and the chief financial officer of the university. The privately run KIU is ranked second in the country, right after Makerere University.

We introduce the two leaders to UECD in more detail. The chief financial officer takes notes during the conversation and thanks KIU on behalf of the university that, with Monica, we have already enrolled 9 students at KIU out of 28 that UECD has funded so far. She asks us to contact her if any student is having any difficulties, they would then support them as well. For example, students may not be able to budget early enough and submit the UECD board in Uganda so late that there is not enough time for us in Switzerland to transfer the money. These delays result in students not being admitted to exams.

As UECD, we are now also considering whether the tuition money should be paid directly to the two universities. With this visit, the network needed for this would already have been established. Monica accompanies the two younger UECD students Faith and Brenda, students of UECD, who also go to school at KIU. All three feel very comfortable at this university.



UECD is being further developed as an organization: Workshop on "Networks and Structures of the New Company

Annemarie und Eva

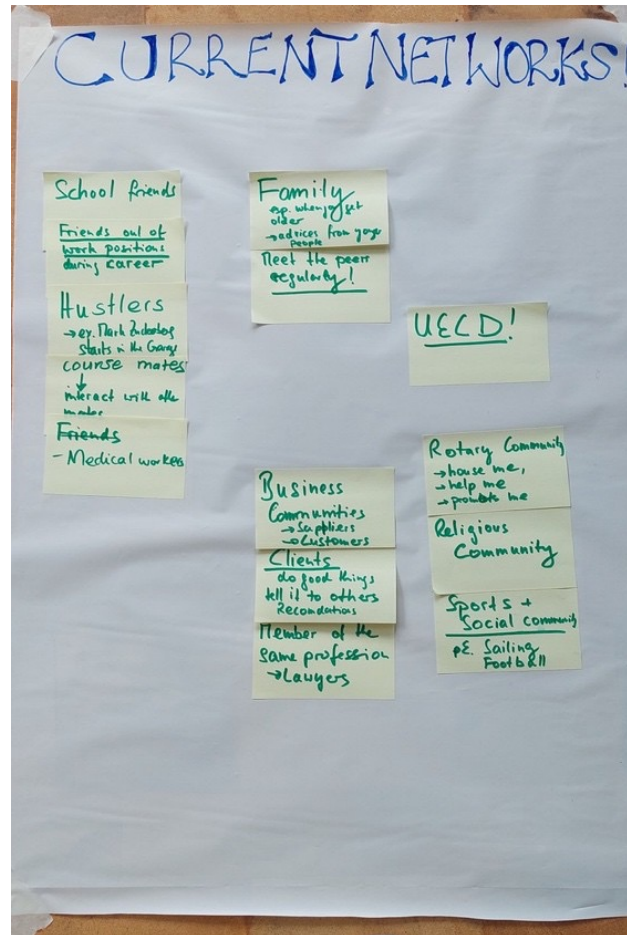
Early Friday morning, the sponsors, students and board members from Switzerland and Uganda arrive at the home of Ronald Tusingwire. Ronald is chairman of UECD Uganda, Phiona and he have three girls, Abigail, Amara and Malaika. We are all gathered here in a happy circle, drinking coffee, tea and fine fruit juices from Phiona's kitchen – quite a few of the young people are still having breakfast. Around ten o'clock we start with a round of getting to know each other.



Our hosts Ronald, Phiona, Amara and Atkin (from right to left)



The first theme '**networks already existing and desired for the future**' raises awareness of how important networks are in life. Such networks can help to get important information without having to pay for it; to get a job, find a doctor, make friends and do business. They can also carry you through difficult situations.











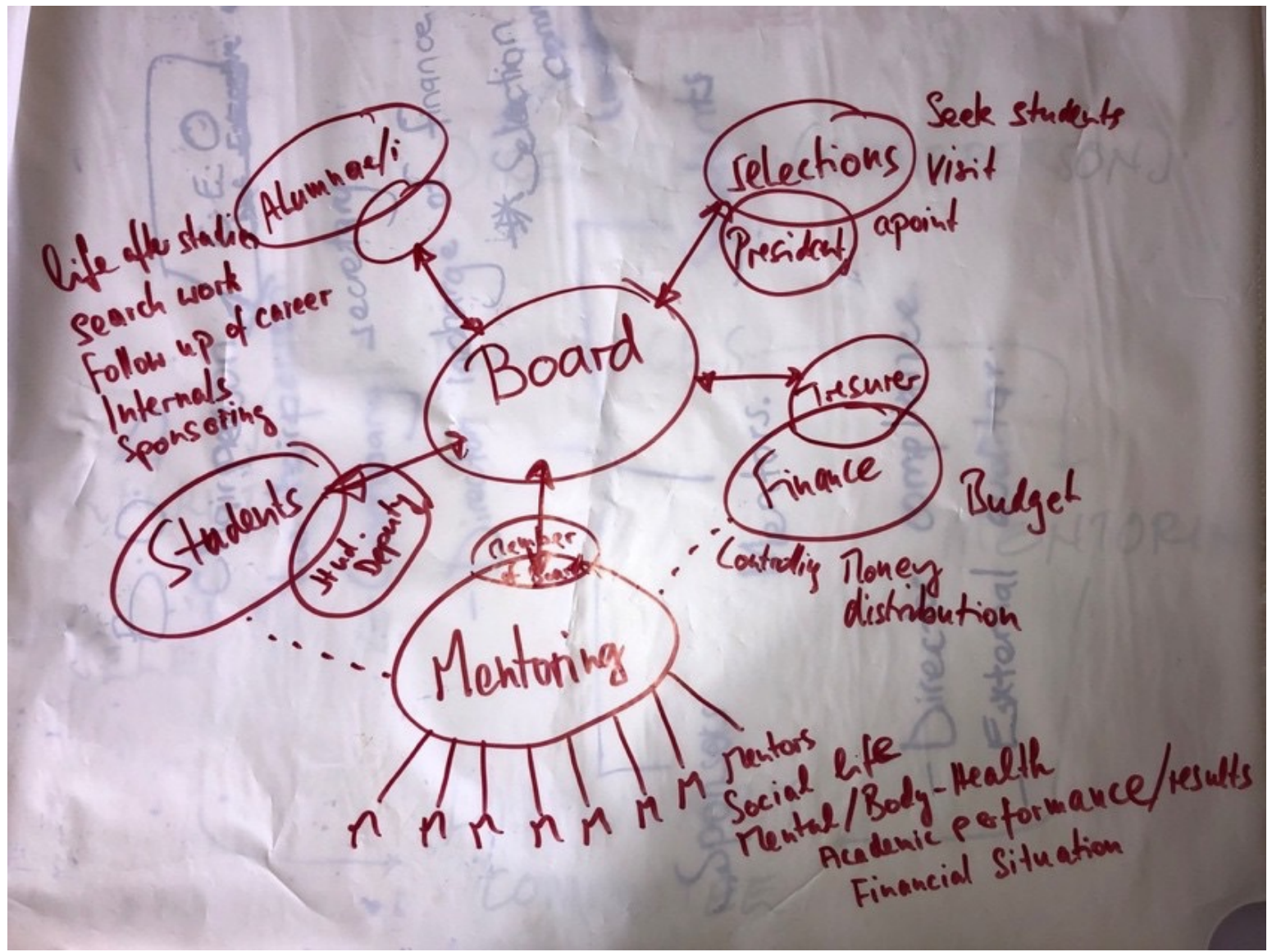
Ronald introduces one such network: the Rotary Clubs. Networks that focus on giving and supporting, and thus promote a foundation for business and professional life. The high ethical principles of Rotarians are in line with the guidelines of UECD: A focus on society as a whole, gender equality, cultural-understanding and peace are also important to us.

Reviewed during the admission of new Rotarier:innen the own attitude to:

1. is what I think, say or do true?
2. Is it fair for everyone involved?
3. does it promote friendship and goodwill?
4. does it serve the good of all involved?

The second topic was requested by our alumnae and alumni. Together we discuss whether the association UECD Switzerland, based in Zurich, will get a registered **non-profit company partner (Ltd.) based in Kampala**. Obed, the president of UECD Uganda, explains to us the advantages that such a structural change would bring. This would lead to sensitization of students and members: Uganda would get more autonomy and take more leadership. What would remain the same is that the students would have to work in the new company for five years, be it in the management or in committees. Organizational chart proposals for the new structure are being developed in three cross-role groups. Agreement must be reached on the new constitution. If necessary, there would be cooperation agreements between the NGO UECD Switzerland and the Company UECD Uganda. It looks as if the future structures will be seen the same or similar as in Switzerland: hierarchical or circular or as a flow chart.

The results of the group work will be presented by one student each. All three do this very well. In loud voices, clearly and confidently, they explain in short words what has been discussed and explained, and what conclusions they and what conclusions the respective groups have drawn. We applaud loudly and are genuinely amazed at how the shy women can suddenly speak loudly and clearly. It is a joy - and the applause is justified. So ends a beautiful and lively day and we are sure that I am not the only one who regrets the end of our joint encounters and looks back on our time together with wistfulness.



UECD COMPANY STRUCTURE

B.O.D.

- Chairperson CEO Chief Executive Officer
- Vice chairperson
- Company secretary
- Director incharge of finance

*** Selection Committee**
(recruitment)



- Director compliance
- External auditor

BOARD MEMBERS

DIRECTORY (CHAIRPERSON)

FINANCES

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

MENTORING

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE



Ronald Tusingwire becomes new president of Rotary Club of Kampala Impala – Obed Rekyeraho, President UECD Uganda new member of this Rotary Club – we celebrate with

Annemarie









Ronald invites us all to his inauguration as President of the Rotary Club of Kampala Impala at the Fairway Hotel Kampala. At the appointed hour, no one is there. A disc jockey plays soft background music. One by one, the guests arrive in the hotel hall, which is festively furnished with round tables.

Finally, the time has come: the "old president" of the club gives a fiery speech. Other important people speak. I have some trouble understanding the Ugandan English accent and can only partially follow the content of the speech. One thing is clear: The speakers thank each other, and the joy is great that they have now found a presidential successor in Ronald.

Ronald is then immediately acknowledged from various sides. Then he takes the oath on the guidelines of the Rotarians and immediately gets a medal around his neck as a sign of his new office. He thanks with a strong speech from which his joy about is palpable that he has now been elected to the new office. He promises to work innovatively for the Rotary Club and to network with other Rotary clubs and with other influential people. His goal for the year, he says, is to find new members, Obed and three other people have already been inducted as new members that evening. The way I have gotten to know Ronald have come to know, he will realize his own requirements and set about the new work with vigor. "Leaders are, by definition, change makers. When you are called to lead, you are called to advance, move forward and improve a situation," reads the text on the website of the Rotarians, and I think that this sentence fits Ronald very well. For me - and I am sure for my colleagues as well - it was an experience to witness this handover of office on site: one of the highlights of our trip. As chairman of UECD, Ronald is implementing the idea of networking with UECD-supporting organizations in Uganda in an exemplary way. The students present visibly enjoyed the evening. After the fine dinner music and dancing was the order of the day. Although the hall emptied quickly, we enjoyed the celebration until the end. We said our final goodbyes to the students present and made our way home late in the evening.

Visit to the artist Abushariaa

Eva

I visit the Sudanese artist Abushariaa on all my trips to Uganda. He had to flee Sudan under the former president Umar al-Bashir as a critical painter and settled in Kampala with his family.

He paints with fine powder colors abstractions on people, landscapes - mostly on a theme. The students and sponsors learn that he is currently working on a trilogy: the White Nile, the Blue Nile and the Black Nile. For this, he travels on location to capture moods. He tells that the pandemic has led him to paint productively. His large-format paintings illustrate this. The students and we are impressed. Brigitta, one of our sponsors, buys a painting.





During dinner we process impressions

Eva

In the evening we meet either in the Country Club, in the restaurant Khana Khasana or in the Hotel Esella and exchange impressions. While during the day the paths were individual according to interest, in the evening they led back together. It is pleasant to discuss the observations with each other over a drink and a good meal. Often students, alumni or alumnae join them during the evening. At one of these dinners, Jimmy, a former student in our program, introduces me to his future wife Mary. Next year, they plan to get married. Mary works in medical research at the prestigious Makerere University. He tells me that he is training at the Uganda Management Institute UMI to become a project manager in the fields of hydropower and electricity plants. It's a big step for the young man, who spent four years of his youth on the streets of Kampala before studying electrical engineering. His children will one day be able to attend school. He himself wants to become a UECD sponsor in the future. Experiencing that vocational training has this lasting effect triggers joy.

Matoke in Student Meburo's home village

Alex Borer, Member of the Board Finance

At seven o'clock in the morning I meet the UECD student Meburo Arinaitwe in front of the bus, who is just starting to study in our program beginning. It's off for a day in the direction of western Uganda. This adventurously in a so-called cab bus with 15 seats, where on that day almost twice as many people are crammed between a few chickens. The passengers ask themselves what this muzungu is doing here? A laugh goes through the rows, but Meburo has surely found the right answer.

Meburo invites me to visit her parents, who run a small farm near Queen Elisabeth National Park. At arrival we are welcomed by the whole family: Meburo's brother with his wife, his sister-in-law and their children run the farm. They mainly grow bananas and corn for their own use. A few goats and chickens also greet me when I arrive. I am treated to a sumptuous meal of meat, bananas, a spinach vegetable and spaghetti specially prepared for the Mzungu. What a feast! The parents and Meburo thanked UECD again and again for her being able to study at KIU Ishaka. She begins her three-year degree in education this fall - she wants to become a teacher with a focus on biology and chemistry. For her, it's like winning a six in the lottery (citation Claude Herzog) to finally be able to study at the age of 31. She has already started her studies twice but had to abandon them each time because her parents could no longer finance them. In the meantime, she has worked as a laboratory assistant and has also taught students. So, standing in front of a class is nothing new for Meburo and when she performs in front of people, you can see how much fire she has!





After dinner we go back to the small town of Katerera, where we finish the day with a drink. A particularly impressive visit. Our stay in Uganda was intense and rich in experiences and encounters – the time remains in our inspiring memories.



Photos by Diana Ulrich, Elisabeth Gerber, Alex Borer, Eva Winizki
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