

The story of Jacqueline Alice NAKYEYUNE Nursery and Primary School Teacher –Bajjo-Bombo, Luwero district

Written for SPAU by Zack Lwanga

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Jacqueline Nakyeyune moved to Bombo village with her baby; her one sister aged 18 and their mother in 2002. Prior to Jacqueline's coming to the village, pre-primary school going children (between the ages of 3-6) had no permanent tutor. All tutors were temporary and would stay at most for half a school term leaving the little children with a half-baked, if any education at all. The reasons for their premature leave were usually centred upon two main issues; poor pay and a hard-to-adapt-to situation leading a village-lifestyle in Bombo.



Jacqueline (*left, in picture*) is a trained cateress who also did a (rotational) year of her training in pre-primary school teaching. When people in Bombo village got to learn of Jacqueline's educational background, many asked her to take on the role of the village nursery school teacher. Finally Jacqueline reluctantly accepted at the proposal of the village L.C.1 chairman and some members of his committee. She was to be facilitated with school stationery, visual teaching aids for the children every term by the school parents and the Bombo Local Council. Also, she would be paid out of the money collected (school fees) from each child attending the school by the Bombo Local Council One. This fee would range according to the age of the children (between 5,000/= and 10,000/= per school term). On average Jacqueline said she would earn between thirty and sixty thousand shillings (30,000/= - 60,000/=) per term. (A nursery school teacher elsewhere within a rural setting earns an average of U.Shs.60,000= shillings per month). Because of her love for little children and out of pity for the '*tutorless*' children, Jacqueline agreed to continue with her teaching role.

With time (two school terms actually), the Local Council's support to the school ceased, as they would no longer afford the cost of the materials. Some of the parents were also defaulting on payment of their children's school fees for periods longer than a school term. And some parents, out of embarrassment for not having outstanding school-fees balances withdrew their children from attending the school. Some visiting teachers would come to the school during the course of the school term and leave almost as soon as they came because the situation, they found more than one could bear. To add insult to injury, the school building, which also housed the children's nursery, began to collapse bit by bit due to the feeble materials used in its construction that couldn't stand the weather (heavy rains, *El Nino*) at the time. Soon the building was in such a precarious state, Jacqueline had to, for the safety of the children and herself, cancel school for the rest of the term until they would find a better place to conduct their lessons.

The Local Council chairman, Mr. Ibrahim Lubwama approached a certain Kampala-based businessman, a one Fred, who had earlier on embarked on a 'silk-worm project' in the same area, to help the community with his room to enable the little children continue with their education. Fred owned a house (1-roomed) in Bombo, which he had previously used to keep silk-worms but had abandoned the project sometime back. This room was un-used at the time and Fred gladly let the community use this, until when he would have use of it next¹.

¹ It is not known when this would be. But given the nature of businessmen, unpredictable, it wouldn't be safe to assume this would be 'indefinite'.

In their new place of study which is some 300 meters away from Jacqueline's home she shares with her mother, sister and one child, the Local Council once again looked into the situation of the nursery school and unanimously agreed that Jacqueline take all the affairs of the school into her hands, from buying school stationery to paying her own stipend. Superficially this sounded like a good deal but it was in all earnest far from one. Jacqueline had a total of about 30 children at the time and only 6 of these had fully paid up their school dues. She could hardly cater for the school stationery, let alone raise her own salary. Jacqueline also had a family to take care of. It was really hard to go on this way. Asked how she would go on in spite of all the hardships, Jacqueline answered, "*obuzibu bwo bubadde wo naye nga wamu n'ebanange bano, nabugumira*" (Hardships have certainly been ever-present, but together with my friends here [the children], we had to get used).

At the time of writing this (2nd June, 2006) only 10 out of twenty eight children have so far reported back for the second school term, which commenced on 22nd June 2006. The most probable reason for the others' absence is the parents' lack of money to pay for the new school term yet. '*There is only so much a person can take*'. Jacqueline was just about to call it quits in January 2006 and then she heard a rumour on the village that "*eriyo abazungu abagenda okutuyamba batuzimbire essomero*" (there were some white men who were going to help them construct the school). 'This hope' Jacqueline said, 'has kept me going on everyday since then'.