

Hello everyone!

Hope you're all doing well?

What an incredible couple of months it's been!

Thank you so much for all your prayers and support. I battled with a few illnesses in my first few weeks but I praise God I'm feeling much better now.



(Photo: Maggie, my new housemate and colleague and I at 'night to shine')

Settling in

It's been so exciting to settle back into Uganda. It's been surreal to be here, finally arriving after all that time spent waiting and preparing. If I'm honest, I hadn't completely prepared myself for how different it would be living in a new town and working with a new organisation, and it has taken me longer to settle in than I expected. I am learning to love my new town and starting to find my way around, making friends and getting settled in to work too.

Church

I have been attending a church called Arise Africa Jinja Town Church, which has a mixture of western and Ugandan attendees and great worship and teaching. It is a fairly large church which makes it hard to get to know people, so please pray that I would have more opportunities to make friends there. I am grateful that there is a women's Bible study on a Thursday specifically aimed at missionaries living in Jinja, where I have met other women who have moved here to teach, and I have been so thankful for time to share experiences, read the Bible and pray together.



(Photo: birthday party for Claire with some of the women I've met at Bible study)

Teacher Training

I hit the ground running, joining the teacher training programme at Ekisa the week after I arrived. We trained the teachers on many things including teaching music and introducing teaching children with profound and multiple learning disabilities. This was well received, and it has been great to see some of the teachers trying new things in their classrooms in the last few weeks.



(Photo: one of the boys in our class trying out using a switch, he loves the singing, light-up, frozen toy!)

Smile Charity Uganda

It has been such a blessing to visit my friends in Kampala and Nansana a couple of times. I went to visit Alex at Smile Charity Uganda. It was great to catch up with him and his family and to fellowship with my good friends at Kampala Baptist Church too.



(Photo: Alex, Bennie and family with also a very old friend Joe, who also volunteered with Smile Charity Uganda on our gap year in 2012)

Holiday School

The following week, I got to run my first week of holiday school which involves planning themed activities for the children who are living in the Ekisa home. It was great to get to know the kids better who live in the home and have some fun during our jungle themed week!



(a happy school photo from one boy at school)

Night to shine

The following week was one of mixed emotions for Ekisa. A little girl from the home passed away unexpectedly which had a huge impact on the staff here. The next day we were running an event called 'Night to Shine', an event to celebrate the lives of all the children in our programmes with special needs and disabilities. This wonderful prom night was created by American footballer and Christian, Tim Tebow and is celebrated around the world. A night centred in God's love, it was an incredibly moving night, where children to dress their best and enter on the red carpet with their families, cheered and celebrated as daughters and sons of the King. A glimpse of the way things should be for these children!



(Photo from 'night to shine' – Students from a local secondary school cheering our students down the red carpet!)

School Starts!

A couple of days later, school finally started, and I got to meet the students in Orange and Green class – these are the classes that I will be working with throughout this year. It's been a real challenge to work out how to adapt the curriculum from the UK to fit the setting here. However, myself and Carol, the local teacher here are working together to see how to do the best we can for these children, and it has been so exciting to see them already learn so much. The TAs and teacher have been so excited to see one student in particular responding in ways they never have before!



(Photo: all the staff and kids at Ekisa Academy)

New Land

Some big and exciting news for Ekisa is that they have just bought land. This means that over the next couple of years they will be building a new school and home, bespoke for the needs of the children. I feel blessed to be here during this season of new beginnings!



(Photo: smiles for learning new things!)

Half term

I can hardly believe we've finished our first half term here and I have already been here for 2 months! I will be helping teachers with their planning over half term, but I am also looking forward to a couple of days off next week. Maggie my housemate has had to fly home due to her sister being in intensive care after emergency surgery. Please pray for her sister to recover quickly and for peace for her family. Kate is also still out of the country so please pray for me as I help to run the school in their absence.



(Photo: a view of the Nile from a local restaurant)

Prayer Points

- For me to continue to make friends here in Uganda
- For the teachers and TAs to build their confidence as they learn a new way of teaching
- For wisdom for Maggie, Kate and I as we try to create a curriculum that is culturally appropriate and meets the children's needs.
- For me to fully rely on God when I am missing home or feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work there is to do and to keep focussed on the goal.
- For me to stay healthy and well and full of energy in the hot, dry season we are in at the moment.



Thank you so much for all your prayers and support! I couldn't have done this without all of you so THANK YOU!

God bless,

Esther 🌸