

TWO “HATS-OFF” REVIEWS



Newly returned from NOTDEC, intrepid explorers **Jonathan Tidd** (left) & **Mark Wardle** (right) report back. They tell you what they did, and saw – and what they thought about it all.

NO GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Before we left, we were briefed very well by Janet and Anthony, who set our expectations very low.

We were not going on a luxury foreign holiday but a work trip. We wouldn't be staying in anything like 5 star accommodation. And we would lose weight! So we knew not to expect too much.

Mark

We would fly to Entebbe, stop off for a meeting in Kampala, and drive 8 hours to NOTDEC.

NOTDEC has no visitor accommodation, so we would stay at Kagando Hospital's Guesthouse 12 km (25 mins drive) away. It was our expectations of the guesthouse that were being managed!

Jonathan

FIRST, CAKE IN KAMPALA!



We started by meeting 25 ex-NOTDEC children who have now moved to the capital Kampala for work. They joined us for the afternoon, with a "Welcome back" cake for Janet & Anthony.

All of them came across well and seemed very well adjusted. All clearly still feel part of the NOTDEC family. Some were struggling more than others with employment – getting a job without paying bribes is not always easy!

Mark

We could see their excitement at catching up with each other. Most started out as orphans – some needing support on very difficult journeys – and it was wonderful to see how they had turned out.

One had just got a job as procurement manager, one ran a shop, one was finishing training as a nurse, and one was a barrister. They all said that the most important thing was they had grown up in a loving environment.

Jonathan

GUESTHOUSE VIEWS



The Guesthouse exceeded my expectations. We had running water, a rickety but useable *en suite*, intermittent electricity and torrential downpours at just the wrong moment. But TIA: This Is Africa! 🎵 After the rain, the powercut! 🎵



Guesthouse food wasn't sooo very bad, though spaghetti mixed with tomato soup seemed to feature regularly for our evening meal. Fresh produce was available from roadside vendors!

Mark

Views from the Guesthouse were marvellous. To supplement our rather limited lunches, Mark took to buying onions, tomatoes, chunks of extremely fresh cow (!) etc. and cooking for us on his "Ridge Monkey" contraption shown below.



Working hard together, we had lots of fun and laughs; and we exchanged plenty of smiles with the people we met. It might not have been 5 star accommodation, but we really enjoyed our stay.

Jonathan

NOTDEC KABIRIZI – THE SITE FOR SORE EYES!



NOTDEC's 30 acre site is an oasis of peace. The grounds are well kept, the buildings fantastic – far better than most in the community. I've visited many orphanages in Africa and in India, and this is the best I have ever seen. Hats off to John Leftley and the team who built it!

As I have a Civil Engineering degree I decided to inspect all the buildings. Overall, they were in a good state, but my report to the Director & Estates Manager identified a need for better maintenance of areas subject to water damage.



Very quickly a plumber (ex NOTDEC boy Sunday Rodgers) began to clear and refix all the gutters. It was good to see my report acted on so swiftly.

Mark

The team are constantly working to develop the site. On our first Sunday, the district woman MP came to open a new kitchen and started the foundations for another.



After the photographs, we had lunch with the local council chairs. It was good to see NOTDEC's management team working to develop positive links with local leaders.

One important topic raised by the management team with local leaders was how water could be pumped to the NOTDEC site from the local river instead of being hauled in every day by tractor.

Jonathan

ACTION ON SITE

Entertaining the Young Children Living on Site

The children are great – rather too young to live with family, very lively, and keen to interact. I taught them *Oh a Lay Lee* – a song I learnt in Mozambique. They all enjoyed it; everywhere I went, they were singing it.



My bubble stick was big hit. I dipped it in a bubble reservoir, and then blew through it. You can see the effect! At times I had to climb a tree for respite from the children!

Mark

Developing A 5-Year Vision and Plan

We arrived as the Staff & Board were starting to create a 5 year vision & plan for NOTDEC.



We helped review the Plan by providing feedback and facilitating discussion. We recommended making it a priority to find a strong leader to follow the very assured Canon Jehoshaphat.

An exciting future is planned. Hats off to them!

Jonathan

NOTDEC'S FARM AND ENVIRONMENT

Cash Crops & A Sting in the Tail!

It was great to walk round NOTDEC's farm and see how various plans had turned out. The first coffee trees were suffering, but later ones looked great and should provide a good income.



Around site boundaries were strange mini-houses joined by strong wires – honey traps! Elephants blundering into the wires shake the suspended beehives. And bees attack anything that moves – including elephants' sensitive ears!

Mark

Never Forget the Elephants!

Just after we left NOTDEC, some crops were damaged by encroaching elephants.



This elephant was in Queen Elizabeth Game Park – just across the road from NOTDEC. We spent 24 fascinating hours there seeing elephants, hippos, buffalo, and wart hogs. NOTDEC is very handy for such animals to visit – and the team have taken park rangers' advice on how to ensure that nature and humans can live harmoniously together.

Jonathan

CHILDREN LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

Many NOTDEC children live in the community with family members who are willing and able to care for them. I visited some in the remote Ruwenzori mountains and accessible only by motorbike.



I wanted to help assess how well the children had been integrated and if they had on-going needs. Overall they seemed happy, even though their accommodation was poorer than on site at NOTDEC, and food much scarcer.

Mark

A few years ago I researched how to grow small businesses in Uganda, so I was pleased to talk with two NOTDEC boys – newly qualified as plumber & electrician, and considering their next steps. As those they saw with money were shop owners, both wanted to start shops; but they had a lot to learn about how to earn a living doing it.



Social worker Justus with Electrician Benjamin

This experience and talking with ex-NOTDEC children in Kampala led us to suggest that the 5 year plan should provide combined career counselling and entrepreneurial training as a key support for children placed with family living in the community.

Jonathan

HALLELUJAH CHORUS

What an amazing trip!

It was great to serve the Lord in Uganda using the gifts with which He has blessed us. The vision “To provide a family community for vulnerable children” is certainly being met at NOTDEC.

The children are a delight, a credit to all – in the UK and Uganda – who work tirelessly to help them.

We loved it. We will be back!

Mark & Jonathan