Dear TFT Partner:

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Sincerely yours,

TABLE FOR TWO International

<Overview>

In fall 2011 we visited Ruhiira Village in Uganda, where we have offered school meals for a total of 21 elementary schools in the area. The number of students has grown dramatically from around 7,000 when we started our program in 2007 to over 10,000 in 2011. In this document, we hope to provide you with information on the conditions of Uganda and life in Ruhiira village, as well as the school meal programs Table for Two supports.

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1. Basic Facts about Uganda

The Republic of Uganda lies in East Africa, surrounded by Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. 32 million people live in the nation of an area size of 91,135 sq miles, with the equator passing through the nation. The capital city, Kampala, lies just north of Lake Victoria.

Uganda is rich in nature and is also known as “the Pearl of Africa.” Wild animals, like mountain gorillas, can be found in its forests and national parks, attracting tourists from Europe and the world.

Uganda has seen a remarkable economic growth in the past 5 years,
along with a significant increase in population and inflation. The government has invested in infrastructure such as roads, energy, network, agricultural production, education and public health services.

It has also been constructing business parks with special tax measures and a stable supply of electricity in an effort to attract both domestic and foreign businesses. The Namanve business park, located in the outskirts of the capital city Kampala, is one of them.

With 87% of its population living in rural areas, most of the people living in Uganda engage in agriculture. The nation is one of the leading producers of coffee in Africa, which dominate around a quarter of its exports. Clothing and leather is also a growing portion of the export products, along with cotton, tea and tobacco.

The poverty rate has declined dramatically in the recent decades, with a UNDP report claiming it has dropped from 56% in 1990 to 31% in 2006. However, it has seen little change since then and is still one of the poorest nations in the world, ranking 154th among the 177 countries in the Human Development Index of 2007.

2. Ruhiira Village, Isingiro District

As part of our Millennium Village Project, we have started our program in 2006 at Ruhiira Village, Isingiro District, lying in western Uganda.

Mbarara is the nearest city to Ruhiira and is a 5 to 6 hour drive from the capital city of Kampala. It lies at about 4,850 feet (1,480 metres) above sea level and among the forest areas. The city is known for the production of bananas as well as crafts like wood carvings, pottery and textile. It is also where
the milk gathered from surrounding areas is processed.

Ruhiira village is another 1 hour drive from Mbarara. The subhumid climate brings rain to the mountainous village during its two rainy seasons: from March until May, and from August to October. With no paved roads along its hills and mountains, the residents mainly live self-sufficiently within the village.

Before the Millennium Village Project, the poverty rate was around 40 to 50 %, meaning that about half of its residents lived on less than $250 each year. Most of the villagers are farmers who grow bananas along the hillsides, but since they contain very little nutritive value in them, undernourishment has also been a serious problem in the village, with around 40% of the children under the age of 5 found to be below the standard weight in 2006.

With the Millennium Village Project, there have been efforts to grow maze (corn), facilitate and guide groups to ship bananas, and improve public health and education.

※About the Millennium Village Project
The Millennium Village Project supports the districts designated in year 2000 by the United Nations to be a model in diminishing poverty. There are currently 80 villages from 10 African countries designated as “Millennium Villages.”

3. The School Meal Program
We visited the elementary schools and clinics of Ruhiira Village in November 2011.

Outlook on School Meals
- Here at TABLE FOR TWO, we provide school meals everyday to 11,000 children from 21 elementary schools: A steamed flour maze, called posho, with a soup of boiled beans and
vegetables poured over them.

- Green bananas, known as *matokes*, are a vital part of their diets. The bananas can commonly be found and are eaten steamed or fried, but lack certain nutrients. Before the project, many children brought matokes from their homes, but with school meals the children can now eat warm school meals daily.

- Some schools already own efficient cooking stoves using little wood to cook, whereas others must cook with bowls placed on top of rocks, with the smoke having a negative effect towards the students’ health. These schools are under preparation for the installation such stoves.

**Movement towards a community-based, sustainable school meal program**

More proportions of the ingredients for school meals are now being provided by the students’ parents instead of TFT. Most of them are beans, or amaranths, known as *dodos*, grown at their homes.

- School gardens are another effort in growing vegetables for meals. Children in the lower classes start with growing crops that are easy to grow, and through experience move on to green vegetables that need prevention of pests. Competitions between the 5th and 6th graders in growing the same crop to see which will be able to grow more of them are another way they encourage farming. We expect to see a cycle in the knowledge of growing crops at school being applied at their homes.

**Outlook**

- The school meals have been effective in bringing children to schools, but the increases in the
number of students have raised some issues. The parents and the community have started taking action towards solving such problems.

- The lack of government-appointed teachers means that each teacher has less overlook towards each student. There have also been cases where teachers refuse to teach at a rural school with insufficient supplies. At Ruhiira, parents have volunteered to split the cost to hire those with teaching qualification.

- With the lack of space in these schools, some lower classes do not use desks and chairs, and instead spread out mats where the students sit during class. To solve this problem, at Nyampikye elementary school the community has cooperated together in working together to construct a new classroom, using the clay at the school field to bake bricks.

- There have also been many other issues the schools in Ruhiira must face. The PTA has been very active in solving them, and now with the community and local churches, they take a unified stand to improve the children’s education. They now focus on solving their problems on their own instead of outsider support.

※ The school meal program by TFT was selected by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a civil partnership program towards foreign development, which funded us the expenses for visiting Tanzania and Uganda.

4. From the Staff at TABLE FOR TWO

In Kampala, the capital of Rwanda, we saw the bustling city, full of traffic and signs of economic growth. On the other hand, however, at the village of Ruhiira we met children who have never been outside of their villages or seen paved roads, suggesting the gap between the growth in urban and rural areas of the nation.

At Kanywamaizi elementary school in Ruhiira, we had the chance to ask children questions during lunch time. When the principal asked them what they could earn through going to school and studying, and eventually being able to work, one upper-class student raised his hand and answered “Respect.” Other students followed with answers like wages, being able to have a family, or furniture, but we were amazed at how they knew that with education came esteem and confidence. Table for Two only supports the meals offered at the schools, but we were struck with the sense that through these meals the children can study, and change their lives. (Tomoko Kobayashi)