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Welcome to our July News Edition. Many Universities and Colleges are still on holiday with many students doing internships although a few schools are running. This time we hear of the experiences of some of our staff workers.

## Alex - MY EXPERIENCE ON STEM

“For the last one year, I have been working with FOCUS on their one year volunteer full time program called ‘Short Term Experience in Ministry (STEM) training program’ for recent graduates. Under close guidance from regional Training Secretaries, each STEM participant has the opportunity to work with the students in one or two or more Christian Unions (CUs). They raise their own financial support from local resources.

I asked to be a part of this program as a result of my interactions with the last STEM staff; Sight Orishaba that FOCUS sent to work with our Campus when I joined University in year one at Bishop Burham University in Kabale. Sight was very instrumental in helping us as students’ appreciate the interdenominational nature of the CU which fostered unity in our fellowships. We experienced a huge gap in not only our school fellowship, but even other Campuses where she worked when her one year experience ended and there was no one to replace her. The CUs struggled with identity challenges, lack of clarity on leadership roles, there was none or limited outreach done by CU members and fellowship numbers dropped significantly and finally divisions arose among the students resulting in School administrations closing 6 of the CUs in the area.



I hoped when I joined the program that I would be a part of the re-birth of some of the closed fellowships and that CU governance issues would become streamlined as the leaders received training. I am so happy that during my time on the program, I have had a chance to work with 15 CUs in Kabale area. With the student leaders, we were able to draw up 4 CU constitutions, work with leaders in all the Campuses to understand what CUs are about and how to structure programs. Students have a tendency to plan too many activities that are unrealistic and poorly executed. We succeeded in reducing the number of CU activities. I worked with 11 Associates in the area who routinely gave of their time to speak in student fellowships and teach them the word of God. I was able to organize a Leadership and Missions training

conference which the students appreciated very much in terms of the topics handled and the speakers who very ably handled these topics.

I have grown in my ability to plan and execute my plans. I have become a lot more self-driven and accountable. My own personal devotions through scripture engagement and prayer have helped me know and love God more. I am also thankful that I have learnt more about mobilizing people.

I was expected to raise resources to enable me do my work and this is the area I struggled with the most. I also found it hard when activities like meetings were arranged and people failed to show up with no reasons given and I would wonder what to do. I marveled that people saw nothing wrong with this. I am so thankful to those whose sacrificial giving made it possible for me to be a part of this program and I am so thankful for having been availed this opportunity.”

*Alex Mugarura*

## Daphine

For the last two, months, Mark, James and I (Daphine) all working as Training Secretaries in different regions in Uganda, have been studying a Course in Theology at the Institute of Staff Development and Training, aimed at building staff capacity for national student movements in collaboration with the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS). It has been a period of learning, growing, intellectual stimulation, and a time of reflection on my personal relationship with Christ and my understanding of salvation. It was also a period of learning and unlearning certain things, and being challenged to know what I believe and why I believe what I believe.

**BEFORE THE TRAINING;** I had never got an opportunity to travel outside East Africa and interact with other student workers from different African Movements. There is so much about Salvation that I did not know yet I train, help and disciple students. The understanding of the ‘interdenominational nature’ of FOCUS had never sunk in my brain, and many times I would struggle explaining to students what it meant. I thought the challenges I face with working with my movement are unique to only FOCUS Uganda. Sometimes I held onto many wrong views, beliefs, and conclusions about salvation that I later learnt, that some were not true, others were based on biases and the rest were due to ignorance. My reading culture and interest in researching certain issues pertaining salvation had started going down again.

**AFTER THE TRAINING;** I am in a much better position to help a fellowship or students with many questions related to the Bible and salvation. Meeting with other staff from other African movements helped me to appreciate that student ministry challenges are the same elsewhere and not just unique to Uganda. I now know what I believe in and why I believe so and this has enhanced my confidence in addressing certain students’ problems and confusion.

I believe beyond doubt that I am different from the Training Secretary I was before the ISDT training; in terms of the knowledge acquired and in terms of my personal relationship with God and understanding of the IFES, and FOCUS vision.

Reading and thinking before speaking is now part of me and I have also learnt to be patient with others, listening intently, and with humility.

From the IFES living stone course, I now know what engaging the university really means and I also know my responsibilities as a Training Secretary Better.

## Meetings

A meeting was held on July 15<sup>th</sup> for 34 participants from 12 Institutions who included Chaplains, CU Patrons and student leaders. Discussions were held on the roles that each of these play in the CU and how all can mutually help the students they work with. The Training Secretary Denis Tapi and one of the Associate Trainers Richard Alele facilitated the meeting. It is expected that all the parties will have an enhanced participation in the CUs they represent



*Participants in meeting with Chaplains, Patrons and student leaders*

Two meetings were held with student leaders in Gulu CO-PTC on 22<sup>nd</sup> July for 40 students and on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 14 students at Kitgum Technical Institute. Discussions were held on leadership issues among the students and areas the students can grow their leadership

## **Staff transitions**

Two staff moved on from serving at FOCUS. The first, Victory Nambuya Musimenta was replaced by Faith Sonia Guhirwa as Finance and Administration Officer. Noah Wafula moved on from being Training Secretary in the Eastern region. Erasmus Bwire joined the STEM program in Mbale.

We are very thankful to all those who serve with FOCUS in different capacities and those who give of their resources to make what we do possible. We remain thankful to God who is at work among us. Again, thank you for your support.

Until next time;  
FOCUS Communications