

Volunteer Grahame Woodward

Partner organisation **Comboni Samaritans of Gulu | UGANDA**

Interim Finance Director Grahame Woodward was running his own business in Birmingham and made time around his client commitments to share his wealth of experience with the Comboni Samaritans of Gulu (CSG) in Uganda. CSG are a community-based organisation providing support to those suffering from or orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, and those displaced by the civil war in the region. Grahame set up his own business with the aim to gain a better work / life balance, which included the opportunity to pursue other projects such as volunteering overseas.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Grahame chose a 4 week assignment with CSG mainly due to the traumatic nature of the region's recent history and the amazing support CSG was giving to the local communities. Much of their work has stemmed from the devastation of nearly 20 years civil war. With past experience of working, and travelling, in Africa and a career specializing in the SME sector, Grahame felt that he was in a perfect position to make a significant contribution to the management and development of this great NGO's (*Non-Governmental Organisation*) financial infrastructure.



"I was overwhelmed by the extent of the appreciation of my support from the staff. My expectations, personally and professionally, as to what I could achieve were more than fulfilled. I strongly believe many working accountants would love to become involved."

Grahame Woodward

"Mr Woodward offered a lot of capacity building support to our accounting and administrative staff. He supported us with achieving greater project sustainability, better internal management procedures and donor relationships."

Acen Rose, Finance Manager

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The overwhelming objective was to ensure that satisfactory funding is secured consistently over the long-term. Grahame's approach was to identify and implement specific improvements in their current accounting and reporting systems, with a view that these would be used as examples by the staff to continue such development themselves. One example involved the radical streamlining of the payroll system, which had become extremely cumbersome, not only for the individual preparing the payroll, but also for the two senior staff responsible for reviewing and authorizing. The resulting enhancement not only made the basic operation considerably simpler, but it also provided valuable information to enable more effective control of the expenditure. This benefit fell within the general philosophy of "helping the charity help itself".

LOCAL IMPRESSIONS

Grahame: It is always exciting to visit and live in a new country for the first time. I knew very little about Uganda, apart from the news coverage of the Idi Amin reign. As it turned out, the social life was brilliant, everybody was so friendly. I always felt safe, whatever time I chose to venture out, often in unlit streets. In fact, the main danger in town was the possibility of falling down the holes in the roads! A particularly pleasing aspect of social life in Gulu was the constant mixing of locals and the "ex-pat" communities.

