



Phyllis' Wamboga Memorial: *A Bustling Primary School and Nursery*

School Background/Life Before WMI

Phyllis Wanyenze is the Director of Wamboga Memorial Primary School in the city council of Budadiri (30 minutes down the road from Buyobo). She became the Director in 2017 following the death of her husband, who founded the school in 2004. The combination of her school administration skills, financial assistance from WMI's Jumbo Loan Program, and emotional support provided by the women of WMI has allowed the school to not only survive but thrive in the wake of her husband's passing.

Phyllis took her first loan in 2014 while working as a teacher and assistant director of the school. After graduating from the initial loan program, she now receives a jumbo loan every 10 months. Phyllis also works as a coordinator for WMI, where she manages 7 groups of borrowers (140 women).



Pictured: Phyllis working at her desk

School Operations

Wamboga Memorial enrolls 440 students, teaching kids from nursery (3+ year-olds) all the way to P7 (13 and 14-year-olds). The students walk to school each day from the 7 surrounding villages. It employs 19 teachers, 3 security staff, 2 cooks, and 1 matron, who looks after the boarding students. Being a private primary school, it receives no funding from the government, but because they take the same exams as the public schools, their curriculums are very similar.



Pictured: Phyllis teaching her Primary 1 class

Due to the lack of government funding, Phyllis' school can only afford to pay their teachers about one-half the monthly salary of a government school teacher. But what they lack in salary amount, they make up for in timeliness and consistency of payment. Late or missed payments of teachers is commonplace here, especially in

government schools, which leads to degrading trust and lackluster teacher performance. Phyllis' school has **never** missed a payment, and as a result, they attract and keep intelligent and highly motivated teachers.

Phyllis' school requires a large number of inputs, which consist mostly of food and classroom items. She buys food in bulk, enough for the entire term, in the local market and stores it in her school's kitchen. Her largest food purchases are flour, dried beans, and rice. She buys her classroom supplies either locally or at school supply shops in Mbale, with her largest purchases being chalk and textbooks. She also spends a significant amount of money each year on supplies to make instructional aids that are displayed in the classrooms. These aids line the walls and even hang from the ceilings, giving the classrooms a colorful and festive vibe. It is atypical for schools here to invest such an amount on learning guides for students.

Performance and Accomplishments

The impact of the administrative consistency and commitment is obvious when observing a class at Wamboga. Each teacher brings tremendous energy to the classroom, and the students respond with

attentiveness and diligence in their work. After seeing the school in action, it comes as no surprise that, in 2018, 39 out of the 39 P7 students at Wamboga passed the national secondary school entrance exam. This is an exceedingly rare feat in this district. Word of the success at Wamboga has started to spread, and her school is now at the top of the recommendation list for families moving to the Sironko district and is expecting to grow steadily in enrollment in the coming years. When we asked Phyllis if she has ever bought advertisements for Wamboga, she responded, *"A school that performs does not need to advertise, the only ones who need to advertise on the radio are the non-performing ones."*

Future Plans and Challenges

To prepare for this growth and to improve the experience for the existing students, Phyllis has several construction projects on the horizon that she is saving for. In her schoolyard sits a brickmaking house that, after being constructed and "fired" by local workers, will have enough bricks to make 3 new classrooms, bringing the school's total to 12 and replacing the only remaining classrooms made of timber. She also wants to coat all of the brick structures in plaster, which is sturdier and makes it easy to hang instructional aids on. In addition to classroom construction, Phyllis wants to purchase additional land for student use and to build housing for teachers and boarding quarters for students.



Pictured: The school's brick oven, which will be used to build several additional classrooms

The biggest challenge facing her school is financial. The school is funded primarily by school fees which can be very difficult for parents to pay. As she explains, *“Our students, whose parents are civil servants, always pay on time and in full, but students whose parents are peasants (farmers) really struggle. In the case of these students we do not chase them from our school; we just consider it a financial loss.”*

Impact of WMI

The difficulty of collecting fees is why her WMI loan is so essential. She uses it to bridge the gap between her income and expenses to make sure that teachers receive their salaries on time or to buy food and supplies for students. As I described above, the importance of this timely payment cannot be overstated.

Phyllis is extremely proud of the successful business she has built for herself and her family. Life is not easy for women in the village following the death of their husbands, but she credits the strong women of WMI, and specifically, Director Olive Wolimbwa, with helping her get back on her feet and help her get to where she is today- educating, feeding, and bettering the lives of almost 500 people.

| Day in the life of student at Wamboga Memorial School | |
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| 6:30-7am | Walk to school, participate in morning glory singing and dancing |
| 7-7:20am | Students clean the compound by sweeping classrooms and common areas |
| 7:30-10:30am | Classes begin for students- periods are 30 mins long for P1-P3, 40 mins for P4-P7 |
| 10:30-11am | Morning break with porridge as a snack (students must pay if they want to receive porridge) |
| 11am-1pm | Classes continue |
| 1pm-2pm | Lunch for all students- Posho (traditional cassava dish) and beans served |
| 2-2:30pm | All school assembly |
| 2:30-6pm | Classes continue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nursery ends at 3:30pm - P1-P4 ends at 5pm - P5-P7 ends at 6pm |

- *Classes include:* English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Religious Education, Science, PE

Financial Management

Director Phyllis and her headteacher, Bosco, do an excellent job keeping the books at Wamboga Memorial. At the beginning of each year, they create a very organized and extensive budget for the school, making sure to include every foreseeable expense.

This diligence in tracking finances has allowed Phyllis to feel financially secure and confident enough to invest heavily in the school’s infrastructure as it prepares to expand. As mentioned above and shown in the 2019 income projection below, they are planning to:

- Build a new, 3 classroom block that will support a higher enrollment

- Outfit the school with electricity
- Buy a computer to improve efficiency and accuracy of record-keeping

The large amount of investment planned for 2019 will lead to a meager profit margin for the school this year, but will certainly pay dividends down the line.

With her record keeping buttoned up, we are discussing strategies with Phyllis on how to most effectively deploy excess cash moving forward, whether it be on living quarters for teachers or more land for the children to play and learn on. With continued sound decision making going forward, the school will be a runaway success both academically and financially.