



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

---

## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

---

**TITLE**        **VISIT TO UGANDA**  
**DATE**        **13 January 2014**  
**BY**            **Firs Minister**

Members will be aware that I returned yesterday from a visit to Uganda. I went there as a guest of the Mbale Coalition Against Poverty, a partner of the Welsh Government's Wales for Africa programme. This presented an ideal opportunity for me to visit projects that have been made possible by the hard work and dedication of many people from Wales with the support of the Wales for Africa programme.

My 5 day visit included elements focused on different components of the Wales for Africa programme including Fair Trade, Wales Africa Community Links, Size of Wales tree planting and Health Links.

On my arrival in Kampala I had initial meetings with the British High Commission and the Department for International Development and then travelled to Mbale in Eastern Uganda, where many of the Welsh projects are based.

Over the course of a memorable 5 days I attended 24 events in 19 different locations attended by dozens of people from Wales and several thousand Ugandans.

Visits included a tour of the Gumutindo Fairtrade and Organic Coffee Cooperative, which the Welsh Government has helped by funding a management expert. I saw for myself the benefits that Fairtrade brings to poor farmers in the form of community improvements such as a regular water supply, better toilets and a Credit Union along with considerably better prices for their top quality coffee. I was given a tour of one of the Size of Wales tree nurseries where dozens of varieties of trees are grown to help bind the soil, provide shade for crops, fuel for cooking and wood for building. I visited a bee keeping project, supported by Monmouthshire based Bees for Development and funded with a small grant from the Welsh Government which is giving women farmers an additional income alongside improved nutrition for their children and better pollination for their coffee.

I was also privileged to see the fantastic improvements made to Bubutu High School through the efforts of staff and pupils from Pontypridd High School. I opened a girl's

dormitory, funded by donations from Welsh businesses which will help protect the girls from assault and ensure that more of them are able to finish their education. Whilst there I was shown a motorcycle ambulance service, set up by Welsh paramedics which helps pregnant women to get to hospital – and in doing so, greatly reduce maternal mortality. The PONT machine tool workshop – donated by TATA steel in South Wales with staff trained by volunteers from Wales with another small grant from the Welsh Government – was making much needed wheeled stretchers for the ambulance service, designed by a student from Wales.

On the last day I visited Namatala slum in Mbale. There, I opened some public latrines built with donations from staff and students at Glamorgan University to improve public health and saw the inspiring work of Child of Hope, giving real opportunity to children of that slum in incredibly challenging conditions. I was pleased to hear their Director praise the work of the 3 volunteers they have had through our International Learning Opportunities programme, saying that each placement had brought about step change improvements to their work.

The visit also enabled me to plant the millionth tree for the Size of Wales Million Trees project and make two announcements regarding the project. From April, we will extend our successful PLANT! initiative which currently plants a tree in Wales for every child born or adopted in Wales to plant an additional tree in Uganda. I also announced a new target of 10 Million Trees for the Mbale tree planting project.

I know that there were people who felt I should not visit Uganda following the unexpected passing of the back bench Anti Homosexuality Bill just before Christmas. I understand their concerns and agree wholeheartedly with the statement that the UK Government position on the matter <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fco-minister-expresses-uk-concerns-about-anti-homosexuality-legislation-in-uganda>

My position has not changed since I wrote to the Assembly Petitions committee almost exactly three years ago on 26 Jan 2011 [http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-pc-home/bus-committees-third-pc-agendas/pet\\_3\\_-3-11\\_papers-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=PET%283%29-03-11%20%3A%20Paper%201%20%3A%20New%20Petitions%20and%20Updates%20to%20Previous%20Petitions%20%28PDF%2C%201-91MB%29%20](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-pc-home/bus-committees-third-pc-agendas/pet_3_-3-11_papers-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=PET%283%29-03-11%20%3A%20Paper%201%20%3A%20New%20Petitions%20and%20Updates%20to%20Previous%20Petitions%20%28PDF%2C%201-91MB%29%20)

Uganda has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. Child abuse is both widespread and under recorded. I believe that these are reasons to continue to engage with ordinary Ugandans and their communities and for people from Wales to continue their work – not to walk away. I saw for myself the positive effect that this Welsh engagement is having, not only materially but also in moderating attitudes.

I spoke publicly about the need for tolerance and acceptance and discussed the Anti Homosexuality Bill privately with local political leaders in Mbale. Ugandans are well aware of our position and I was regularly advised that by speaking out on the Bill – which is currently with the President - I could make the situation worse not better.

I want to congratulate all of the volunteers from Wales who are making such a positive and inspirational difference – not only in Mbale but in many other communities in sub Saharan

Africa. I am glad that my visit has drawn attention to their invaluable work and would like to encourage even more people in Wales to get involved in their work.