



Global Friends  
FOUNDATION

# Lessons Under the Mango Tree

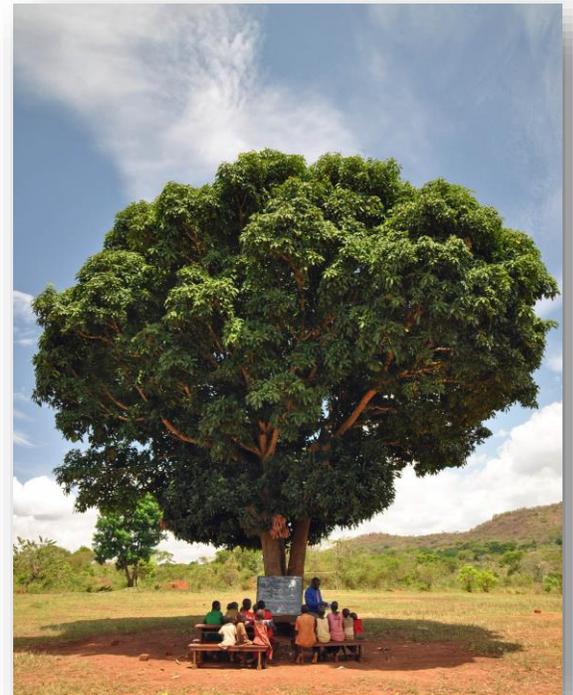
By: Catherine Mulvale, Founder and Director, Global Friends Foundation

The children sit attentively under the mango tree. Class is in session. An umbrella of green shades the crooked lines of wooden benches teetering on the dirt floor. The canopy sways gently in the warm African breeze above the young students. Shadows cast by the magnificent tree embrace the Ugandan classroom. It is a beautiful site.

On this splendid day, the outdoor classroom is, by far, the most exquisite education setting I have ever seen. That will soon change.

In the next few days, the rainy season will begin and class will be dismissed. The rain that brings life to fields and gardens, will end this season of learning. Classes will resume but when exactly that will be, is a mystery only nature knows the answer to. There is no alternative space – no classroom with protective walls or roof is available. There are no text books nor school supplies. This is reality, year in and year out, for the students and teachers of Gayaza sub-county.

Too many children living in rural Uganda live in extreme poverty. The majority of people do their best to survive on less than \$2 a day – many live on much less. This crippling disadvantage would break the spirit of most. And yet, for the people of Gayaza sub-county, it doesn't. Far from it. They sing with joy, dance with delight and celebrate life with passion and exuberance.



For me, the makeshift classroom represents ingenuity, determination and hope. Adults are trying to make the best of a difficult situation for the sake of their children and grandchildren. The teachers who do not make enough money to survive often work more than one additional job, consider it a great service to educate the youngsters of their community. Many of the parents, who struggle to provide their children with the bare necessities of life, offer services to support their schools in the hopes that the teachers will continue to teach.

Education offers opportunity – to dream, to realize one's potential, to break the cycle of poverty. Someday soon, the Global Friends Foundation, a national charity based in Oakville, hopes that holding lessons under the mango tree will be an optional – rather than the only -- place to study. Having already funded the construction of a school for 500 in a neighbouring village, they have seen how a small investment in one school is already transforming a community.

Education is not the only solution to breaking the cruel, relentless cycle of poverty but it is one critically important element. To watch the transformation yourself, please visit [www.GlobalFriends.ca](http://www.GlobalFriends.ca)

**Update July 2019: The school has been built, hundreds of children are attending classes and we have received funding to build another two blocks of classrooms.**

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