

**Our "Vision 2025" –
The new St. Thomas Operating Theatre and Laboratory Building**



Our current conclusion:

With an incredible amount of commitment and financial support, we succeeded in building a new hospital building with an operating theatre, intensive care unit and large laboratory in Nawanyago in only 7 months of construction. The whole project, as unimaginable as the implementation originally was, has been and is obviously under a good star or as Sister Angela would say "we are blessed".

Our Christmas present came early this year. After our new doctor Martin finished his internship, we were granted a temporary license to perform operations!

All we are waiting for now is the official upgrade to Health Centre IV, so that a blood bank can finally be established in Nawanyago.

As of December 31, 2024

THE FACTS:

2 floors, a total of 360 square meters of usable space, with an inwardly sloping roof and 20 KW solar system, another UV disinfection system from aqua pura, wastewater

disposal, hot water in showers on both floors, a fully equipped operating room, 3 complete intensive care units, several offices and storage rooms, a large laboratory as well as various rooms for special gynecology and dentistry consultations. Of course, there are also social rooms for laboratory staff and changing rooms for operating room staff. All in all, a "German standard hospital" in Nawanyago – hard to believe for everyone involved.

HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

How did we – as a small association with 30 members at the time – come up with the idea of expanding the small Health Centre III in Nawanyago/Uganda with a new building with a total of 360 square meters?



The original idea for our "Vision 2025" is based on a statement made by Sister Angela, the director of the small hospital, in 2014. At that time, she visited Gemmingen for the first time at our invitation and spent a day in the practice of Dres. Med. Klimm in Gemmingen. Her most important realization after that day: "I need such a small operating theatre in Nawanyago, too!" (For explanation: the joint practice Dres. Klimm has a

small operating room for the treatment of minor wounds, ear irrigation, dressing changes, etc.).

At that time, small wound care etc. in Nawanyago took place in a run-down, very dirty room that had not been renovated since the end of the 1990s. So our idea was to at least let one of these rooms be tiled, so that cleaning would be easier and the hygiene standard would be better. However, in the context of our founding of the association and the much more urgent first project "water supply", this problem disappeared from our field of vision for the time being.

It was only when our members Manfred, Jörg, Klaus and Florian were able to fly to Uganda at the end of 2018, just a year after our founding, and were able to attach the first UV disinfection system donated by aqua pura Switzerland [NGO https://aqua-pura.ch](https://aqua-pura.ch) to the three new 10,000 litre water tanks, that we came back to it.



Inauguration of the first UV disinfection system from aqua pura with Florian, Jörg, Klaus and Robert Mudiima, November 2018

One evening during his stay, Florian was called to attend to the victim of a traffic accident with several broken bones, which could not be treated in Nawanyago. So the ambulance with driver was organized in order to be able to transfer the woman to Kamuli after painkillers were administered. On the way to dinner, Jörg and Manfred met in the courtyard of the Health Centre and Jörg asked Manfred: what is happening there? Manfred said that someone is being transferred who cannot be operated on here. To which Jörg replied: "Then we'll just build an operating room next!"

It became clear relatively quickly that the very small and stuffy laboratory, which is therefore harmful to the health of the employees against the background of tuberculosis (TB) and other infectious diseases occurring in Uganda, should also be integrated into the new building.

Plans for an expansion of the laboratory had already been made during Florian's Weltwärts stay in 2012/13, but these could not be realized.



The old laboratory in 2022



Sister Angela at the ultrasound

Since Sister Angela had already had a lot of success with her ultrasound examinations in cooperation with "Imaging the world" imagingtheworld.org 2018 and planned to do her bachelor's degree in radiology, a separate room for the Department of Radiology was initially to be created, but this was not realized.

Immediately after returning, this first plan was discussed in the board and the project was given the name "Vision 2025", because that was all it was in 2018: our idea, our "vision" of what the Nawanyago Health Centre should look like in 2025 and what it should be able to achieve.

Designed for the year 2025 because at that time, with a total of 9,000 euros in donations collected so far, it seemed completely absurd to us to get even a reasonably large share

(our goal was 80% before the start of construction) of the originally estimated 120,000 € construction costs for the shell together. We are all the more proud that we were able to open the new building as early as January 2024 - thanks to many smaller and larger donations, but especially thanks to the generous donation of Thomas Meumann.

Equipped with our plan and a new flyer designed by our member Jörg, we now started collecting donations to make our vision a reality. We started with the sale of Ugandan crafts at all public events in and around Gemmingen: Kerwe, Christmas market, Gemmingen welcomes spring, park festival, everywhere we were represented with a booth, companies were also contacted, donation boxes were set up, because: " Every little bit added to what you've got makes just a little bit more" and we needed an incredible amount of money.

But then Covid came: Ugandan schools closed (a total of 88 weeks!), the nutrition of our sponsored children suffered and we supported their families with food parcels, while due to the lack of events and the economic situation in Germany, our donations also decreased. But there was a lot going on in one part of our project: after we had repeatedly received medical material from the SLK clinics, practices in the area and private individuals to equip the new building, PD Dr. med. Michael Preusch, MdL, and the nursing director of the Heidelberg University Hospital, offered the equipment of the old surgical clinic, which had just been moved. This afternoon was like shopping without a wallet for Florian. For hours we roamed through these "historic walls" and were allowed to stick our Tusiima stickers on everything that was still there and did not already have a "Reserved" sign! On this day, we were able to secure four fully equipped intensive care spaces from monitoring to syringe pumps, beds, documentation computers, ventilators (from the Covid peak reserve of the state of Baden-Württemberg) as well as many carriages, cabinets, dressing carts, etc. for the new hospital in Nawanyago.



Part of the team of helpers at Heidelberg University Hospital with Dr. Preusch, April 2022

On the first trip to Uganda after the Covid pandemic in August/September 2021, Florian had met with the architect and contractor, who had already worked for Sister Angela and had built the "Administration Building" on the hospital grounds.

With the help of his design, which represented something really tangible for the first time, we continued to collect donations after Corona. So from 2022 on we took up many of our ideas again, which, thanks to the contact of our member Klaus, led, among other things, to the later "Phil" concert in Gemmingen.

The concrete construction planning also continued to progress: In June 2022, our president Kerstin Weber-Kistler and her husband Manfred Holzner, honorary chief technician of our association, flew to Nawanyago to discuss the placement of our new building, the necessary preparatory work and interim solutions. It was here that the two met Evalisto for the first time, the great stroke of luck for our Vision 2025. Already on his first visit to Nawanyago as accompanied by Sr. Noelina Namusoke, Mother General of the Bannabikira Order, the site inspection and surveying of the construction site began immediately.



Evalisto is an engineer and contractor and has great expertise. For example, he revised the reinforcement plans so that four water tanks with a total capacity of 20,000 litres could also be installed on the roof. He then submitted an offer of approx. 110,000 euros for the turnkey building including the well and was awarded the contract to build our Vision 2025.

In the meantime, it was clear that due to the countless donations of medical technology and other aids, a container transport to Uganda would be necessary. Thanks to the mediation of Dr. med. Michael Preusch, patron of our association since September 2022, we were able to receive 23,750 euros for the purchase of a container and installation of a solar system for the existing buildings, as funding from the state of Baden-Württemberg through the Development Cooperation Foundation <https://sez.de/>.

We were able to purchase this first large solar system as well as the associated storage batteries from Rainer Holst, master electrician from northern Germany and owner of The Haven Lodge <http://www.thehaven-uganda.com> (on the other side of the Nile) for more than 20 years, and have him and his team install it.

An application to Cents for Help e.V. <https://www.centsforhelp.de/> was successful thanks to the sponsorship of our member Tobias and so we were able to use the 5,000 euros in funding to buy a blood count analyzer for the laboratory at the St. Jude Medical Store in Kampala and to finance the conversion/renovation of the existing outpatient clinics in Nawanyago.

On February 28, 2023, the time had actually come. The foundation stone was officially laid in Nawanyago and Kerstin, Manfred and our members Beatrice and Mirko (who also works pro bono for us as a lawyer) were there along with many other guests.

Laying of the foundation stone in Nawanyago, February 28, 2023 with



Dr. James Kuunya, Chairman Tusiima Nawanyago
Foundation Uganda;

1st Chairwoman Kerstin Weber-Kistler,

Sister Janes Frances, Sister Angela and Sister Bernadette

According to the revised plans of Engineer Evalisto, the long-awaited start of construction was in May 2023.

To ensure that enough water is available at all times during the construction phase and later operation, the new well on the hospital grounds was first dug by Evalisto and his team. By the beginning of August, the base plate was finished and the walls of the ground floor were already partially in place, when representatives of the District Health Office, among others, suddenly demanded a change in the floor plan. A hospital was to be built according to Ugandan standards, with narrow doors, many distances, instead of being able to drive emergency patients lying on a stretcher from first aid to the operating room. After several such discrepancies and ambiguities arose, Manfred and Florian flew to Uganda at short notice for a week in August 2023 to clarify details that are difficult to convey online. Thus, the Ugandan average of 2 sockets per room (60 in total) became a total of around 130 due to the equipment already purchased, which is much more in line with the needs in a German hospital with the many different devices. The changes that had already been made were reversed. In addition, it was checked whether all corridors and doors can be crossed without any problems with a bed or stretcher, what the water supply and sewage disposal should look like, where the sockets in the respective rooms have to be installed in order to be close enough to beds/desks, etc., from where which light switch has to be switched which light and much more, More.



Construction meeting August

2023

Thanks to almost 20 hours of working time a day with up to 25 construction workers on the construction site at the same time, the construction progress was so rapid that we immediately started planning the official opening as part of our first group trip to the club in January 2024 after returning.

After many weeks of hard work, the container with 76 cubic meters of medical supplies and a total weight of around 15,000 kg was finally packed at the beginning of September 2023. Among other things, in addition to the above-mentioned donations in kind from Heidelberg University Hospital, mobile X-ray machines, countless walkers, crutches and wheelchairs, baby warming bed and heat lamp, spineboard, emergency backpack, gynecological examination chair and as filling material, among other things, more than 90 kg knitted hats and socks from knitting project. Thanks to the transport cost subsidy from Engagement Global gGmbH <https://www.engagement-global.de/de/>, 75% of the transport costs between Gemmingen and the customs yard in Uganda were covered. On September 12, 2023, our container then left its location on the premises of Wüteria Mineralbrunnen in Gemmingen and was sent on its way to Nawanyago.



The container is almost packed,

September 2023

The preparations for our benefit concert by "Phil-The Genesis & Phil Collins Tribute Show" <https://www.phil-online.de/> were now in full swing with the aim of generating as much income as possible for our hospital project. The concert in Gemmingen in November 2023 was a sensational success and will always be remembered by the more than 1150 visitors, but also by the 100 helpers.



After completion of the building in January 2024, the proceeds enabled the installation of a 20 KW solar system on the roof of the new building (the so-called "Phil solar system") with 36 batteries of 240 W each, which allows the hospital to be completely self-sufficient with several large solar systems and, thanks to the new well, with running water!

Even the entire outdoor area could be additionally financed thanks to the proceeds from the Phil concert. This second solar power system was also installed by Rainer Holst and thanks to him, the water supply of the building was also made "gecko-proof". The donation of a second disinfection system from aqua pura ensured that the new building can also be supplied with germ-free drinking water.

Immediately after the concert at the end of November 2023, our members Jörg, Moritz, Klaus and Daniela traveled to Uganda to receive and clear out the container. Since it had already arrived in Jinja on November 11, 2023 and was released by customs 10 days later, it was assumed that this would work. However, since a new Ugandan authority came forward every week, which still wanted to meet its requirements for the collection of tax money or duties for the year 2023 and a new permit had to be issued each time, the container was unfortunately not released during the entire time the team was in Uganda. Florian, who flew to Uganda as a newly qualified doctor immediately after completing his medical studies on December 9, 2023, was also unable to receive the container. In addition to his work in the hospital, supervising the last construction phases including outdoor facilities and planning the opening, he also had to take care of the release of the container intensively on a daily basis. Since a bribe payment would never have been an option, Ugandan authorities have to be annoyed by their presence. If the "big muzungu" is in your office every day, asks, writes emails, tries to reach superiors and annoys you again and again, a Ugandan official also moves a finger. However, we only really made progress after we had made contact with the former Speaker of Parliament, current "Minister for East African Affairs" and Woman Member of Parliament for the Kamuli district, Dr. Rebecca Kadaga. There was movement in the matter, but still neither at an acceptable speed nor in transparency. Cheers to German bureaucracy and EU customs regulations!

Even Matthäus and Lennart, who came to Uganda over Christmas and New Year's Eve with the aim of assembling the furnishings, could not live to see the arrival of the container. However, the completion of the building progressed with seven-league boots: When Jörg's team left, mounds of earth several meters high could still be seen around the construction site, and by Christmas a large part of the courtyard had already been paved! And also in the area of the container, a success could finally be reported: on Wednesday, January 10th, almost 16 hours before the start of the official inauguration, the container finally drove into the yard! This was preceded by 72 hours of hard negotiations and finally the payment of the final tax assessment in the amount of 16 million UGX, i.e. approx. 4,000 euros. From our point of view, it was still much too high and unjustified, but it was the only way to get our container free.



After it had taken us several months to prepare the container in Germany, it was largely cleared out in Nawanyago in only 5 hours with a total of 20 helpers. For this purpose, Manfred was freed from the tour group that had arrived in Entebbe shortly before and taken to Nawanyago in an adventurous ambulance ride with a group of helpers

who were responsible for the decoration of the opening, in order to coordinate the unloading directly.

After this night shift, we were very proud to be able to present the invited guests with at least a provisionally furnished building, so that they could at least get an idea of how it should look when fully furnished.

The opening on January 11, 2024 was a huge celebration: the whole place was on its feet, guests from Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, the USA, all of Uganda and of course our travel group - a total of 10 Tusiima members - were present to celebrate this milestone. Our personal guest of honour was the German Ambassador to Uganda, H. E. Matthias Schauer, who gave a wonderful, very personal speech and was very impressed by our commitment. The guest of honour of the entire event was Minister Rt. Honorable Dr. Rebecca Kadaga, who apologized in her speech for the excessive bureaucracy and thanked us for the support of the people of Nawanyago.



The highlight was the ceremonial christening of the building with the name "St. Thomas Operating Theatre and Laboratory Building" with the unveiling of the commemorative plaque and the handing over of the key by our 1st chairwoman Kerstin Weber-Kistler and our representative to Uganda Florian Kistler.

Only a short time after the opening, the first hearing aid camp of Rhein-Neckar-Akustik <https://www.rhein-neckar-akustik.de> took place in the new St. Thomas building. 3 hearing aid acousticians and a retired ENT doctor were in Nawanyago for two weeks and were able to provide around 70 small and large patients with hearing aids. The hearing aids were manufactured and fitted on site according to mouldings. The newly treated patients were infinitely grateful. A repeat of the camp is already being planned for February 2025.

Last summer, our member Hartwig was on site in Nawanyago for a 3-week work visit. During this time, he has proven to be an all-rounder and, in cooperation with the craftsmen on site, has found technical solutions to almost all existing problems. Thanks to him, there is now a functioning lightning rod that protects the building and all technical equipment from damage. He also made sure that the water supply worked, the PV system was grounded, new house connection boxes were installed and much more.

In the last months since the opening, the operating room has been made radiation-proof, so that Sister Angela, now a licensed radiologist, together with Hartwig was able to put into operation the first mobile X-ray machine in the Kamuli district.

In the meantime, the laboratory has also moved into the upper floor of the St. Thomas Building and is perfectly equipped thanks to another donation of 5,000 euros from Cents for help e.V.

Aerial view of St. Thomas on the inauguration day, January 11, 2024

