



## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO TRAVEL IN UGANDA

**Please review this document thoroughly** to ensure full preparedness on your part before traveling as a representative of Just Like My Child Foundation in Uganda.

### PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

**PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS:** You must have a passport valid for (6) months beyond the LAST DAY OF YOUR TRIP. Please check the expiration date of your passport immediately. Do not delay in taking the steps to renew if necessary. Entry will be denied if this is not met.

**ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS:** Visas are required in order to travel in Uganda.

**Option 1 (our recommendation):** The easiest way to buy your Ugandan Tourist Visa is on arrival in Uganda at the point of Entry of the Entebbe International Airport. **You must bring a new and crisp \$50 USD bill to pay for your Visa.**

**Option 2:** Apply online @ <https://visas.immigration.go.ug>

Please refer to [this document for step-by-step directions to apply online](#). After submitting your application, you will receive an email immediately stating that your application has been received. This email will also provide instructions for making an online payment of \$50 USD. Within 72 hours you will receive another email confirming receipt of visa payment. You will also receive a separate email confirming that your visa application has been approved. Print the attachment and present this in Uganda upon arrival with your Yellow Fever vaccination card.

**MEDICAL:** Please consult with your medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation, or whether additional travel insurance should be purchased. Each visitor is responsible for providing your own medication needs. Make sure you have adequate supplies of any required medication. If you are on medication, please check with your physician to insure you will not have a reaction to anti-malarial medication or necessary vaccinations. It is also suggested that you assemble a traveller's medical kit appropriate to your the destination, length of trip, and general health. Your physician can advise you on specific items to include (such as remedies for minor stomach ailments or motion sickness).

**VACCINATIONS:** An international inoculation certificate against yellow fever **must** be presented at the point of entry into Uganda. **You will not be permitted to enter the country and obtain a visitor's visa without this vaccination.** Please also note immunization must be completed at least TEN (10) days prior to entry. A travel clinic will be able to provide you with this vaccination and the certificate. [Here is a list of travel clinics in approved by the CDC.](#) Please

consult your immunization record (for tetanus boosters, for example) and visit a travel clinic prior to leaving. They will be able to advise you on the timing of any other immunizations you require against your shot history and travel dates.

**ANTI - MALARIAL:** Malaria Prophylaxis tablets are essential and strongly recommended. Some medications need to be started prior to travel and taken for a period after you return. Please consult your physician or a travel clinic for details. JLMC's preferred medication is Malarone. Please consult your healthcare provider to determine which anti-malarial medication is right for you! (*There are drug interaction considerations, allergies, etc. which make it essential that each person discuss with their own health care professional which Anti-Malarial drug is right for them.*)

**MONEY:** The larger the denominations of US dollars and the more recent they are, the better the exchange rate. So make sure you've got \$100 bills minted for the year 2006 or newer and you'll get the best rate. **Bills must also be in EXCELLENT shape** and can't have even the slightest tear or deep creases. They will not be accepted if they aren't newer and in excellent condition. Also, please note that U.S. currency notes in \$20 and \$50 denominations are exchanged at a fixed rate which is significantly lower than the current rate of 3,500 UGS/= per \$1 USD that is given for larger bills.

Secure Forex Bureaus are readily accessible in Kampala and at the Entebbe Airport to exchange money. Credit cards are accepted on a limited basis; most hotels, restaurants, and shops in larger cities accept at least one variety of major credit card such as Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. In Uganda, some credit card use is subject to a surcharge of 5% to 10% of the cost of the item(s). ATMs are also available in Uganda, particularly in Kampala and at the Entebbe Airport, but you'll sometimes find them not functioning, unable to print receipts or having extremely long lines. There has also been a recent uptake of ATM skimmer scams. Most machines function with overseas accounts as long as they have a VISA symbol on them. Some ATM's in Uganda accept Master Card now, but they are few and far between. If you plan to use the ATM or your Credit Card, be certain to inform your bank beforehand of the dates that you will be traveling in Uganda. There are offices that facilitate Western Union, Money Gram, and other types of money transfers in Kampala and throughout the country. Just Like My Child Foundation suggests \$200.00 as a good starting point for necessary cash on hand. You really won't have a great deal of opportunity for spending money.

If you have extra shillings at the end of the trip that you don't want to exchange back into US dollars (the reverse exchange rate from Shillings back to Dollars is very unfavorable), there is always the option of leaving the remainder of your shillings as a donation to one of JLMC's partners. Any contributions are very much appreciated.

**GRATUITIES:** It is recommended to leave the driver and the guest house staff with a tip at the end of your trip. We suggest each traveler giving 50,000 UGS/= (about \$15.00 at the current rate) per driver / housekeeper for a tip.

**JUST LIKE MY CHILD FOUNDATION VISITOR'S POLICY:** This will be provided to you via email closer to the date of travel. Please review and sign the liability waiver prior to departure and ensure that JLMC has the original signed copy in its possession.

If you would like more detailed information about traveling in the country of Uganda, you can also go to the U.S. State Department's information sheet at <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/uganda.html> to review suggestions from the US government on traveling overseas.

## HANDY THINGS TO PACK

Always carry a little bit of **toilet paper** with you. It's seldom available in public toilets or in pit latrines out in the village. The guest house or hotel will keep you well stocked.

Carry **hand sanitizer** because it's also rare to find running water or hand washing stations outside of public toilets and pit latrines.

Carry a handkerchief, bandana or a **hat** for travel on dusty roads and for sun protection.

Carry **mosquito repellent** with a high level of DEET. The beds at the guest house and hotels have mosquito nets, but sometimes those little buggers are flying around the sitting room/dining room during the evening hours and they can be brutal. Don't forget to bring along your preferred **Malaria Prophylaxis** as well (ours is Malarone).

While Ugandans put a lot of emphasis on dressing appropriately and smartly they typically don't use mirrors. It's a good idea to bring along a **travel mirror** with you.

The weather in Uganda is unpredictable these days. It's always best to be fully prepared for all possibilities. Bring **sunscreen** for days when the sun is beating down and a **light jacket**, sweater or **raincoat** for days when there just may be a torrential downpour. Bring your **Sunglasses** to protect your eyes from sun and dust!

You may want to bring **earplugs** if you're a light sleeper. There are a number of sounds to wake you in the wee hours of the morning or in the middle of the night, which include but are not limited to...the local disco, church bells, the mosque, the rooster, the caretaker singing while preparing breakfast, children walking to school, babies crying, torrential downpour, thunder, dogs barking, a cow or goat giving birth etc. etc. etc. etc. Uganda is just bursting with the sounds of life!!

If you swim, bring your **swimsuit**, as the hotels in Entebbe and Safari Lodge will have a pool.

Bring extra **soap** for showering and an extra **fast drying towel** and **washcloth**. The guest house or hotel will typically provide you with one towel, but an extra always comes in handy.

**Convenience foods** are not readily available in Uganda. There will be occasions when we are in a vehicle for long stretches of time traveling from place to place. If you feel that you would like something to snack on for such occasions than it's not a bad idea to bring along some **granola bars or other light munchies**. JLMC will always have bottled drinking water handy, so it's always a good idea to grab one on your way out.

You may want to bring **binoculars** for the game / bird watching and **camera equipment** (memory cards, batteries, film)

Consider bringing a **small backpack** for personal items such as sunscreen, medicine, sunglasses, camera, and water bottle when out in the field.

### **PACKING CHECKLIST:**

- KLEENEX and/or TOILET PAPER
- HAND SANITIZER
- BANDANA and/or HAT
- MOSQUITO REPELLENT WITH A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF DEET
- MALARIA PROPHYLAXIS
- TRAVEL MIRROR
- SUNSCREEN WITH SPF OF 30 OR HIGHER
- SUNGLASSES
- LIGHT RAIN JACKET
- EAR PLUGS
- SWIMSUIT
- SOAP
- FAST DRYING TRAVEL TOWEL & WASHCLOTH
- SNACKS (E.G. NUTS, TRAIL MIX, GRANOLA BARS)
- HEADLAMP OR FLASHLIGHT
- ELECTRONICS ADAPTER
- BINOCULARS, CAMERA, FILM, MEMORY CARDS, CAMERA BATTERIES
- SMALL DAY BACKPACK

**CLOTHING:** In the village it is best for women to wear a dress or skirt that goes past the knees. If a woman has no skirt, then nice looking and loose fitting trousers are the next best option, but you will still likely get stared at wherever you go. It's not appropriate to wear tank tops or spaghetti straps in the village unless they are covered by a cardigan. It's best to wear a nice fitting t-shirt or a blouse. Kampala is another story altogether. Ugandan women in Kampala are often found wearing jeans or trousers as well as tank tops. If you are a woman attending a meeting with a professional in Kampala it is fine to wear trousers as long as they look "smart".

Men will likely get stared at if they are wearing shorts. It's best for a man to wear cargo pants or khakis and a "smart" looking t-shirt or button down. Shoes are also a very big deal. You should never wear rubber flip-flops whether you are a man or a woman. In Uganda they are only worn around the house to keep your feet clean or worn while bathing. Ugandans would prefer you go barefoot than to walk around with flip-flops. You should wear tennis shoes / converse, nice looking sandals (Chacos or leather) or flat dress shoes when you aren't on the guest house compound.

You can have laundry done at your personal expense along the way. Be sure to arrange to turn in your laundry to housekeeping in time so it will be ready before you are scheduled to leave! Please follow cultural protocol regarding laundry (see more info under "cross cultural practices" outlined below.

## **ELECTRICITY, TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS**

**ELECTRICITY:** Carry a **headlamp or flashlight** with you. At our lodging locations, the electricity is fairly stable, but we are operating in a developing country. If the power goes out or has been off, you'll be happy you brought your flashlight.

Uganda uses electricity at 240 volts. It's necessary that you **bring a 3 pin (square) socket adapter if you have electrical devices** that you want to plug in such as laptops, curling irons, etc.

**INTERNET:** Internet Access is almost always readily available these days at hotels in Luweero. We have a GPRS USB stick that allows Internet access as long as the computer you are using has some battery power. It's an excellent alternative to wireless when we have no power. The only down fall with the GPRS it does have data limitations, so we ask that you don't open up large attachments or download large documents. Even with access to Internet it's important to remember that we are in Africa and often there is network interruptions, power failures or numerous additional variables that can affect communication capabilities. We ask that you please be flexible and patient.

**TELEPHONE:** Telephone Access Option A: Call your cell phone service provider and ask them about their Global Plan. You will need to add coverage for the duration of your visit.

Telephone Access Option B: Vivian carries a mobile phone that operates here in Uganda when traveling to the country. She makes a point of filling the phone up with talk time upon her arrival in country. The talk time on local mobile phones in Uganda goes much more quickly (at a rate of 1,000 UGS/= per minute) than an international calling card typically does. All visitors traveling with Just Like My Child Foundation will be able to briefly call home to notify their loved one's that they have reached Uganda safely.

## SAFETY TIPS

**HEALTH:** The water that comes out of the taps at the guest house or hotels is not safe for drinking. Please be sure to brush your teeth with bottled water and clean your toothbrush with it as well. JLMC will keep you well stocked with safe drinking water.

**DISPLAYING MAPS:** In Kampala you often find people standing on the street holding maps confusedly trying to figure out where they are. The moment you do this, you are saying to the whole world, "Hey, look, I am new to this city and I do not know my way around, please come and rob me blind!" It is safer to go to an enclosed place, such as a restaurant, bookshop or post office and read your map from there. In this way you lessen the likelihood of being pick pocketed or mugged.

**WEATHER:** Uganda is in the tropics and is crossed by the Equator. It is mostly warm all year round. Temperatures vary from 60°F to 99°F depending on season throughout the year. Most parts of the country receive in excess of 60 inches of precipitation annually, with the driest months being July to September and the wet months being December to February & March to May. The month of November is characterized by essentially constant daily high temperatures around 79°F and daily lows around 67°F. This is a guideline only. Unseasonal weather can occur and is becoming more common as a result of climate change. You should pack with a degree of flexibility in mind. Always pack sunscreen!

**DRESS:** Your manner of dress is a potential way of attracting unwanted attention. Granted, the weather is very nice and warm and tempting for wearing shorts, but women could be targeted if they over expose their thighs. This will be difficult for some women, because they feel they don't have to dress in a particular way just to please men or another culture. It is a lot safer to protect one's life than one's beliefs, especially when one is in a new environment. In addition, such dressing identifies you as a tourist, thus you will get a different type of treatment - tourist treatment.

**DISPLAYING EQUIPMENT:** Some tourists are easily recognized due to the equipment they wear around their neck (cameras, binoculars, video cameras etc). If you carry it, keep an eye and your hand on it, especially in crowds.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC ETIQUETTE:** There are some places where photography is prohibited, and these areas are usually clearly marked. If you are uncertain about whether or not photography is permitted, ask. **Under no circumstances should you take photographs of airports, government buildings and installations or military/police personnel.** Taking photographs when permission is not granted is inconsiderate at best and may result in the confiscation of your film. When taking photos in communities where JLMC operates, please adhere to the guidelines outlined in the JLMC visitor's policy, which you will sign before traveling.

**LUGGAGE:** The way you carry your bag may also attract thieves and pick-pockets. A small bag should be carried in front of your body, with hands across it. If you are carrying a backpack then it should be properly tied and locked. It is always best to travel light.

**ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS:**

- Move in pairs or bigger numbers (adhere to the JLMC policy where this is concerned).
- Avoid involvement in political debates
- Always ask about things that you do not understand. Ugandans are open to teaching people from other cultures about their own.

**VALUABLES:** Remember that many Ugandans believe that every Mzungu is rich. This makes you a target for thieves.

- Do not expose your money.
- Do not show that you are frightened or scared or worried that you will be pick pocketed by looking around at everybody or touching the spot where you keep your money.
- Be confident; act like you know what you are doing.
- Do not accept easily offered help.
- Do not leave valuables on a windowsill.
- Do not wear your gold/diamond jewelry on busy streets (I've witnessed on more than one occasion, friends of mine having jewelry ripped off of their bodies on the streets of Kampala. This isn't really an issue to worry so much about in the village).
- Do not leave valuables in the car (One of our partners, Sister Ernestine's laptop was recently stolen out of a vehicle and she's a nun. People have no shame!).
- Do not ask people you do not know well if a place is safe for you to leave your valuables. The only safe place for your valuables is with you or locked in your room. Never leave valuables in a hotel in Uganda unless there is a lock box.
- Be especially careful with your passport. It is a good idea to travel with a photocopy of the informational pages of your passport (the pages containing your photograph and passport details, as well as any amendment pages and visas) and to leave a copy at home.
- Keep an eye on your windows when driving in traffic jams and at traffic lights. These are areas and times when valuables could be snatched. Be extra conscious about the

people around you. When you hear persistent honking or horns, others may be alerting you about a thief.

## UGANDA TRAVELER TIPS

Most of these tips are reserved for situations where you are moving around the village or in Kampala, the capital city. When you visit Uganda with JLMC you will be staying at a guest house in a secure compound. There are, however, many scenarios where you will be moving around outside of the watchful eyes and safety of the guest house. Many of these cultural tips that are mentioned will come into practice when you're out visiting schools, sponsorship recipient's homes or goat beneficiaries deep in the bush. It would be much appreciated by the JLMC team and our partners if these cultural practices were observed as much as possible.

It should also be duly noted that many of these tips/practices came from a book entitled *Tips on Ugandan Culture. A Visitors Guide* by Shirly Byakutaaga, who is a Ugandan trainer for the Peace Corps Volunteers that serve in this country. It's unlikely that you'll find her book or any other with such truthful and insightful tips in the United States. If you want a copy of this book it's found in bookstores all over Uganda and Amazon. It's got excellent illustrations!

## CROSS CULTURAL PRACTICES AND THEIR INTERPRETATIONS

**FOOD:** Prayers - Most Ugandans pray at mealtime, so expect a short prayer before a meal in most homes. It is a Christian practice introduced by the British and French missionaries. White people are especially assumed to be Christian and therefore expected to pray. Often times our hospital partners, the Sisters, will eat a meal with guests. They will pray before eating.

Clearing of Plates - When you visit a Ugandan home you will be served a meal. Traditionally, it is impolite, embarrassing, and uncomfortable for the host if her visitor is not fed. You do not have to eat all that you are served. Leaving food on the plate shows you are full and cannot eat any more, which pleases the host. It is interpreted as a sign of satisfaction. Uganda is blessed with an abundance of food and in many areas people can afford to throw away food. This practice is changing due to economic pressures, but many people still observe it. In some Western European cultures the way one arranges the knife and fork on the plate shows whether one has finished eating or wants more. In Uganda, depending on where you are, you might want to leave a morsel of food to signal your satisfaction. Often times, food that is left over in the guesthouse is either fed to the staff's children or neighboring children.

**HAND WASHING:** Many Ugandans do not use forks and knives to eat and believe that staples like matooke and millet cannot be tasty when eaten with cutlery. So everyone washes their hands before meals, especially when they are to eat with their hands. But the kitchen is usually out of bounds to visitors. In an average Ugandan home there is no sink available. A young boy or girl pours water out of a jug for everyone to wash their hands in a small basin before and after a meal. This is typical in rural homes. The logic behind this is mostly for hygienic purposes. If



you hold the handle of the jug and pour out the water, the handle may not be clean. It is better for another person to do it so that you remain clean. Although you may offer to pour water yourself, the host would not allow it. It would not be polite. This will not apply at the guesthouse because they have sinks and running water, but it will definitely apply if you are visiting most anywhere outside of the compound.

**Eating with Hands** - When you visit a Ugandan home you will be invited to wash your hands so that you can eat with clean hands. Eating with hands can be tough on many foreigners, especially ensuring that the soup doesn't run down one's arm and soak one's clothes. This comes with practice. You could let your host know that it is your first time eating with your hands and ask him/her to help you learn the skill. At our lodging locations, you will be given cutlery to eat your food.

**Offering Food** - In most African cultures, and Uganda in particular, a visitor is always given something to eat or drink. There are however, things that cannot be served to any visitor. For example, water cannot be served to a visitor unless he/she has asked for it. Usually tea, juice, roasted groundnuts, cookies and soda are among the snacks that will be served to a visitor who will not stay long enough to eat a full meal. When one is going to serve you, he will not ask you if you would like to have what is to be served, as indicated below:

“Would you like something to eat?”

“No thanks”.

If you heard such a cross cultural exchange, especially if B is a Ugandan, chances are that B wouldn't mind a meal or snack but does not want to be considered greedy. Generally Ugandans don't ask if one wants a meal or not before serving it. Asking is interpreted to mean you do not really want to give it away but are just asking in pretense. Therefore the person asked feels embarrassed to say yes even if they want to. It is worse if the offer involves food. The guest is embarrassed by the question. Instead of a question, make a statement: “have something to drink or eat” or, if you are offering a variety say, “I have A, B or C, which one would you like?” It is considered rude not to accept food or snacks that have been served to you.

**COFFEE, TEA AND SUGAR:** Generally, Ugandans serve their guests tea with milk and sugar. A guest is served black tea if the host has run out of milk. Black tea is taken either when one cannot afford milk or for health reasons. Black tea is also referred to as “dry tea”; it may also mean coffee without milk. So not taking either milk or sugar or both in your tea could surprise the host. Sugar and milk is preferred because for many Ugandans, tea is the only way to drink milk. Most Ugandans do not drink plain milk. The slogan “any time is tea time” holds true in Uganda. So even on a hot day you might be served hot tea. It is believed that you cool off better after drinking hot tea. Hot tea also assures you that you are drinking safe boiled water. In areas where cows are kept, plain milk or tea with a high concentration of milk is served. Milk tea is normally half water and half milk. Tea is typically served at the guest house. If you don't wish to take tea they will not be offended.

**MEAT:** Meat is a delicacy in Uganda. It is usually served to show a host's politeness and standard of entertainment. As mentioned earlier, people cannot ask you if you eat meat or not. They assume you do. Asking could also be interpreted that the offer is not genuine. Vegetarians are pitied and in extreme cases herbal medicines are offered so that you can also start enjoying meat. Health or religious reasons for avoiding meat are more acceptable here than animal rights. Green vegetables are not commonly served as people associate this with poverty, or if a dish is served, it will be in very small portions. Many of the guests who visit are vegetarians and the JLMC team will ask the guest house to prepare dishes that a vegetarian can eat, but they will likely tease you about it. That being said...if you aren't a vegetarian and you are just afraid to eat the meat...don't be! Meat, chicken and fish served by the guest house are absolutely delicious!

**CHICKEN:** Chicken is an even greater delicacy than meat among various tribes. If you are served with chicken in areas where it is a delicacy (JLMC falls into the Baganda region where this holds true), this shows that you are a much honored guest. The gizzard, which is the most favored part of the chicken, will be served to the chief guest. When there is not a chief guest, the head of the home is the one who eats it. This is usually the father. Do not feel shy about mentioning it to your host if you are not a gizzard fan. Just say you feel honored, but would prefer the host to eat it instead.

**GRASSHOPPERS (Ensenene):** Grasshoppers are a delicacy among various tribes in Uganda. Traditionally, women did not eat them, but now many do. The wife in a home was expected to catch grasshoppers for the husband. The husband would, in turn, have to buy a dress in appreciation; if he did not, she would report him to his parents and he would be fined heavily. In some rural areas this is still practiced. Thus, if one takes the trouble to give you "ensenene" it shows they hold you in high esteem.

## **SOCIAL PROTOCOL**

**PREGNANCY:** Do not ask a pregnant woman when she expects to deliver. For a man to ask another man's wife when she is expecting is especially unacceptable. The conclusion could be that you are the father of the expected baby. Only the father of the expected baby asks such a question. A woman also does not usually ask about the due date unless she is very close to the pregnant woman. There is a superstition that if someone knows one's expected date, that person could cast a spell on the mother to produce a maimed baby or make the pregnancy disappear. It's also considered rude because you might be trying to imagine someone involved in sexual intercourse around the conception date. Such superstitions are changing, but the practice of refraining from asking has very much still remained.

**COMPLIMENTS:** In some cultures, to show politeness to your host, you compliment the beauty of his wife. In Uganda, a man never compliments another man's wife in this way, whether the man is present or not. It will not only be shocking to the husband but may also result in many other problems. The man could immediately conclude that you are in love with his wife.

**LAUNDRY:** Many people want to have their laundry done when they come to Uganda, especially if they are packing light. The guest house will do your laundry for a small fee. However, it is not culturally acceptable at all to make them wash your underwear. Although your housekeeper may say it is okay when you ask her to wash your underwear, she is likely saying it out of fear of losing the job. When other community members learn that the person is washing another one's underwear, she will be ridiculed and lose respect and self esteem. Although the sun is beneficial and freshening to clothes, drying underwear in the sun where everyone can see them is unacceptable. People are embarrassed to see such clothes on the line. Dry them where they cannot be seen. This practice definitely applies at the guesthouse and any alternative lodging locations.

**SITTING:** In Uganda, sitting with legs together is aimed at preserving the woman's chastity. Ugandans consider it impolite to show underwear or the inner thigh when seated. While wearing a dress, the proper posture requires the legs to be together. This may be difficult for women from the West who are used to wearing trousers. It's considered rude for women to cross their legs other than at the ankle. Girls in Uganda are trained at a very early age not to sit with legs apart. In the past, women's dress did not include underwear as we know it today.

**DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION:** Whereas it is acceptable in Europe or America for a man to kiss a woman in public, in Uganda it is not, except at weddings. People in love who hold hands and kiss in public are considered obscene. A love relationship is a private affair. Touching and kissing to show love and affection may be interpreted as a desire to make love. This could result in accusations of being sex hungry, uncivilized, aloof and unreserved. You may see some displays of affection in Kampala, but it is rare. You will often see two men holding hands. This is a sign of friendship in Uganda.

**GIFTS:** If someone gives you a gift in Uganda you are supposed to open it in private when you get home. This way you don't have to feel awkward if you don't like the gift and the gift giver won't feel bad for giving you a gift you didn't want.

## COMMUNICATION

### GESTURES:

- Snapping fingers: Not for calling human beings EVER. Usually used to call dogs; it can also be used when one is following along with a musical tune! :)
- Pointing at a person! BAD!! A person is only to point at inanimate objects or animals but never ever at another human being.
- A raised middle finger moving backwards and forwards means....I want to have sex with you.
- A pointer finger placed inside of the palm of the opposite hand is also a gesture implying that a person wants to have sex.
- Our version of a goodbye in the western world (not a wave, but an opening and closing of the fingers over the palm) is meant as a beckoning call, please come here.

- If a person of the opposite sex shakes your hand and they wiggle their finger inside of your palm that means they want to have sex with you.

**LAUGHTER:** One of the most confusing messages to a foreigner in Uganda is the message given by laughter. Apart from expressing happiness, laughter can also express surprise, wonder and embarrassment. Smiling is not used as greeting as in some western countries. Sometimes when a foreigner does something unexpected, such as trying to speak the local language, people will laugh with you. However, some foreigners think they are being laughed at so they take offense. In Uganda people laugh openly, even when it may be embarrassing to another person. We can't even count how many times we've been in situations with Ugandans when they have laughed at what we would consider an absolutely inappropriate moment to laugh. we've gotten used to it, but it used to really bother us. "Once I was in a workshop talking about rape and abuse to women and everyone, even women were laughing. It was so disturbing, but I've come to learn that Ugandans have a tendency to laugh when they are extremely uncomfortable or in situations where things are tense and awkward, like in the movie theatre when the characters in the movie are crying, angry, upset or having sex." - *Tessa Davis - JLMC Program Director*

**VOCAL EXPRESSIONS:** In Uganda, the different cultural groups sometimes have different interpretations for some of the sounds. For example, a click type of sound may mean that you are "nobody" among the Banyankore and thus it is an insult. Yet among the Batooro it is contextually used; it may be an insult in one instance or a sign of marvel or wonder. A "tststs" sound made with the tongue between the front teeth, repeated several times, expresses sadness and disbelief about a sad happening in most of the languages. "Mm" as if one is humming means 'yes', while "uh uh" or "ah ah" means 'no'. One grunt at the same tonal level means 'yes', while two grunts mean "no", and grunt with a raised tone means "what did you say??"

**FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:** There is this thing that Ugandans do with their faces that takes awhile to get used to. Sometimes when they are meaning to say "yes" to something they raise their eyebrows. Not one sound comes out of their mouth...they just raise their eyebrows very quickly....so you're like.....ummmmm.....so.....is that a yes???? A quickly raised eyebrow means a yes. They also point to places or things with their mouths. They sort of purse their lips together in a kissing like way and point.....it doesn't really seem possible.....but it's true in every way! We can actually point quite well with our lips these days!

### **HOW ARE YOU MZUNGU?!!**

People in the western world have a tendency to try not to notice people's differences. However, in Uganda people "tell it like it is", NO PRETENSE. To identify you, someone might call you "the fat one", "the old one", or the "brown one". If someone is lame, he/she might be called "the lame one". If someone is blind she will be called "the blind one". All of these labels do not carry value judgments with them. Ugandans are simply describing what they see. In Ugandan culture, skin color doesn't have a value judgment. In America, South Africa and other countries where racism has been a problem, it is impolite to refer to someone's skin color. Not surprisingly, people from

those countries conclude that the term “mzungu” is racist. Mzungu is a term borrowed from Kiswahili to mean “white person”. Different people have heard various definitions and interpretations of this word, such as traveler, or wanderer, referring to explorers who moved from place to place. Today, it generally means “white person”. It is pronounced differently in different languages. We can reliably say that most of the time the word Mzungu is not derogatory. In most cases it is used in a hailing manner. Historically, when the Europeans came to Uganda, they introduced many new items that the native people admired such as cutlery, cars, radios and other equipment that made life more comfortable. So the word mzungu was broadened to mean, “leading a comfortable life”. Thus the expressions like “you live like a mzungu” or “You are my mzungu”, meaning my favored one. Mzungu can also be used to refer to a disciplined and time-conscious person. Quite often the word mzungu will be used by taxi drivers, vendors and boda-boda people to attract your attention to buy their commodities or use the services they are offering. Children will also try to attract your attention by calling you “mzungu” and waving to you.

**LANGUAGE:** All of JLMC’s staff and most of our partners speak English. Most professionals in the country can speak English, but in all cases they are speaking English as a second language. Please be sympathetic when you are speaking to someone in Uganda. Enunciate your words, avoid umming and ahing and try to steer clear of using slang that is only used in the western world. While visiting villages you’ll find that most people do not speak any English at all, but a translator will usually be around if this is the case. Ugandans are very happy when a foreigner can speak their language even if it’s only greetings. Ugandans often consider greeting another person the most important part of any conversation. In Western culture we greet hurriedly if at all. Please take your time to greet Ugandans properly. Greetings in Luganda depend on who you are greeting and when you last saw him/her. A polite kind of greeting for someone that you see daily, such as the guest house caretaker, would go as follows:

You: **Wasuz otyano Nnyabo** (wah-sue-zoh-tee-yahn-oh) (knee-yah-beau)  
Good Morning madame how was the night?

Caretaker: **Bulungi....wasuz otyano** (buh-loon-jee) (wah-sue-zoe-tee yahn-oh)  
Fine/well.....good morning how did you sleep?

You: **Bulungi** (buh-loon-jee)  
Fine/well

Caretaker: **Jabale Ko** (Jay-bah-lay-koh)  
Thank you for working a little

(the ko, meaning little, is added to the end in the morning greeting because you just woke up, so you haven’t had time to do much work, but getting yourself out of bed and showering justifies a thank you.)

You: **Kale Nyabo, nawe jabale** (kah-lay) (knee-yah-bow) (now-way) (jay-bah-lay)  
Okay madame, also you, thank you for your work.

(We usually don't add a ko to the end of our morning greetings to Ugandans because they've been awake much longer than us in most cases and they've already done a great deal of work)

Note: If you were saying this same morning greeting to a man you would say the word **Ssebbo** (say-beau) meaning sir instead of **Nyabo** (knee-yah-beau) meaning madame.

The afternoon greeting, which starts promptly at 12 noon, goes in the same order as the morning greeting, with only one word changing. Instead of saying **Wasuz otyano** (wah-sue-zoe-tee yahn-oh), you plug in:

**Osibby otyano** (oh-sib-eeh-oh-tee-yahn-no)  
Good afternoon

Of course you can't greet everyone you come across while walking in a busier town, but in rural areas greeting is a rule, and it is very impolite not to do so. It's absolutely fine to greet people in English by telling them good morning or good afternoon. If you are able to greet in local language you will be applauded in that lovely Ugandan way. You can greet all children informally by saying:

**Oli otya** (Oh-lee-oh-tee-yah)  
How are you?

Their response will always be either:

**Gendi!** (Jen-dee)  
Fine/well

Or

**Bulungi** (buh-loon-jee)  
Fine/well

Please note that you will be hard pressed to find more accommodating and friendly people than our staff and partners on the ground. Our staff in Uganda will meet all visitors at the airport on time and are extremely committed to their comfort and safety.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY: Enjoy your stay here in Uganda! You are most welcome!  
We are so grateful that you have chosen to visit with us.**