

## Nikki's pledge to make a difference

By Lindy McNamara

Most law students in their fourth year of study would have a pretty busy schedule, with no need for further distractions.

For Nikki Lovell, studying law at Flinders University is something she manages to fit in around running *One Village*, a registered charity that raises money and establishes projects to empower two villages in Uganda.

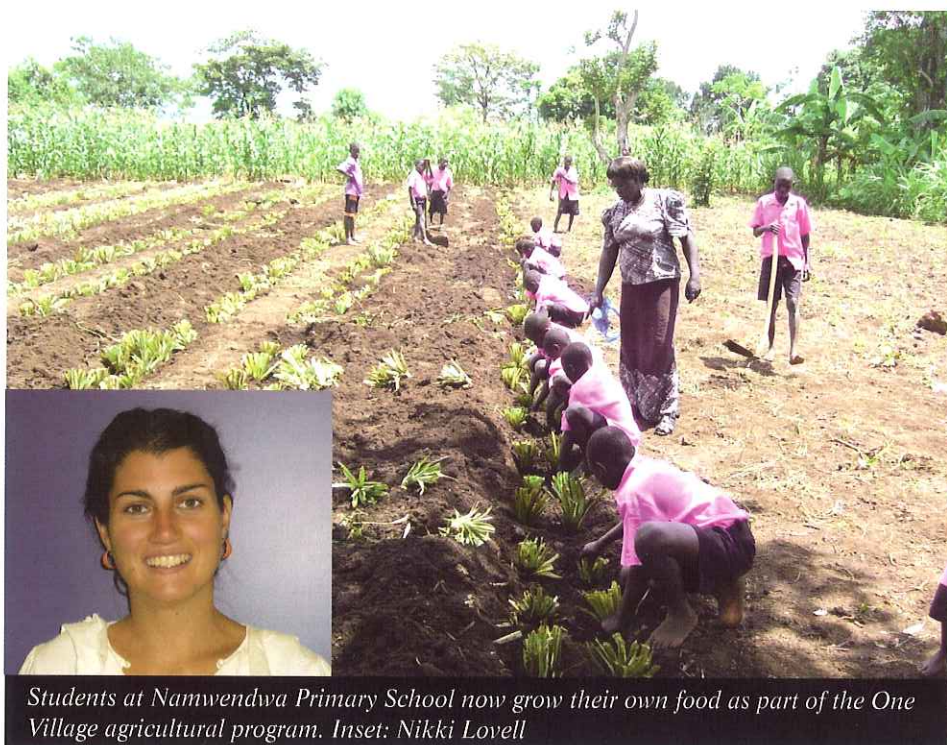
Speak with her about her impending legal career and she is pragmatic, discussing the possibility of using her Law Degree and Diploma in Languages to work with refugees. Mention *One Village* and her face lights up and her notebook flies open, eager to throw around ideas for future fundraisers which will help her friends back in Uganda.

Although another world away, Nikki formed strong ties with the Ugandan people after spending eight months in the village of Namwendwa in 2005. Instead of taking a "gap" year and relaxing after finishing high school at St John's Grammar, Nikki took part in a Student Partnerships Worldwide program, volunteering as a health educator at the primary school. There she helped to pass on information ranging from the basics of menstruation through to HIV and malaria.

"I was part of the culture there and felt a real sense of the community," she said. "These people have so little but are so optimistic and focused on achieving the common good for their community. It is really refreshing."

She lived like everyone else, cooked outside and experienced first hand how women are treated as second class citizens. On her return to Adelaide she decided she could make a difference to the lives of some of these villagers and at the tender age of 19, registered her charity *One Village*.

Run by two Boards of volunteers – one in Namwendwa and one in Adelaide, the charity initially started raising money for scholarships so girls, who would otherwise be denied the opportunity, could continue



Students at Namwendwa Primary School now grow their own food as part of the *One Village* agricultural program. Inset: Nikki Lovell

onto high school. Today the scholarship scheme empowers 36 students to attend secondary school and 35 students to attend tertiary education.

All the other projects undertaken by the charity are sustainable, so that they can continue to be run by the local villagers once established. Nikki is particularly proud of the agricultural program which now means the 1500 students at the school enjoy a lunchtime meal each day.

Previously, only students who were able to bring in some sort of food item from their limited crops were offered a cooked meal at lunch. Few children were able to enjoy this luxury - and most were arriving at school not having eaten breakfast.

"We believed that 90% of these kids were getting only one meal a day and we wanted to change this."

*One Village* asked the local church to donate three acres of land, which enabled a wider range of crops to be grown. These crops are now tended by the school students and surplus is stored so that at all

times of the year they can enjoy a lunchtime meal.

The charity has also sunk a new bore hole in the village, so everyone can enjoy clean, fresh water.

After spending a further six months at Namwendwa in 2007 and another month in 2009, Nikki is hoping to get back to see her friends soon – but realises she can help them more by being here and raising money through the charity.

"I made a commitment and I am going to do this (charity). I've got a fantastic group of supporters and we are making a difference."

For more information about *One Village* or to see how you or your legal firm can support the charity, go to [www.onevillage.org.au](http://www.onevillage.org.au) or contact Nikki at [nikki.lovell@onevillage.org.au](mailto:nikki.lovell@onevillage.org.au). Administrative costs for money raised are less than 3% and each project has a budget and timeline, with money sent at appropriate times. Nikki stresses that all money is accounted for and 100% transparent. **B**