Mike Vella, PhD student, discusses his recent visit to the IOP’s workshop in Rwanda

During a stay at the IOP workshop in Ndera I conducted 10 follow-up visits to Rwandan schools which had been given sets of apparatus produced at the IOP workshop in Ndera in the preceding years. By speaking with students and teachers I was able to form an impression of how useful the apparatus given by the IOP had been to the schools. Speaking with teachers also allowed me to discuss the problems they face in teaching physics in Rwanda. While I was impressed by the dedication of many of the teachers and schools, it was clear that there is still a long way to go in terms of improving Rwandan physics education, both because of the lack of availability of apparatus and also due to a shortage of adequately-trained teachers.

I held several productive meetings with Dr Marie-Christine Gasingirwa, the Rwandan Director of Science and Technology, who made it clear to me that she and the Rwandan Department of Education had the desire and willingness to assist the IOP with its Ndera project. During my meetings with Dr Gasingirwa I was also able to give her a personal assessment of the way in which the teaching of science in Rwanda could be improved, in particular I was able to bring to her attention that from my school visits I found that not all Rwandan schools were utilising science apparatus provided to them by the government and the IOP. Dr Gasingirwa has now made a personal commitment to solving this problem. While at the workshop I was able to implement some design changes to the apparatus produced at the workshop to make it less costly and easier for the IOP technicians in Rwanda to manufacture.

During a visit to Bukinda in Uganda I was able to assist Stephen Wright with an excellent IOP teacher-training session. I saw that many of the teachers taking the training were very motivated...
and feel that such training-efforts are invaluable. I hope to assist the IOP in conducting similar training sessions in Rwanda in addition to continuing the current training programme led by Mr Francis Gatete at the workshop.