

SEDCU

Supporting the Education of Disadvantaged Children in Uganda

July 2025

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Newsletter 23

Welcome to SEDCU Newsletter No.23 covering the period February 2025 – July 2025

We are pleased to report that SEDCU is healthy and there is much to report in this issue. The Trustees are currently preparing to make their 7th trip to Uganda later this month (at their own expense!), and this will provide the opportunity to assess what has been achieved in the 2 years since our last visit. It will also give us the opportunity to assess what should be the priorities for our future support of schools, teachers and children. We understand from the media that the Governments of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) may have agreed to a ceasefire, brokered by USA and Qatar, in the fighting just over the border from Uganda. Our visit will give us the opportunity to hear about any impacts this continuing unrest is having on life in Kisoro District. We will also be able to catch up with developments in Kisoro and Mgahinga. And above all, we will hopefully see as many as possible of the sponsored children and the “SEDCU Alumni” who are transitioning from education into their future careers.

Mount Everest Base Camp fundraiser

In March 2025, Nik, whose family sponsors the education of a deaf child through SEDCU, took on the challenge of climbing to Mount Everest Base Camp to raise money on behalf of SEDCU. This was a 15-day trip ascending and descending from Kathmandu, hiking through Phakding, Namche, Tengboche, Dingboche, Loboche and finally to the base camp of Mount Everest.

Nik said the following; “Three of my brave friends and I are taking on the climb to Mount Everest Base Camp. On the 15th of March 2025, we start our journey in Kathmandu and by day 10 will arrive at Everest Base Camp. This entire trip will be challenging, and it would be a lie to say we aren’t nervous. But it is all for a good cause!. My wife and I have two profoundly deaf children, Ava-Rose and Charlie. This was identified at their newborn baby screenings, and we found it very hard to come to terms with. With the help of the hospitals and our family and friends it soon came apparent that none of this mattered. In the first six months there were a lot of tests for both children to endure. This was emotionally hard for us all at times, but we knew it would be a benefit to us all, but especially to Ava-Rose and Charlie. We chose for them both to have cochlear implants which has given them a good degree of hearing. Ava-Rose and Charlie are excelling in life and are the most wonderful children. We couldn’t be prouder of the independent, kind and caring people they have become”.

We are pleased to share that through Nik’s amazing achievement and perseverance, a total of £1050 was raised for SEDCU. Thank you to all that supported and donated. You can see more about Nik’s adventure here - <https://www.facebook.com/sedcu.org>



SEDCU Report on Participation in the Ugandan National Disabled Athletics Competition

The games took place in Kabale, a large town some 3 hours' drive from Kisoro. The team selected to participate consisted of 3 hearing impaired and 3 visually impaired children entering the Under 12 competitions, and 2 hearing impaired, 3 sight impaired and 2 physically disabled children entering the Under 14 competitions. There were nearly the same number of boys and girls. They were supported by 3 teachers and one older child (a boy sponsored through SEDCU) to act as guide for a blind child in races.

The KDS team of 13 children participated in a wide variety of sports including the 60,100, 600 and 800 metre races, shot put, javelin, discus and long jump in either the under 12 or under 14 categories. There were individual medals awarded to one boy who came first in the 60 metres race for under 14s, and for one girl who came second in the 60 metres race for under 12s - both were in the physically disabled category and are shown below with their medals.



Overall, the Kisoro Municipality came 34th out of 89 districts. This was a good result considering how small the team was.

We have received a report on the event, including the above information, prepared by the KDS Head Teacher and the teacher in charge of the Sports SNE Department. They highlighted some of the impacts from the participation:

- Participants learned and improved their performance and strived to achieve goals.
- The children enjoyed the journey by coach, seeing both scenery and monkeys on the roadside while in the forest.
- Participants gained in self-esteem, entering different events for children with various degrees of disability.
- Children were exposed to new environments such as the Kabale Stadium and Kabale Primary Schools where the games were held.
- The children made new friends from all over the country.
- The children improved their physical fitness and had good healthy meals.



As ever, the mere fact of their participation was a further demonstration of the KDS School motto 'Disability is not Inability'.

In conclusion, the pupils 'thanked whoever was involved in supporting them and promised to do wonders if given another chance'!



PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

In our last newsletter we shared an article entitled “Three Firm Friends”. They are now setting out in the big wide world! One will either stay at KDS to assist with making school uniforms etc. or do the same but from home in a neighbouring village. The other two will go to family members who will support them in setting up their businesses. The photographs show the handover of all the equipment needed to start their businesses: knitting machines, sewing machines, scissors, fabric, wool, pattern books, tape measures, buttons etc etc etc! SEDCU has funded this from a newly established fund for business start-ups created by one of our supporters. We wish them all great success...



NYONZIMA NESTOR GRADUATES

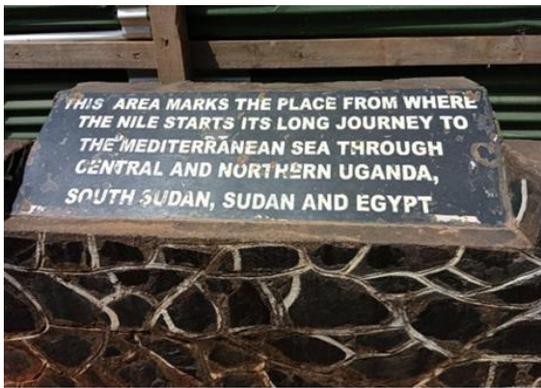
but like the other students has not yet enjoyed his graduation ceremony! He says it could be in December this year! He has appreciated learning more skills in using ICT and other equipment used in teaching blind children and improved skills in advanced braille reading and writing. He acquired more knowledge and skills to support learners with visual impairment. He also has a greater appreciation of the need to create awareness of building hopes in learners with visual impairment and, very importantly, in their parents.



Environmental Study Trip for MCJS Pupils

A four-day study trip organised for 23 senior pupils (Primary 7) from MCJS took place in January 2025. It was aimed at providing them with an opportunity to explore and learn about the history, culture, and geography of Uganda. The trip aimed to broaden the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the country, while also promoting teamwork, leadership, and social skills.

The first day was spent travelling to Kampala. On day 2 the children visited Entebbe Zoo and the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre, learning about different animal and plant species and conservation work. They took a boat trip on Lake Victoria and were told about the fishing industry.



On day 3 the party visited Jinja, the Source of the Nile, and learned about its historical significance. They took a boat tour of the Nile River to the real source and learned about the local fishing communities.

To round off the day they visited the Uganda Museum, drove around Kampala and visited the Namugongo Shrine where Uganda martyrs were killed. On day 4 the children spent time at the Entebbe Wildlife Centre completing project work on conservation and more conservation education. They visited the Entebbe weather station and learned about the different weather instruments and climate related meteorology.

Finally, they visited the Victoria Mall in Entebbe where they witnessed the electric lift and indoor shopping – both novel experiences for most!

On the way back to Mgahinga they crossed the equator line and visited different towns where they made stop overs for refreshments and fresh adventures.



The staff report that the study trip was a huge success, with pupils demonstrating a significant increase in knowledge and understanding of Uganda's history, culture, and geography. The trip also promoted teamwork, leadership, and social skills among the pupils and staff.

The staff collected reflections and feedback from the P.7 pupils who participated in the study trip. Here are some examples:

- "I learned a lot about Uganda's history and culture. I thought Namugongo shrine was a place for tombs but was instead a developed place with good buildings!"- Wrote Prudence.
- "I was amazed by the beauty of the Source of the Nile. I never knew it was so breathtaking!" – Leah

- "I enjoyed the boat tour of Lake Victoria. I learned a lot about the fishing industry and the importance of conservation." - Blessed Iradukunda.
- "I was inspired by the buildings and the roads in Kampala. I realized how lucky I am to have access to education; I want to study and have my university at Makerere and have more experiences in Kampala." - Mutuzo Annette.

From the pupils' reflections and feedback, staff identified some common themes:

- Appreciation for Uganda's history and culture
- Wonder and awe at the natural beauty of the country.
- Increased awareness of social and environmental issues.
- Gratitude for the opportunity to learn and experience new things.

Based on the pupils' reflections and feedback, the Head Teacher said he plans to:

- Incorporate more Ugandan history, geography and culture into school learning and curriculum.
- Organize more field trips and outdoor learning experiences.
- Invite guest speakers to talk to the pupils about social and environmental issues.
- Encourage pupils to reflect on their learning experiences and provide feedback to improve future trips.
- The full report contains many recommendations for MCJS staff and for the content and practical arrangements for future study trips. They have earnestly sought that SEDCU should continue to provide funding for similar trips in future years.



New Computer at MCJS

The Head Teacher of Mgahinga Community Junior School (MCJS) applied to SEDCU to fund a new computer to support computer literacy education and enhance pupils' IT skills. He listed four specific applications that the new computer would enable:

- ***Teacher training and resource development***
- ***Computer literacy classes***
- ***Research and computer-based learning projects***
- ***Improvement to school administration***

The school has over 200 pupils. SEDCU has provided two computers in past years. The first was a recycled computer which we had refurbished in the UK and donated in 2013; its battery has now failed. The second computer we donated in 2023 was a laptop for personal use of the Head Teacher in his role and because we have funded him to study for a Bachelors Degree in education. He is evidently allowing others to use it!

The Head Teacher has very gratefully acknowledged the receipt of funds which have enabled the purchase of a third up-to-date computer. He wrote:

New Computer at MCJS cont.

“The new computer will enable a start to be made in establishment of a computer lab with adequate devices for older pupils and teachers to develop essential IT skills as for the current school curriculum. By incorporating computer literacy education, we can empower our pupils with essential skills in this digital age. We will provide regular maintenance and updates to prevent technical problems. Please find attached some photos of the pupils utilizing the old and new computer that was purchased. I have attached photos of the first experience when almost the whole school was very eager to touch the keyboard and the mouse!! (LOL!) None of them wanted to leave the place. I can't imagine how all the pupils were eager, regardless of the limited space and a few computers non compatible to the number of pupils! At least we grouped them, and everyone was able to learn something new! Thank you so much SEDCU and everyone who made this possible!! Pupils, staff and all stakeholders are truly thankful.”



MCJS Update Report

We recently received a report from the MCJS Head Teacher marking the end of the first term of 2025. Considering that when SEDCU first became involved with this school it had some 40 pupils being taught in mud huts and wooden classrooms, it is amazing how far they have come, and SEDCU is proud to have played an important role in developing the school to what it is now with 200 plus pupils and a growing reputation for the results it is achieving. The following are extracts from the report.

“It has been an exciting and productive term, marked by significant progress in various areas. We have continued to have notable achievements which include improved academic performance, with pupils showing significant progress in various subjects and final PLE exams. This has led to increased enrolment, with new pupils joining our school community. Some other points:

Clubs and Co-curricular Activities.

Our football club, music-dance and drama club including the wildlife and patriotism clubs are all actively thriving. Pupils have shown remarkable talents and enthusiasm, and we look forward to more exciting events in the coming terms. Our football team participated in inter-school competitions, demonstrating excellent teamwork and sportsmanship. The music-dance and drama club has actively been performing at the school assemblies, welcoming visitors on different events while showcasing their musical talents. The wildlife club has done more of environmental conservation awareness and conservation skills by designing posters in the compound with conservation information.

MCJS Update Report cont.

School Farm.

The school farm has been a hub of activity, with pupils learning valuable skills in agriculture. Our small school farm has provided fresh produce for the school kitchen and has been an excellent hands-on learning experience for our pupils.

We managed to harvest a bountiful crop of cabbages and spinach which were used to supplement school meals. This improved on children's feeding and diet.

Pupils have learned more of sustainable farming practices, such as composting, spacing and crop rotation.

Computer Lessons.

The school started computer lessons this year which have shown success, with pupils showing great interest and aptitude for technology. We are grateful for the support of SEDCU, which has enabled us to purchase a new computer for our school. The school however needs more computers to address the pupils' ratios and compatibility.

Enhanced Library.

Our library has been upgraded with new books and resources, providing a welcoming space for pupils to explore and learn. The library has become a popular spot for pupils borrowing study materials to read both at school and at home doing more research and self study. Allow me to once again applaud the generosity of all SEDCU team for the contribution that made this library a reality.(see overly)

Seasons for Women.

MCJS and entire community are grateful for the support of Seasons for Women, which has made a significant impact on our girls' education. SFW programs have empowered our girls with skills, knowledge, and confidence in their learning abilities enabling them to excel in their studies and beyond. SFW managed to donate re-usable sanitary pads to the girl child in classes five to seven to help them in menstrual health. We are grateful that this reduced the school costs for purchase of pads and parents in buying for their children. SFW has sponsored a skills training in pad making for women in the community which equips them with practical skills and knowledge on how to make their own pads with a needle. This takes place at our school premises. We are hoping to involve our girls and staff come next term.

Holiday Pay.

We appreciate the importance of holiday pay for our staff, which motivates them to continue providing quality education and care to our pupils. This has helped to boost staff morale and job satisfaction, staff turnover and retaining experienced teachers.

We have continued to achieve all this by the support of SEDCU as we, MCJS, can't sustain ourselves without your hand.

Building and Infrastructure

The school has undertaken a few projects, some caused by the projected Kisoro – Mgahinga road construction project which may impact the school if it happens. These have including construction of a five-block classroom that's on the beam level waiting for roofing, and the installation of hydroelectric power in the dormitory for both boys and girls together with staff houses. These projects will enhance the learning environment and provide better facilities for our pupils with lighting and enough space for expansion. The school has a plan of installing new water tanks, and piped water, as two of our tanks are also affected by the road construction and water being a major content for health and hygiene, we are making this a priority. This will provide a reliable source of clean water for the kitchen, pupils, staff and entire school community."

NEWS from JAMES...

James graduated last year from university but was getting very frustrated trying to find a job which he felt would be worthwhile, stimulating and fulfilling. At the beginning of this academic year, he got a job teaching English in a primary school not far from Mgahinga!

He told us he now wishes he had studied for a degree in Education!!!

A-Level Results!

Two of our students sat their A-Level exams last November/December. Their results are in! They have both done very well indeed and deserve our congratulations. Both have applied to university. Students indicate 3 university choices and will be awarded one of them.

M is hoping to study Software Engineering or ICT. G has applied to study Tourism and Travel. Precise course details will be known when they are informed of the university they will be invited to attend.

GRATITUDE FOR TEXTBOOKS

In our last newsletter we reported that SEDCU had received another generous donation from the Stodden Churches which was donated to MCJS to enable them to purchase both text and library books. We went to print before we had received the photos of some of the books with the pupils. We had photos of piles of books and boxes of books but the photo we all liked best is this one with the children!



Thank you so much, Stodden!

Thanks to Donors!

Since SEDCU's inception, we have relied on the generosity of individual donors to develop our sponsorship of disadvantaged children and to fund a wide range of projects. We would like to put on record our sincere appreciation for the regular donations we continue to receive. Many people have been supporting us continuously for a very long time – some for 12 years or more! We are also extremely grateful for grants received during recent years from Leo Lion Foundation, Hexham Abbey, Hexham and Welshpool Rotary Clubs, Tynedale and Hexham Inner Wheel Club, Tynedale Lions Club, Stodden Churches and Kirkheaton Women's Institute. You are all making a big difference to young lives in Southwest Uganda.

Thank you to our sponsors, donors, supporters and all who take an interest in SEDCU. Together we can continue to make our stated mission a reality. If you wish to donate you can do so through the website or by cheque made out to SEDCU and mailed to Lowstead, Highford Lane, Hexham NE46 2DP. Or you can pay online into the SEDCU account, sort code 20-74-81, account number 83561356.

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