

SEDCU

December 2018

Newsletter 10

Supporting the Education of Disadvantaged Children in Uganda

Welcome to SEDCU Newsletter No.10 covering the period July 2018 – December 2018

2018 has been a year of consolidation for SEDCU. Income has increased thanks to the continuing generosity of donors and this issue provides information on some of our fundraising activities. We continue to receive pleasing termly reports on all the children and it is gratifying to note their progress. The various projects which are being funded by SEDCU have progressed well – some examples are described in this edition.

Disabled Scouts triumph again!

Thanks to many generous donations it was again possible for SEDCU to fund a scout troop from Kisoro Demonstration School to participate in the Ugandan National Scouting Jamboree which was held in Kaazi near Kampala in August 2018. A total of 16 blind and deaf children participated with support from relevant staff. We understand that the overall competition attracted over 3500 scouts from 69 districts of Uganda, and there were competitions in different categories including special needs children as well as those without disabilities. The scouts participated in a variety of activities including life survival skills, kayaking, sports, chess, community

service, construction, pioneering and a range of other basic skills. The report we have received tells us that these activities were aimed at ‘enhancing the children’s intellectual, spiritual, and social, economic and physical potential’. We were delighted to learn that the KDS children came first in both the blind and the deaf categories. The photo shows the team from KDS with their trophy!



Rotary Club of Hexham Fundraiser!

In Northumberland the tradition of telling stories lives on! Early in December the Rotary Club of Hexham organised a “Tall Tales” Competition in Hexham Abbey. Eight orators put on fantastic performances which were judged by three local personalities. The Club decided that part of the proceeds from ticket sales and raffle should go to SEDCU, specifically to fund the disabled children’s participation in the 2019 Scouting Jamborees. The Trustees of SEDCU are deeply grateful to the Rotary Club for their generous donation and their interest in SEDCU’s activities.

Stephen Habiyaremye

Stephen Habiyaremye has just completed his second year as Head Teacher at Kisoro Demonstration School. We asked him about his aims and ambitions and he replied: ***“To work together with all stakeholders and `well-wishers aiming at accessing equal educational opportunities to all children regardless of disability. To make sure that children with special needs attain education that will enable him/ her to live sustainable and independent lives within society. Ensure that children who may not excel or proceed on to secondary education may be trained in vocational skills to enable them to earn a living in the future.”***



Funding Degree in Special Needs Education

In the Newsletter of June 2018, we reported that SEDCU had agreed to support Mugabe Joseph, Head of Special Needs at KDS, to undertake an In-Service course at Kampala International University leading to a Bachelor Degree in Special Needs Education. This course will take two years and not three as we previously reported. We heard from Joseph at the end of November and he said, "I have so far completed two semesters for first year and the next semester will begin early December this year in order to complete the first Year." At the time of writing the Ugandan school year is coming to its end and school examinations have been taking place. Joseph was spending some time marking Braille exams at the Ugandan National Examinations Board, in Kampala, where all the country's final exams at all levels are set, marked and the results announced.

Holiday Activities at KDS

All four deaf girls sponsored through SEDCU spend the majority of the school holidays at school as due to varied and complicated circumstances they are unable to go home. Their sponsors fund their holidays at school and SEDCU ensures that they are able to enjoy some worthwhile activities outside the school environment. Where possible SEDCU encourages activities which broaden their horizons and perspectives. Even on school trips the disabled children need additional assistance as you can see in the photographs.



In November 2018 we were alerted to this good news story by MCDO:



After facing near-extinction, mountain gorillas are slowly rebounding. On 14th November 2018, the Switzerland-based International Union for Conservation of Nature updated mountain gorillas' status from "critically endangered" to "endangered," a more promising, if still precarious, designation. There are now just over 1,000 of the animals in the wild, up from an estimated population of 680 a decade ago. Mountain gorillas live in lush and

misty forests along a range of dormant volcanoes in east Africa. Their habitat falls inside national parks spanning parts of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of those is Mgahinga Gorilla National Park where the boundaries border the small community which SEDCU supports. Of course, it is also the area from where so many Batwa families were displaced without compensation leading to poverty and hardship and many of whose children are sponsored through SEDCU.

CHANGE OF HEAD TEACHER AT MCJS

Kobusingye Annette has been Head Teacher at MCJS for a number of years. Under her leadership the school has gone from strength to strength with growth in school numbers, creation of new classes and excellent results in P7 Leaving Exams.

SEDCU funded a 3 year In Service training course for her to gain her Head Teacher's qualifications. It was therefore both a surprise and disappointment to learn of her decision to leave MCJS and take up a new position as a teacher in a local Government school in her village. In accordance with the contract which was drawn up at SEDCU's request she is obliged to refund her course fees to which she has agreed. P7 teacher Niyibizi George is currently Acting Head and the Governors are recruiting a new Head Teacher.

Mgahinga Community Junior School is in a particularly remote location and has generally been functioning without any electrical power. SEDCU has, over the years, funded two small solar power installations on the rooves of the old classroom block and the boarding quarters. Our latest project has been to install solar cells on the roof of the new classroom block whose roof was funded by SEDCU thanks to generous donations received.



This photo shows the technician who was preparing to install the solar panel on the roof.



We have also been sent a photo showing the power was switched on for the first time.

Imagine how excited the children must have been!

As ever, there has been total transparency to show how our funds have been employed and invoices were submitted to SEDCU with details of costs down to the finest detail of not only the solar panels themselves but also wire, cable grips, inverters, batteries, fixing screws – and 23 light bulbs and light fittings! The total was about £800.

LEAP FOR LUNCH

MCJS still relies on a very basic outdoor kitchen to create meals for the growing number of pupils and this urgently needs to be replaced by a safer purpose- built facility. The plan is for this to be combined with a new dining hall to replace the mud wall construction building which has had to be demolished, being no longer fit for purpose. The plan is for the building to be constructed in two or more phases as funds become available. The estimated cost for the first phase - putting in the foundations for the whole building and then constructing the kitchen element - is £4000, and SEDCU has been seeking donations for this worthwhile and indeed essential development

In September 2018, 25 brave and fearless individuals flung themselves from a 125ft tower in aid of SEDCU. This was organised and led by trustee Becky Lynch who wrote “ At 125ft high Bodyflight Vertigo is one of the tallest Power Fan descenders in the UK. An amazing adrenaline rush, adults and children alike can experience the thrill of leaping from a building and plunging to the ground just like a BASE Jumper but in complete safety. After plenty of hesitated and scary moments all 25 of the jumpers safely arrived back on the ground and with the support of others managed to raise well over £2,000. I feel incredibly proud that so many have decided to jump and raise money for such a worthwhile cause. Thank you.”

There have been other very significant donations to this project, including £1000 from Welshpool and District Rotary Club and £500 from the charity School Places which has been active in Mgahinga over many years. As a result, we have now exceeded our target and sent some funds to Mgahinga, so the project is underway. This photograph shows the ground for the foundations being cleared, and the old kitchen in the background.



Our contact at MCDO has written on December 4th:

“I wished to inform you that the construction work started yesterday with measurements. We have got quite a lot of materials at the site such as bricks, sand, stones, and other requirements. Much of physical work started today. The other achievement we have so far reached is to agree with our immediate neighbour to remove his tall eucalyptus trees which seemed to be quite risky to the school successful development. The owner of that land is now very supportive to the school and he has sent his children to study from there. Community members are now happy. More than 15 workers are going to be employed on daily basis in construction work and more than 60 have been engaged in bringing various material and paid. The general public here is very happy of the development so far.”

Legal Ombudsman Staff raise funds for SEDCU



For the second year running, staff working for the Legal Ombudsman have given SEDCU the opportunity to have a fundraising day in their office in Birmingham. This took the form of a cake sale together with provision of information about SEDCU's activities. Most of the cakes were baked by Melissa Sanders, daughter of SEDCU founders Jan and Ben, and they went down a treat! Indeed, business was so brisk there was a queue of staff wanting to buy, and we were very soon sold out! A very significant amount of money was collected and will be put towards the new kitchen at Mgahinga Community Junior School; there is more about this project elsewhere in the newsletter.

TRUSTEE – KATE COULSON

I first heard of SEDCU and the purposeful work they do to support children in Uganda back in 2013 when I started to work with Becky Lynch, a fellow trustee. We both worked in the Early Years sector and shared a passion for children's education: which led me to run the London Marathon for the first time back in 2012 for a charity that supports children in the UK who have faced trauma in their early years. Learning from Becky how SEDCU improves the lives of children who have been born to a life of disability and or disadvantage in Uganda really touched me. Furthermore, hearing from Jan and Ben their story and how SEDCU came in to being was inspirational: I could listen to them on repeat and never tire of their dedication, kindness, and optimism. I was 'lucky' to get a Marathon ballot place in 2017 and this was an opportunity for my husband and I (like most things he had no choice) to raise money and awareness for SEDCU: It was an honour and Lee and I ran the whole race together spurred on by our kind sponsors.

In 2017 our family prepared for our eldest to start school, an emotional time for any parent. This coincided with us learning about H; a 4 year old girl whose parents, just like us, wanted to give their daughter an education. However, Annabel and H were born into very different worlds and here was our second opportunity to support SEDCU. As Annabel started primary school in September we agreed to sponsor H to start her schooling journey the following January.

Jan and Ben invited me to become a trustee because they felt my profile and my determination to support SEDCU actively would enhance the team of trustees. What can I bring to the role to support SEDCU and you, our valued supporters? As a trustee, governance is a vital part of this role; Jan and Ben continue to run SEDCU based on their own morals and values. They work with the local community to partner with families who embrace change and opportunity, and want to make a sympathetic difference to develop sustainable communities. As a trustee I vow to continue to support SEDCU in this way.

I am the mum of 2 independent strong-willed girls who remind me daily how to challenge the status quo and push boundaries. My promise is to continue to support SEDCU in Jan and Bens vision as a sustainable community partner for years to come. I will do this through my passion for children's education, my pragmatic 'can do' approach, and if needs must I will run another Marathon! (don't tell my husband.) Kate x



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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