

SEDCU

**Supporting the Education of
Disadvantaged Children in Uganda**



**ANNUAL REPORT AND
ACCOUNTS**
2023

INTRODUCTION

This is the tenth SEDCU Annual Report covering the period from January 1st to December 31st 2023.

SEDCU's mission is to broaden and strengthen support for disadvantaged children in Uganda so that they can benefit from good quality education and realise their full potential. We focus on schools with whom we have developed a relationship in the extreme Southwest of Uganda and working with people whom we can trust to be aligned with this aim.

It is not our aim to build a large organisation but to focus on supporting modest numbers of individual children, as they progress through the Ugandan educational institutions. We also fund small projects at their schools which will make a difference. We recognise that the country faces huge challenges, and we are powerless to tackle them, but we do believe that our approach does have the potential to change lives and give individual children the start in life which they deserve. All those who choose to support SEDCU will have the opportunity to be kept informed of the progress of the sponsored children and the projects we fund at their schools. In this spirit, our Annual Report again details where money has been spent during the year.

A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

During 2023, Ugandan schools have continued their recovery from the extended 2020/21 COVID lockdown. Parents have struggled to pay fees with so much damage to the economy caused by the Pandemic.

There have been other major issues this year from which the education sector (and hence SEDCU) cannot remain isolated. The impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have caused the price of wheat, fertiliser and fuel to increase sharply across the whole of Africa, with shortages causing starvation in some countries. There are also terrorist groups fighting in the border region between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. This has continued throughout the year despite international efforts to seek a way to resolve the situation peacefully. As a result, Kisoro District, where SEDCU operates, has had to accommodate many refugees. There have also been some serious terrorist incidents during 2023 leading to substantial loss of life.

Of course, there are serious economic issues in the rest of the world too, and for charities in the UK the impacts of high inflation and other related factors may make fundraising more difficult for charities as supporters struggle with the rising cost of living.

Despite all this, SEDCU has continued to do all it can to support the 34 sponsored children and their schools. We are pleased to be able to report that the children have been doing well and a number have passed exams and moved from primary to secondary school, or from secondary to tertiary education. During 2023 several sponsored children have completed their education and graduated from colleges and universities.

THE SCHOOLS

SEDCU continues to focus on two primary schools in Kisoro District where the majority of sponsored children are either being educated or have been educated before moving on to other schools for their secondary education and eventually to colleges and universities for tertiary education in some cases.

Kisoro Demonstration School (KDS) is a state funded school but one with a difference. During the 2023 school year, it has been providing Special Needs Education for some 145 children with a range of disabilities including deafness, blindness and visual impairment who can receive an education there which otherwise would be impossible. The full range of disabilities catered for at KDS includes deaf, deaf/blind, blind/sight impaired, physical handicap, mental health issues, trauma PTSD, autism, dyslexia, and multiple disabilities.

These children have to board, and in many cases their parents (if they have them) are unable to pay the costs. A number of children are sponsored through SEDCU to attend KDS. Over the years, SEDCU has funded a range of projects to improve facilities at the school and to enhance the breadth and quality of education.

Mgahinga Community Nursery and Junior School (MCJS) is on the boundary of a National Park very close to the borders with Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. It is in a very rural environment where most people live off the land and poverty is rife. There is no mains water supply or drainage, and mains electricity has been limited. The school has been expanding steadily and during the 2023 school year there were nearly 200 children enrolled. A growing number of children are sponsored through SEDCU to attend MCJS.

Over a number of years, the Mgahinga Community Development Organisation (MCDO) has managed the construction of a number of new buildings and other facilities to cope with the growing number of children attending and to improve the environment for their education. A number of projects have been delivered, most of them involving part-funding by SEDCU. In 2023, SEDCU continue to provide some financial support to the school and funded several projects aimed at enhancing the breadth and quality of education.

Secondary Schools and Colleges

When SEDCU was established, all the sponsored children were in Primary School. However, as these children have progressed through their primary school education, a number have reached the point where they are ready to take their exams and move up to Secondary Schools, Colleges or Universities. During 2023, 13 children sponsored by SEDCU were in primary education, 11 were in secondary education, and 5 were in either college or university. 5 have graduated and completed their education this year.

Collaboration

SEDCU is of course not the only charity operating in this part of Uganda, and we have sought to cooperate with other charities active in the same schools as ourselves. We have been particularly appreciative of collaboration with School Places, Sustain for Life and Swedish charities which have funded building and other projects as well as sponsoring children at schools where we are involved.

THE CHILDREN

SEDCU's primary aim is to sponsor the education of disadvantaged children so that they can realise their potential.

Sponsorship pays variously for school fees, scholastic materials, meals, boarding costs, uniforms, braille paper for blind children, mattresses, bedding, transport, school trips and a range of other necessities. For some children with no home to go to, SEDCU has been paying for holiday boarding costs. For the older children at secondary school or college or university, the fees are generally higher and there are additional requirements for scholastic materials, field trips, books, laptops, tablets and/or smart phones.

We receive regular termly or mid-year and end of year academic reports on each child, and often other news and photographs to keep us informed of progress of each child and results of any exams they must pass to rise through the system. All of this is shared with sponsors. Some of the older children have moved into the modern age and communicate with us or their sponsors by WhatsApp!

FUNDRAISING AND ADMINISTRATION

Funding for the education of individual children is provided by sponsors who have been found almost entirely through word of mouth; this is very much in the spirit of how we wish the charity to operate, with each sponsor able to develop a personal relationship with SEDCU and with the child they have chosen to support. In order to fund projects which have been identified by the schools as desirable to enhance the children's education and/or out-of-school activities and experiences, we have generally been dependent on donations by individual supporters as well as income from fundraising events and grants. This year we are pleased to report we have received grants from Hexham Lions Club, Hexham Abbey PCC, Stodden PCC, and a substantial grant from Leo Lions (formerly COINS) Foundation. As a result, our income has risen significantly, and we have been able to send more funds to Uganda than ever before. We are profoundly grateful for the generosity of all our donors.

We have developed and regularly updated our website at www.sedcu.org.uk, and post updates on social media. Each year, we have published two editions of a Newsletter which we use to keep supporters informed of recent events.

SEDCU is registered with the Charity Commission and our 2023 Accounts have been filed in compliance with their requirements.

Every pound donated is transmitted from the SEDCU Bank Account to the schools for defined purposes, whether to fund sponsorship of specific children or selected projects. Receipts are obtained for the amounts received in local currency. Gift Aid recovered is used to cover our minor administration costs (which we have kept at about 1% of expenditure) and the balance goes to fund priority projects.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

The trustees are pleased to report that SEDCU's accounts are in good shape. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, our income for 2023 rose significantly to £46,393.

Our expenditure on sponsorship totalled £28,425, and project expenditure totalled £14,098. The details of how funds were spent are shown in the tabulation below. As a result, we generated a surplus of £3,361 and so were able to increase our reserves, ready for the demands which will no doubt arise. In fact, experience has shown that school/college/university costs have risen sharply as a number of children have moved up to secondary or tertiary education which is a great deal more expensive. This has already led to quite a few demands on the reserves and the Bursary Fund (see below).

Recognising the issue which would arise with these sharp increases in fees at secondary and tertiary level, and the need for example to purchase laptops or smart phones for students in tertiary education, the SEDCU trustees decided in 2019 to create a Bursary Fund and some of the reserves at that time were transferred into this new Fund. Since then, there have been some further transfers from Reserves and also some supporters have donated money specifically to add to the Bursary Fund. At the end of 2023, the Fund stood at £8862. This is not extra money; it is a subdivision of our Reserves designated for a particular purpose.

Approximate Breakdown of 2023 Expenditure

Purpose	School	Amount (£)
Sponsorship		
Sponsorship – nursery and primary level	KDS, MCJS	9,043
Sponsorship – secondary level	Hornby High School, Kisoro Vision, Standard Secondary School, BAVOSS	8,390

Sponsorship – colleges awarding diplomas, work experience	St Bruno, KIVI KDS work experience	6,092
Sponsorship – Universities awarding degrees	Chemequip Medical Faculty, Makerere, Bishop Barham,	4,900
TOTAL SPONSORSHIP		28,425
Projects		
Teacher degree level education	KDS & MCJS	3,732
Textbook Library	MCJS	1,620
Participation national sporting and scouting events	KDS	2,245
Arts & Crafts project	KDS	1,121
Classroom partition for P7	MCJS	1,032
Environmental Study Trip	KDS	2,325
Teacher pay top up	KDS, MCJS	2,023
TOTAL PROJECTS		14,098
UK Administration		
Print costs – two newsletters		263
Bank charges – funds transfer		195
Other		24
TOTAL ADMIN		482
TOTAL		43,002

The SEDCU policy is to maintain a reserve of at least £1000 so that, should a sponsor drop out, we can maintain sponsorship payments for a year for the affected child while a new sponsor is located, as well as maintaining funds for payment of committed future project funding instalments and coping with currency fluctuations. There are no administrative costs to run the charity apart from bank charges for funds transfer, newsletter print, and web hosting costs.

Since SEDCU was founded, SEDCU trustees have aimed to travel to Uganda every two years at their own expense to liaise with the schools, verify that SEDCU funds are being spent as

intended and to establish future needs. They also aim to meet every sponsored child and to meet with parents, teachers, and community members. These visits help us to confirm that our donations are making a real difference to schools and children and enable us to reset priorities for future funding. Due to the pandemic, there was a pause in these visits, but we are pleased to report there was a very successful visit in March 2023, as reported in our August 2023 newsletter.

SEDCU Financial Outcome 2023

The following summarises the financial outcome for the twelve-month period ended 31 December 2023, with a comparison with the previous year.

	2023 £	2022 £	
Cash at start of year	21,489	15,080	
Receipts			
Donations received	41,777	21,681	
Gift Aid refunded	4,616	6,060	
TOTAL RECEIPTS	46,393	27,741	
Payments			
Amount sent to schools in Uganda	(42,520)	(20,930)	
Administration costs in UK	(482)	(402)	
TOTAL PAYMENTS	(43,002)	(21,332)	
Increase/ (decrease) in funds	3,361	6,409	
Cash balance at year end	24,850	21,489	

Our 2023 accounts have been audited and the Annual Report and Accounts will be posted on our website in March 2024.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

With all schools, colleges and universities reopened after the pandemic in January 2022, life has largely returned to normal although it will be a challenge to mitigate fully the impacts of the long period of school closures. We are delighted that the number of children supported through SEDCU has risen over the last 2 years. We are also proud to see more of the sponsored children progressing to secondary or tertiary education, and a number have graduated this year. SEDCU has sound financial reserves and we are also confident our supporters will continue to demonstrate their commitment to SEDCU and what we stand for. Above all we will work tirelessly to achieve our mission and enable every one of the sponsored children to realise their potential.

The Trustees of SEDCU