

January 2025

Supporting the Education of Disadvantaged Children in Uganda

Newsletter 22

## Welcome to SEDCU Newsletter No.22 covering the period August 2024 – January 2025

The Ugandan 2024 academic year has ended, and we are awaiting school reports and plenty of exam results too. SEDCU is in good shape thanks to continuing donations and grants for which the trustees are extremely grateful. As it enters its 13<sup>th</sup> year, we have been reflecting on how the charity has changed. In the early years, our sponsored pupils were all in Primary Schools. In 2024, only 35% are in Primary, 31% are in secondary, 14% are in Tertiary education, and our Alumni cadre has grown to 20% of the total numbers we have supported through sponsorship. Just three children have dropped out, either due to family factors or being unable to cope with the challenges of schooling. In this issue of the newsletter, we include details of several alumni as well as news of teachers taking SEDCU sponsored degree courses and updates on activities aimed at broadening horizons outside school.

### KDS Educational Trip Broadens Horizons

The following summarises the report we have received on a 4-day Educational Trip which was fully funded by SEDCU and took place in December 2024. The trip was mainly for KDS pupils in the more senior classes and involved 55 pupils including seven who were children with special needs.

The journey began with a visit to Kitagata hot spring. The children learnt that such a spring is heated by geothermal activity below the earth's surface. The water can reach 80 degrees centigrade and is said to have health benefits and healing powers. The children saw men and women bathing in the water, and they learnt that such a destination offers a combination of natural, cultural, and spiritual experiences. They also learnt that its growing popularity has created a number of challenges ranging from inadequate infrastructure, environmental concerns, risk of unregulated development around the hot spring, waste accumulation, deforestation, and destruction of local habitats. They were told of the risks for future generations if tourism is not managed sustainably.

The journey continued with a visit to several lakes, including Lake Nkugute which is 4645 ft above sea level, was created as a result of volcanic activity, and is shaped to resemble the map of Africa. They learned about mysterious legends and folklore shared among communities which surround it, including the fear that the lake annually swallows a male and female child.

The children were taken to visit Queen Elizabeth National Park. Although this is a major tourist destination in the area where their school is located, these children are unlikely to have had the opportunity to visit it. They were very excited to go on a game drive and to see elephants, antelope, hippopotamus, many unusual birds, monkeys, and warthogs.



They had a chance to cross the equator and had a lesson at the crossing point about the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

They also visited Lake Bunyampaka where salt mining takes place, they saw cotton growing in Kasese District, and they saw the Kazinga Channel which links Lake George and Lake Edward. The children also visited the Hima Cement Factory, one of two factories in Uganda which produce 1.7 million tons annually, supplying the construction industry across the whole country.



We have seen from the teacher’s report that “the children expressed their love for adventure by singing and clapping hands as the journey started” and that “they loved the game drive and seeing the monkeys and baboons taking care of their young ones.” They all received a pineapple to take home (this is fruit not grown in Kisoro District). They loved seeing new environments – more than 95% had never been outside their own district and yet during this trip they went through 12 districts in 4 days!

### Special Needs Children Participate in International Event in Kenya

SEDCU has been able to fund KDS scouts to participate in both the National Competition and the East Africa Event during 2024. We have found that the children who take part in such events get a lot out of it, and they give meaning to the school motto “Disability is not Inability.” The following are extracts from the comprehensive reports submitted to SEDCU by the Head Teacher. We believe it is more powerful if we quote such extracts verbatim.



“In August 2024, KDS special needs scouts competed at national level at the Kaazi camping ground in Uganda near Kampala. At this event, the two teams from KDS were winners out of the whole of Uganda. The two teams were the Lion patrol (hearing impaired girls) that emerged the first position and Elephant patrol (visually impaired boys) that emerged the second position. As a result, the two teams qualified to take part in the Eastern African Zonal Scout Educational Camp in Nairobi.

“The Camp started on 7<sup>th</sup> December and ended on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024 with a closing ceremony. During this ceremony, the Chief Commissioner of Kenya Scout Association proudly thanked all the scouts for active participation in the camp and encouraged them to always exhibit good discipline in their villages, being patriotic to their countries and to promote scouting. The countries that had participants were KENYA, BURUNDI, RWANDA, UGANDA, SOUTH SUDAN and ETHIOPIA. Each country was given a trophy, and each school received a certificate of participation.



***KDS scouts pose for a photo at the entrance of Rowallan National Scouts Camp training Centre***

## CHALLENGES

- ✓ **Time:** Public means of transport took long time on the way due to several stopovers while loading and offloading of other passengers and luggage which made us fail to manage period of arrival.
- ✓ **Unexpected charges:** We got a challenge of extra charges that were not included in the budget especially the payments made on the yellow fever certificates and temporally travel permits to allow us to cross the border.
- ✓ **High costs of some items:** Most of the items on the way both in Uganda and Kenya were very expensive especially at the border of Busia.



*Assessors inspecting scouts making gadgets*

## EXPERIENCES

- ❖ The national language in Kenya is Kiswahili unlike Uganda that uses English and even the sign language of Kenya is different from the Ugandan sign language. This made our children learn communication skills and friendship among Ugandan scouts and other scouts from different countries that attended the camp.
- ❖ Scouts from Kisoro Demo School made a record when they became the first scouts to reach the highest peak of Gong Forest block but looked very tired due lack of enough physical exercises.
- ❖ Learners with hearing impairment enjoyed different signs through constant interactions with their friends from different countries as different sign languages are based on regions.
- ❖ Scouts visited new places like Ngong forest block, Bomas homestead, Kampala city, and Busia border, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kericho and East African Rift Valley.
- ❖ Learners viewed different structures like flyover roads and buildings in different fashions.
- ❖ We saw different animals like monkeys, warthogs, and pigs in Bomas homestead.
- ❖ We enjoyed the Independence Day in Kenya and admired the parade alongside the band.
- ❖ Children also enjoyed the games played by aero planes in sky on the Independence Day celebrations.
- ❖ Scouts expressed their way of culture from different countries where even our special needs scouts presented our culture in Uganda dressing style, how children obey their parents and the walking style.”



*KDS scouts having a photo taken with other scouts from Uganda*



*KDS scouts constructing tents and other gadgets on the second day of the camp*



*Scouts participated in mountain hiking and the special needs children did it better than others where ours were the first to reach the peak*

The report also gives fulsome praise to SEDCU, its trustees and the donors (as well as supporting members of staff) who all made possible the participation of 16 scouts in what must have been for them a life-changing experience.

## THE WAITING GAME.....

The end of the academic year always has some SEDCU students completing their school exams and awaiting their results for their onward journeys. The system in Uganda is very different to the UK and takes some understanding. Exams are all marked centrally, and this takes quite a while.

P7 pupils sit their Primary Leaving Exams in late November/early December and if successful will be offered places in Secondary Schools according to their grades. Some students will be sitting O (S4) and A -Levels (S6), others Vocational Practical and Theory tests. University students generally study for 3 years and sit their exams in November - but all will be waiting to learn their futures.

As our students age and progress, it is inevitable that they will travel in different directions. We have more graduates this year. These figures also change the balance of the SEDCU programme. Reflecting on the success of students over the past years it is with pride and gratitude that we consider their educational journeys and the wonderful support they have enjoyed from sponsors, teachers and supporters. Our Bursary Fund is proving extremely valuable – in these days of computers and mobile phones it is vital that our students have all the necessary (but costly) technology to assist their progress through university and/or college.

## NEWS FROM OUR STUDENTS

Here are profiles of some of our successful students. Some will look familiar, but supporters are always interested in their achievements and activities. We are delighted when our graduates update us on their progress and career paths.

### MESSAGE FROM REFUGEE CAMP

S sent us the following message.

"I would like to inform you that all is well about work. Here at the facility, we analyse samples from patients and screen malaria for all new refugees since the facility is attached to a refugee transit centre. We do malaria testing, syphilis, urinalysis, complete blood counting, HIV and hepatitis B testing, stool analysis, ZN (Ziehl-Neelson stain) for TB and many others.

I continue to pray for you and appreciate the good work which you did by shaping my future, may the good lord reward you abundantly."



*S relaxing between shifts*

### THREE FIRM FRIENDS

DD, DI and FI have been firm friends for many years since they met at KDS and travelled through the school together. All three are profoundly deaf and have needed different types of support over the years but they have remained constant in their friendship. DD was the first girl sponsored through SEDCU, and she joined us in February 2014! The sponsors for all three have been steadfast in their support throughout their education. There are no words to thank them.

The girls are now about to graduate from St. Bruno's Vocational College where they have studied Knitting and Dressmaking for the last two years. Their lives will change dramatically, and our contacts have been carefully putting into place their next moves. DD and FI will go to live with family members and will, hopefully, receive support from their families to set up in business. DI will return to KDS to make school uniforms. Should they need it all three will be equipped with knitting machines, treadle sewing machines, wool, fabric, threads etc. courtesy of the SEDCU Bursary Fund.



We wish them all every success!

## **BLIND FOOTBALL: TUMUSIIME GUIDES STRONG SPIRITS TO TITLE** **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2024**

### **Article from Ugandan Monitor**

Strong Spirits won all four games without conceding even once to claim their second national title since the inaugural edition in 2022.

Gad Reuben Tumusiime was the most valuable player and top scorer, after scoring all seven goals by which Strong Spirits won the 2024 Blind Football Uganda Championship Sunday evening.

Strong Spirits won all four games without conceding even once to claim their second national title since the inaugural edition in 2022.

They opened their victorious campaign by defeating hosts Kyambogo University 2-0 in an end-to-end encounter, thanks to a brace by Tumusiime.

They replicated the feat against Living Hope Centre for the Blind, again courtesy of Tumusiime. With six points they topped Group B, followed by Kyambogo on three.

In the semi final Strong Spirits edged Katanga Young Boys 1-0 via a Tumusiime penalty, to book a rematch with Kyambogo, who ejected Red Angels in the other semi final thanks to William Atatibo's brace.

As expected, Tumusiime gave his team a first half lead, doubling it in the second stanza to win the final 2-0.

"I am so happy to win the golden boot and the title for my team. I am looking forward to playing for other teams outside Uganda" said Tumusiime post-match.

It was a triumphal return for Tumusiime, who alongside recruit Fred Masisa were busy chasing qualification for the Paris Paralympics via athletics and were absent when Strong Spirits finished fourth last year.

Tumusiime, who lost his sight when he was four years old, is confused which sport he should focus on because he thrives in athletics, archery and football.

"I have done athletics and archery in different countries, and I want the same for football" said Tumusiime, who has graduated with a Bachelors in English and Literature from Makerere University.



*In the photo, Gad is in the centre wearing the white eye shield.*



### **ANOTHER GRADUATE**

Congratulations to J on achieving his degree in Social Work and Social Administration from Bishop Barham University in Kabale. We wish him every success in his future career.

### **OFF TO NURSING COLLEGE**

When D, aged 9, was first sponsored through SEDCU she told us her ambition was to become a nurse!

Last year, she passed her O-Levels but decided not to stay on at school to study for A-Levels. Instead, she decided to apply to a Nursing School.

She was, happily, offered places at more than one college and in July we reported that she was going to the Metropolitan University in Kisoro. However, she changed her mind and is currently studying at Uganda Nursing School, Bwindi, ranked among the best in Uganda. Our contact went to visit her and reports that D *“is one of most dedicated students with excellent behaviour at school.”* The school is on track to be awarded University status in the next few years. We trust D will go on to achieve her ambition.



### **CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR TEACHING STAFF**

As the academic year has come to a close in Uganda some of our teaching staff have their heads down, studying hard! Every school holiday, university's run degree courses to enable teachers to attend and gain degrees to further their careers.

Nestor, Special Needs teacher at KDS, has featured in previous newsletters, and is expecting to complete his course in January. Edward also featured in our last Newsletter. He has now completed the first year of his course concentrating on teaching the deaf.

Innocent, Head Teacher at MCJS, has completed his first year at the Metropolitan University in Kisoro and submitted an academic report to SEDCU. He has achieved excellent grades in all 13 of his course units! We are delighted for you, Innocent. He also told us of the impact the university course was having on his role as Headteacher:

*“My academic pursuit have significantly enhanced my understanding of more educational principles, pedagogy, and leadership skills. I am becoming better equipped to design and implement engaging lesson plans, assess pupils/teachers learning and teaching, and create a positive and inclusive learning environment. My university experience has broadened my perspective on education, enabling me to think critically about the challenges facing MCJS and develop innovative solutions to address them.”*

He continues:

*“My university education has equipped me with modern teaching methods and techniques, which I can apply to improve learning outcomes at MCJS”*

*“Through my studies, I have gained valuable insights into effective leadership and management practices. I am being equipped with skills to lead and manage the staff at MCJS, promoting a positive and productive school culture.”*

*“My studies have deepened my understanding of child development theories and practices. I can now design and implement more effective programs and activities that cater to the unique needs of learners at MCJS.”*

The Trustees are delighted that Innocent, Nestor and Edward have embraced the opportunities their courses have given them, and it confirms our belief that investment in teacher training can not only benefit the pupils but also the wider school community.

## **BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS!**

At the end of November SEDCU received another substantial donation from the Stodden Churches. This has been sent to MCJS with the purpose of supplementing their stock of text and library books. Previous donations have also been used for this purpose. We will include more about this in the next SEDCU Newsletter. We are very, very grateful to Stodden for this generous donation.

## **SEDCU Celebrates Ben and Kate's Great North Run Success!**

Despite the torrential rain from start to finish, the spirit of camaraderie and determination shone brightly as Ben and Kate, both representing SEDCU, took on the challenging Great North Run in September last year. The weather was far from ideal, but that did not dampen their spirits, or the electrifying atmosphere created by the enthusiastic crowds and celebrity runners.

Ben, ever the enthusiast, felt an incredible surge of energy as he crossed the finish line, convinced he could have kept on running. In contrast, Kate was simply relieved and thrilled to have completed the race, her determination unwavering even in the face of such daunting weather conditions.



***Ben made it – disguised as Bernard!!***



The event was a true testament to the resilience and dedication of all participants, and the support from spectators and fellow runners added an unforgettable spark to the day. Ben and Kate's journey was not just about personal achievement but also about raising awareness and support for SEDCU's vital work.

Join us in congratulating Ben and Kate on their incredible achievement and in celebrating the unwavering spirit of the Great North Run community! 🏃‍♂️

For marathon aficionados there was a total of 60,000 runners who covered a distance of 13.1 miles. Kate's time was 2 hours 23 minutes while Ben managed 2 hours 48 minutes and came in 38,549<sup>th</sup> place!!

## **COLOUR RUSH TURNS INTO CLIMB!**

Earlier this year the colour rush was cancelled last minute. Vowing to still take on a challenge to raise money for SEDCU this wonderful team took on the O2 Arena climb in London. Our brave young supporters and their parents scaled the side of this iconic structure.

This climbing challenge involved walking the 380 metres of fabric walkway literally up and over the O2. Climbing all the way across the webbed roof suspended 52 metres above the ground and with up to 30° angles of ascent ..... this was definitely felt by the knees by the parents on the climb down!

The view from the top was phenomenal, seeing and appreciating the skyline of London.

Thank you to all sponsors for your generous donations.



**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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