

SEDCU

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



**ANNUAL REPORT AND
ACCOUNTS
2021**

INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth SEDCU Annual Report covering the period from January 1st to December 31st 2021.

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 South West 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 well as funding 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.

IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC

However, there has been continued disruption of education across Uganda due to the COVID pandemic. All schools, colleges and universities had been shut down completely as a result of a strong national lockdown implemented by the Ugandan Government in March 2020. Reported statistics show that the country has been less impacted compared to most countries around the world. Levels of infection and mortality are at moderate levels, but the Government remained cautious. There was some easing of restrictions in July 2020, and in mid October 2020, exam year students taking Primary School leaving exams, as well as O level and A level students, were allowed to return to schools provided they could demonstrate that specified precautions had been taken to prevent spread of the virus. Some vocational colleges re-opened, again just for exam year students. Special needs children with disabilities were also permitted to return to school.

Moving on to 2021, all of these categories of children returned to school in January 2021, and in the following months most other children were progressively allowed back to school subject to appropriate precautions. Colleges and universities were just starting to reopen when a second national lockdown was announced at very short notice in mid June. In Autumn 2021, colleges and universities were reopened, and in January 2022 all schools were permitted to reopen.

The schools supported by SEDCU have been struggling to pay salaries for teachers laid off due to the Pandemic, and SEDCU took the decision to pay a percentage of their salaries until schools would reopen. Also, many of the families of children attending these schools have been finding it hard to pay for adequate food with breadwinners living in abject poverty due to being out of work or unable to sell their produce. SEDCU has made it possible for some food to be distributed to those in greatest need. During 2021, payments totalling £9,000 were made and we understand these have made a huge difference.

All the children sponsored through SEDCU were severely impacted by these closures, as were their schools, colleges and universities. Sadly, two of the sponsored children have dropped out of secondary education during the extended lock downs, but on the other hand, we have been able to respond to requests for sponsorship for five more exceptionally needy children, so the number of sponsored children has risen to 32.

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.

Kisoro Demonstration School (KDS) is a state funded school but one with a difference. It has established special arrangements for 104 children with a range of disabilities including deafness, blindness and visual impairment who can receive an education there which otherwise would be impossible. The range of disabilities catered for at KDS includes:

Deaf, Deaf/Blind, Blind/sight impaired, Physical handicap, Mental health issues, Trauma PTSD, Autism, Dyslexia, Multiple Disability.

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. In past years, SEDCU has funded a range of projects to improve facilities at the school and to enhance the breadth and quality of education. However, with the school being closed for much of the year, projects have inevitably been suspended until more normal times return.

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 is expanding steadily and a growing number of children are sponsored through SEDCU to attend.

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. However with all the disruption and school closures caused by the pandemic, future projects have been suspended and there were no deliverables during 2021.

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. At the point that schools, colleges and universities reopened in January 2022, 19 children sponsored by SEDCU were in primary education, 7 were in secondary education, and 6 were in either college or university.

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 are funding 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, 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 including 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 children write letters for their sponsors, and we ensure that each sponsor receives regular information about the progress of the child they are supporting.

FUNDRAISING AND ADMINISTRATION

Funding for the education of individual children is provided by sponsors who have been found 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. The latter have been

practically impossible due to the various lockdowns in the UK. Even so, our income has been relatively strong despite it all. 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 also 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 2021 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 again kept at about 3% of expenditure) and the balance goes to fund priority projects.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Despite the difficult situation, and our limited ability to fundraise, the trustees are pleased to report that SEDCU's accounts are in good shape. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, our income held up well at £23,199. There was no real opportunity to fund projects this year because schools were closed and there were severe restrictions on movements across Uganda. However we did transfer £9,000 to Uganda for COVID relief purposes. Our expenditure on sponsorship totalled £10,745. The details of how funds were spent are shown in the tabulation below. As a result, we generated a surplus of £2,853 and so were able to increase our reserves, ready for the demands which will no doubt be made on them once normal life resumes.

SEDCU – Approximate Breakdown of 2021 Expenditure

Purpose	School	Amount (UGX)	Amount (£)
Sponsorship			
Sponsorship – nursery and primary level	KDS, MCJS	11,891,942	2,563
Sponsorship – secondary level	Hornby High School Kabale, Kisoro Vision Secondary School	9,122,400	1,954
Sponsorship – colleges	Vocational, Teacher Training, Business Studies	13,098,500	2,605
Sponsorship – Universities	ChemEquip Medical Faculty, Makerere	17,392,600	3,623
TOTAL SPONSOR		51,505,442	10,745
Projects			
COVID Relief payments covering teacher salaries, school running costs, food distribution to needy families	KDS HHS MCJS	43,815,000	9,000
TOTAL PROJECTS		43,815,000	9,000
UK Administration			
Print costs – two newsletters			197
Bank charges – funds transfer			135
Other			269
TOTAL ADMIN			601 (2.9%)
TOTAL		95,320,442	20,346

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 and some costs associated with fundraising which are recovered from the Gift Aid refunds. SEDCU trustees aim 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 every one of their teachers. 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. Our most recent visit was in October 2019, and sadly we had to postpone our planned visit in 2021 due to the pandemic.

SEDCU Financial Outcome 2021

The following summarises the financial outcome for the twelve-month period ended 31 December 2021.

	2021 £	2020 £	
Cash at start of year	12,227	9,878	
Receipts			
Donations received	20,988	17,971	
Gift Aid refunded	2,211	5,564	
TOTAL RECEIPTS	23,199	23,535	
Payments			
Amount sent to schools in Uganda	(20,014)	(20,454)	
Administration costs in UK	(332)	(733)	
TOTAL PAYMENTS	(20,346)	(21,187)	
Increase/(decrease) in funds	2,853	2,348	
Cash balance at year end	15,080	12,226	

Our 2021 accounts have been audited and the Annual Report will be posted on our website in mid- March 2022.

Future Outlook

With all schools, colleges and universities reopened in January 2022, we are hopeful that life will return to something approaching normality in the year ahead. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we were able to keep schools afloat during 2021 with our COVID relief funds and we trust they will now bounce back. We are delighted that the number of children supported through SEDCU has risen and we are also proud to see more of the sponsored children progressing to tertiary education in recent months, despite all the obstacles they had to overcome. As a charity, SEDCU must remain flexible and stand ready to assist as best we can while the whole country seeks to return to normal. We do have some 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