

February 2022

Supporting the Education of Disadvantaged Children in Uganda

Newsletter 16

Welcome to SEDCU Newsletter No.16 covering the period August 2021 – January 2022

We are delighted to be able to report that Ugandan Colleges and Universities reopened during Autumn 2021, and that all schools were able to reopen on January 10th 2022. While, sadly, two sponsored children dropped out of secondary school education during the COVID lockdowns and have as yet not returned to school, we have been able to respond to requests for sponsorship of five more exceptionally needy children, so the total number of children sponsored through SEDCU has risen from 30 to 32. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, SEDCU remains in a stable financial position.

Back to School after 83 weeks COVID shutdown

On January 10th, Uganda ended what is reported to have been the world's longest school closure. The Government has indicated that primary and secondary pupils would mostly resume their classes a year above where they were when the closures began in March 2020. Remedial lessons will be provided for some classes to help cover critical content missed during the closures. Assuming all now goes according to plan, the school year would consist of 3 normal terms ending on 9th December 2022. The 2023 school year will start on January 29th. We understand that the dates for the various national exams are yet to be announced.

The Education Minister said he 'urged schools to follow health protocols.... and they are required to implement guidelines and standard operating procedures to ensure safe return to school for all children.' He also said 'Measures have been put in place to ensure that those who don't comply do so'

Latest COVID statistics

The levels of new infections in Uganda appear to be falling. Based on data at the end of January published by WHO and Reuters we understand that average numbers of new infections each day have been falling by more than 1,000 per day for the last 3 weeks to 34% of the previous peak. Since the start of the pandemic, Uganda has reported 161,772 infections and 3,528 COVID related deaths. On vaccinations, there have been 12,911,692 doses administered, sufficient to vaccinate 14.6% of the population.

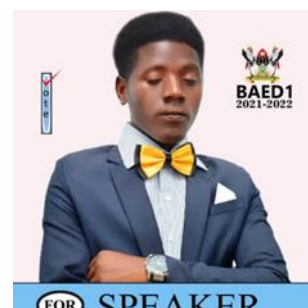
DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY

In November, our sponsored blind student G was elected as the speaker of the Association of all Disabled People at Makerere University and he is now on the University Guild Council.

G had been sponsored through SEDCU since 2012 and we have proudly watched him progress through KDS and Hornby High School and, finally, Iganga Secondary School where he sat his A Levels. He was successful in gaining a place at Makerere University to study Education.

What a transformation!

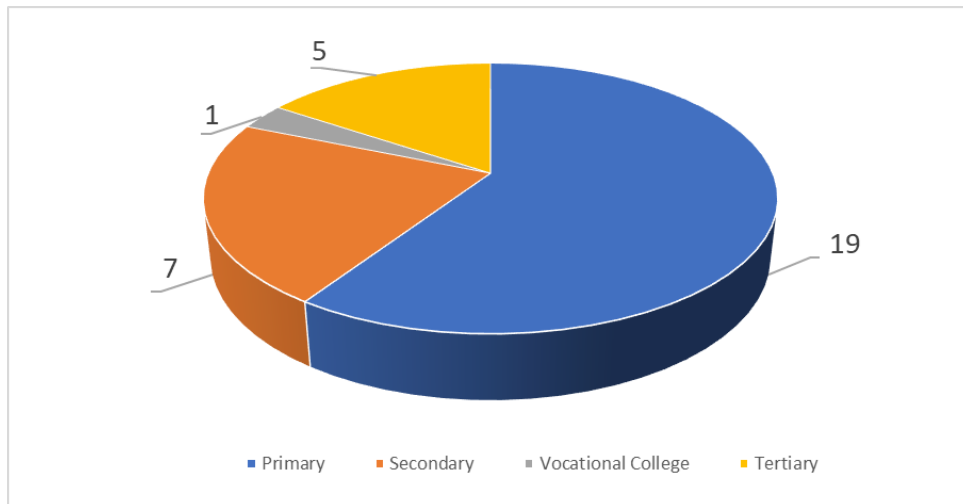
CONGRATULATIONS G! You are an inspiration!



COVID Relief Payments

As we have reported in previous newsletters, 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 out of work/unable to sell their produce and living in abject poverty. SEDCU has made it possible for some food to be distributed to those in greatest need. During the period June – December 2021 payments totalling £9,000 were made and we understand these have made a huge difference. Hopefully there will be no more lockdowns and this kind of support will no longer be needed!

PROGRESSION of SPONSORED CHILDREN



When SEDCU started in 2012 all the sponsored children were in Primary School. Ten years later this chart shows how many of them have progressed to Secondary or Tertiary education. The latter embraces 2 at University, 1 at Teacher Training College, 1 at Commercial College and 1 waiting for, hopefully, a University place.

During the last 3 years 1 has graduated from Vocational College and 3 have left school for various reasons.

NEW SPONSORSHIPS

We have been asked to find sponsors for five more children - all either disabled or subject to bereavement, poverty or ill treatment made worse by the pandemic. As has already been mentioned two of the pupils sponsored through SEDCU did not return to school and we are very grateful to their sponsors for agreeing to support two of the five mentioned above. Sponsors have already been found for two more of the others. **However, we are seeking a sponsor for K whose fees for this year have been paid from SEDCU's funds.**



K is one of four children. She is 13 years old and was born with hearing and speech problems. She is starting school in Primary 1 at KDS. She is pictured with members of her family and wearing her blue school jumper!

NEW SPONSORSHIPS (CONTINUED)

B is 16 and the second of eight siblings and is already in the second year at a secondary school in Kisoro. His father has been dependent on income from tourism but lost his job due to the pandemic. The family now depend on subsistence farming but are unable to manage his secondary school fees. B says his ambition is to become a human rights activist!



M is 8 years old and was born deaf. The cause of deafness is unknown. Her father neglected her and her siblings. Her mother was divorced and remarried but M was left with a stepmother. She is starting in Primary 1 at KDS. M is wearing the turquoise top.

Y is of an unknown age. He was beaten to a coma and dumped after which he was picked up unconscious and hospitalised. After his treatment he had nowhere to go and was brought to KDS where he will live all year round and receive his education. He will also benefit from a caring environment and be with other children who have also experienced trauma. In addition, he has hearing problems.



The school have given him a name and arranged his baptism. He is now in Primary 1.



P is 7 years old and is pictured here with her older brother who is visually impaired. Their father died in 2020 and their mother suffers from partial blindness and mental illness and is unable to care for her children. They were taken in by KDS together with another brother who is deaf and blind. They were all neglected and malnourished. The clothes they are wearing were donated. Currently all the children are living at KDS and P is in Primary 1.

These profiles demonstrate the desperate situation of some children and families in Uganda. The Trustees of SEDCU are constantly in awe of the love and care shown by school staff and community members in Kisoro District who identify the most needy cases and provide support.

Charitable Donations

In addition to many donations made by individual supporters and through fundraising activities SEDCU gratefully acknowledges the receipt of three charitable donations during the last six months:

- Hexham Abbey - £465
- Hexham Rotary Club - £250
- The Stodden Churches - £120

Given the difficulties of fundraising during the pandemic these timely gifts are particularly appreciated.

SEDCU Financial Position

In January/February 2020, before the first lockdown, SEDCU sent funds to the schools in Uganda to cover the academic year 2020. With the schools closed from late March 2020, much of what we had sent remained in the relevant accounts until the end of 2021, although we did give permission for some expenditure during the protracted closure period to meet urgent needs, and some teaching happened later in 2020. In every case, our contacts in Uganda maintained careful accounts of what had been received for each child, how much of this had been spent, and what remained as we prepared to send funds for 2022. As a result, a number of our sponsors have received a reduction on fees sought for 2022 to reflect what had been saved. For many of the disabled children and those at College or University the same principles applied but, in many cases, they had been able to attend for substantial periods of time, so we sent fresh funding in Autumn 2021.

In terms of the sponsors who pay monthly by standing order, and who had continued payments throughout the long closure period, they built up substantial credits in the SEDCU UK account and have had the option to have these credits refunded, but we are extremely grateful to the majority who have opted to leave the funds in our account, but transferred to the SEDCU Bursary Fund.

The SEDCU Accounts for the year ended December 31st, 2021 are being finalised and will be audited and published on the website. Thanks to the generosity of our many donors the financial position is quite healthy.

Bursary Fund

In 2018, the trustees decided to establish a Bursary Fund whose aim would be to provide funding for older children in Secondary School and students attending Colleges and Universities. These young people will often have greater financial needs for equipment, books, scholastic materials and so on. Laptops will generally be required at some point. It may be unreasonable to expect their sponsors to cover all these expenses on top of fees and living costs, and the Bursary Fund is designed to help out in such situations. We are pleased to report that there is now over £5,000 in the Fund, thanks to specific donations and fundraising.

Nestor Niyonzima



Nestor Niyonzima has been selected by KDS to be Head of Special Needs. He will replace Mugabe Joseph who so sadly died last year.

Nestor is 40 years old, married and has three children. He is already working with Special Needs children in KDS. He writes

“I support in:

- *Teaching Special Needs Children especially the blind children.*
- *Repairing and maintaining the Perkins braille machines.*
- *Training blind children in games and sporting activities.”*

Nestor will build on his current experiences and qualification to study for a Batchelor of Special Needs Education at Kyambogo University on a part time basis over three years.

SEDCU is happy to support Nestor through this and wish him every success. We also note that new Government policy is for all teachers to be fully qualified, and we expect that further funding will be sought for this purpose in the coming months and years.

CORBRIDGE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



A member of Hexham and Tynedale Inner Wheel Club organised an entry in the Corbridge Christmas Tree Festival to promote the club and SEDCU. Her husband made the tree from bicycle wheels and baubles were hung in blue and gold, the Inner Wheel colours. Some baubles were adorned with hats to reflect the knitting effort made by the Club. The festival is a wonderful occasion and is supported by groups and businesses local to the ancient town of Corbridge. Thank you, Sheila!

Fundraising

Despite the limitations caused by the “Lockdowns” and restrictions we are happy to report that fundraising has continued to generate valuable income for the charity.



November 2021 saw one of our trustees Kate Coulson take up the challenge of RED November. No, this wasn't a glass of red wine every night, but Running Every Day during the month. Kate is currently living in Greece with her young family, so the challenge gave her a good excuse to explore her local countryside. 'I enjoy running for both my physical and mental health, but I always lack consistency. RED November gave me the motivation to get my trainers on each day for such a good cause. I met some of my new neighbours, discovered some new trail routes through the olive groves and gave the locals something to talk about – I am not sure they are used to seeing runners in this rural area!'

Kate ran 150km in total, both Kate and SEDCU are extremely grateful for all the support she received, raising £460 for SEDCU. Thank you!

A big **THANK YOU** to the staff at Whispers in Hexham for hosting “A Taste of Africa” hamper square which raised £100!



Another **thank you** to all those who selected SEDCU as their AMAZON SMILE charity!

SEDCU has received £60.12 as of December 2021. This equates to 284,133.3 UGX!

In turn this can buy: 7 pairs of school shoes or 7 pairs of bedsheets or 4 white canes

Keep spending!!

December 2021 saw the return of our popular 'Find Santa, Pick a Square' game. A **big thank you** to Hidden Beauty in Higham Ferrers for kindly sponsoring SEDCU. An amazing £280 was raised. Thank you to all that participated and a big well done to our winner Laura.





The Trustees are very grateful to The Lanes Shopping Centre in Carlisle for offering us a free pop-up stall on a Saturday before Christmas. We were able to display and sell some of David Almond's beautiful watercolours. Surprisingly this one is still for sale!!



Once again, Carly, George, Elliot and Molly gave us an excellent supply of manure to enrich gardens local to Hexham. Thanks to our customers old and new we raised £260! Even more than last year. Thank you, too, to their owner and riders who so generously allowed us to access the muckheaps and helped us cart it away!

Hexham should win the Britain In Bloom competition!



FINISHING ON A HATTY NOTE!

Restricted by the pandemic, members of Hexham and Tynedale Inner Wheel Club have been busy knitting and have produced over 150 hats! The knitters are of all ages but the oldest is 95! For children living in the foothills of the Virunga mountains on the border with Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo these colourful hats will be very welcome. Even though the area is less than 100 miles from the Equator it can be bitterly cold at night and for children who rarely have anything new to call their own these colourful hats will be exceptionally special. A special thank you to a lady named Audrey who donated **all** of the wool!



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.

Email us at info@sedcu.org.uk Visit us at www.sedcu.org.uk