



Report of the annual General Meeting of the board of Trustees Rainbows4Children (UK) Trust

Date and Time: Wednesday 8th May 2024, 1700h, Zoom link.

Present: Richard Max Robinson (President)
Kathryn Robinson
George Potts
Alison Burgh
Philip Stockbridge

Minutes

1. Presentation of the annual accounts of the Foundation for 2023.

The annual accounts have been examined by the External Independent Examiner and approved. They are ready for submission to the Charity Commission.

At the current date Rainbows4children has cash assets of approximately £ 500'000 which is in line with our policy to always have sufficient reserves to cover the Nicolas Robinson School's annual operating costs which are estimated to be £ 500'000 net in the current school year.

Rainbows4children are using Moneycorp to transfer funds to the Swiss bank accounts. Payments from Ethiopia are made from the Swiss bank account, to maintain transparency. Moneycorp takes a reduced fee for currency exchange and has worked very well.

The overall cash position is increasing. This is seen as a temporary situation, caused by several factors, the main ones being:

- a) During the war (2020-22) the budget was underspent as materials were not available and the school had to manage with reduced and rationed supplies.
- b) Salaries were paid during the war and remained at the same level throughout the war in Ethiopian birr. However, during the same period, the Ethiopian birr devalued from approx. ETB 35 to £ 1.0 to ETB 70 to £ 1.0. Salaries were doubled to compensate for this once the budget for the 2023-4 school year resumed.
- c) No capital projects were undertaken due to the instability in Ethiopia. Funds had already been raised for most of the planned projects and will be held in reserve ready for when capital investment is deemed wise.
- d) It is uncertain how many parents are able to pay full fees sustainably.
- e) It is clear that for Ethiopia to receive loans, the IMF expects the country to devalue the ETB against the USD. With this in mind, we only send funds to the school when they are needed.

Further commentary on these points were discussed during the meeting and are reported in the minutes.

2. Liabilities and financial transactions for the financial year 2023.

Background (reminder)

The war between the Ethiopian government (Prosperity Party) and the state of Tigray, represented by the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), began in November 2020 with fierce fighting.



As of June 2021, the Ethiopian government imposed a blockade on Tigray. This meant that the region was not supplied with food, medical items or other materials. There were no formal banking services. There were no telephone services (landline and mobile) and no fibre optic internet. The only internet or telephone use that was possible was through the satellite connections of a few NGOs.

The Pretoria Agreement for the Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) was signed in early November 2022, two years after the start of the civil war. Implementation is very slow, and there are many concerns about the humanitarian situation in Tigray. This has resulted in people being desperate for money and theft has become widespread in the region.

Electrical power has been restored to Mekele, but it is often cut off for many hours. Phone links and mobile data work for much of the time. At the beginning of March 2023, the internet cable was restored to the Nicolas Robinson School (the line had been severed).

Private banks re-opened during 2023 and later the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia re-opened. The process was slow as major audits had to be done before they could serve the public.

Max and Kathryn visited the Wegagen bank in Mekele in June and checked that they would be able to handle bank transfers from Switzerland as we wanted to re-start the transfer of funds directly to the school account. We decided that it would be wiser to use a private bank rather than the government bank as they are less likely to block funds for political reasons. This is the biggest current threat.

The Nicolas Robinson School's bank accounts with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) were frozen by the federal government on 28 June 2021, meaning that the school could no longer receive or disburse funds. At that time the assets stood at approximately ETB 928,000. (£ 17,500 at the official exchange rate of that date). In July 2023, CBE released these funds to the school. Because some parents pay their fees into the existing school account at CBE it has been retained. However, most of the school's banking services are now provided by Wegagen Bank.

In the first half of 2023, banking services were still not operating. To cover the budget to the end of the school year (7 July 2023), funds were transferred through business owners who had cash assets in Mekele. They released funds to the school in exchange for transfers to family members or businesses in the USA or Europe. All transactions made under these arrangements have been documented for auditing purposes by Rainbows4children Foundation and the Nicolas Robinson School. The next transfers to pay for the school budget were made to the school's account at Wegagen Bank, Mekele in October and December 2023 in an amount of £ 85,000.

3. Project status overview

Lalibela:

In Lalibela, two students currently receive sponsorship through Rainbows4children, one of whom is sponsored by Max and Kathryn Robinson. These children will continue to receive support until they have completed their education. After that, it is not planned to sponsor any more children in Lalibela.

Nicolas Robinson School, Mekele:

War started in the Tigray region of Ethiopia on 4th November 2020 and continued until November 2022. Normal school operations resumed in late February 2023.

Food support continues to be given to students from kindergarten to grade 6, a total of about 1,000 students. Older students who are in severe difficulty also receive support. Students were given physical and mental health checks when they arrived at school after it re-opened following the war.



School staff are currently being trained on mental health issues to help themselves and the children. A local charity called “Haqi” is doing this work and the costs are being supported by a donor foundation in the UK.

Accelerated learning is being achieved with the school staff teaching students through the summer holiday period. They are achieving their target of completing 2 years of education in 18 months.

Regional exams have been taken by 2 groups of grade 8 students. 100% passed these exams and these students have now progressed to grade 9.

National exams are taken at the end of grade 12. Students that pass qualify for university entrance. Grade 12 exams were held in early October 2023 for Tigray students. 97% of the Nicolas Robinson School students achieved a pass mark enabling them to go to university. This is a major achievement - especially when set against the national (all Ethiopia) pass rate for grade 12 students of approximately 3.5% for the last 2 assessment periods.

By the end of 2023, all grade 12 Nicolas Robinson School students with the required pass mark had registered for colleges in Tigray or other regions that are considered safe for Tigrayans.

On a temporary basis the school is educating approximately 2,000 students. Many schools in Mekele are still closed due to damage sustained or because they are still occupied by Internally Displaced Persons. Some of the students’ parents pay the school fees, others are supported by Rainbows4children, especially the children of our local partners, the Tigray Disabled Veterans Association.

Sponsorship

The running costs of the Nicolas Robinson School are covered by school fees, which for 720 of the students is fully supported by student sponsorship. Some of the parents now pay school fees. We have had to double the cost of school fees in local currency, due to the devaluation of the Ethiopian birr in the last 3 years.

This chart shows the current status of our sponsored students:

No. of students	Status description
720	Students still at school – KG2 to Grade 12
43	Left the school, for various reasons, mainly because they failed their exams and refused to repeat them. Sponsors have been asked to take a substitute child for support and most have agreed.
5	Died fighting during the civil war.
8	Have not yet returned to school and are still on active service in the Tigray Defence Force
23	Passed grade 12 and are now at university (Oct 2023)
36	Were at university before the war and have continued now the universities have re-opened
8	Graduated from university during 2023.

7 sponsors left the sponsorship programme this year affecting 17 students. Some wrote to us, others have not paid their sponsorship for more than a year, despite monthly reminders. One died, another had been very ill. 3 lost their jobs.

The school has the capacity to teach 1400 students, however the NRS has recently taken on an additional 600 children who have been unable to attend their regular schools damaged during the war. Out of these 2000 students, half are sponsored by Rainbows4children, the other half pay, or are expected to pay, the school fees. This is a temporary situation, and we hope that by the start of the next school year, we will reduce the number and by summer 2025 operate again within our capacity of 1400 students and within



our financial model by which 25% of these students pay the full fee or parts of it, and 75% are sponsored either by individuals, organizations or Rainbows4children.

Nicolas College – (previously known as NYALC)

Because of the impact of Covid and the war, the college had to largely close on a temporary basis. However ongoing training has continued in computer skills for the teachers. It has also been used as a cooking and feeding centre for students. Alison provided the name of the new head of tourism in Tigray who Max and Kathryn can contact on the next school visit.

Now that a permanent ceasefire is holding, it is anticipated that the Nicolas College will play a very important role in the community with regard to equipping young people with skills to enter the workplace. This applies especially to the older students who went to fight. We are working with the school to determine where the College can be of most value in the recovery effort. One of the school management team (Tedros) has been appointed to run the revival project. We anticipate signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the local Don Bosco College to provide soft skills in support of their training programmes in automotive engineering and solar installation.

Fundraising

The annual sponsored walk was held in September 2023 at the Dow premises in Horgen. Despite many organisational changes in the supporting companies, £ 49,000 was raised for the school project. The next sponsored walk will be held on 14th September 2024.

Student Sponsorship is the most effective way to ensure the sustainability of the school, so trustees are encouraged to help us find new sponsors.

Max asked if the trustees know any Rotarians, as he has just joined a local Swiss club who fundraise for us. This might be an opportunity to expand contacts.

School visitors/volunteers

In 2023, no volunteers/visitors were able to travel to the Nicolas School due to the security situation caused by the ongoing war. Kathryn and Max visited for 2 weeks in June 2023 and 3 weeks in November-December 2023.

New projects

No further construction projects will be considered until the situation in the region stabilises. We will focus on rehabilitation of the students and staff with their education being the first priority. At a later date, we will review the opportunities for further investment.

Some maintenance costs and re-painting was done in late 2022 in preparation for the start of school. The kindergarten was built 20 years ago on soil which expands in the rain and is poor quality for building. The kindergarten floor develops a crack most years due to ground movement and this must be repaired. In the longer term the board should consider re-evaluating the kindergarten design and consider a re-build. Possibly also taking into account modern teaching methods such as Montessori when developing a better design to incorporate learning and play. This will be assessed in full, in the future, before any expenditure is proposed for approval.

Taking the school off grid by expanding the solar panel project is an important and necessary project. Phil can provide a contact who is a Freemason if Max provides more details of equipment needed.

Projects for which funds have been raised, but are currently on hold include:

English language laboratory, STEM training centre, re-equipping the computer labs and staff with updated computers.

Scholarship applications (to institutions outside Ethiopia)

One student was accepted at the African Leadership Academy in Johannesburg on a full scholarship.



Another student applied early decision to the African Leadership Academy in November 2023 and in January 2024 we heard she was accepted. She, too, has received a full scholarship and will start her studies there in August 2024.

Other top-ranked students who had graduated from the Nicolas Robinson School in previous years have been applying to universities and colleges overseas, supported by the school and Rainbows4children.

During 2023 we started a collaboration with the Tigray Professionals Network (TPN) based in the US to help us apply to US colleges. They are providing internships for some of our students to help their finances as well as technical support on their applications and using their connections as alumni of US colleges to help the students apply.

Students have offers but there are large funding gaps of \$30-40,000 per year per student. This has been the experience for all international students.

4. Expanding the Foundation board of trustees - experience sharing.

In previous meetings of the Foundation, it was agreed that the age limit for trustees should be 70.

Max and Kathryn will reach that age in approx. 2 years. They have committed to remain active as advocates, fundraisers and administrators on a voluntary basis, as 'Presidents for Life'. We are actively looking for new board members in the UK to fulfil legal requirements, preferably those with experience at the Nicolas Robinson School.

Signed:

Richard Max Robinson

09.05.2024

Kathryn Robinson

09.05.2024

George Potts

09.05.2024

Alison Burgh

09.05.2024

Philip Stockbridge

09.05.2024



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Rainbows4children (UK) Trust

No (if any)
1116387

CC16a



Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	01.01.2023	To	31.12.2023
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Private donations	-	156,103	-	156,103	121,541
Bank interest	6,255	-	-	6,255	547
Gift aid refund	9,730	-	-	9,730	11,717
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	15,985	156,103	-	172,088	133,805
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	15,985	156,103	-	172,088	133,805
A3 Payments					
Bank charges	62	-	-	62	170
Transfers to Rainbows4Children Foundation for Mekele School building	-	20,000	-	20,000	20,000
Membership fees	135	-	-	135	50
M Gebreyohannes for food aid Mekele	-	-	-	-	18,400
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	197	20,000	-	20,197	38,620
A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	197	20,000	-	20,197	38,620
Net of receipts/(payments)	15,788	136,103	-	151,891	95,185
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	40,272	314,192	-	354,464	259,279
Cash funds this year end	56,060	450,295	-	506,355	354,464

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	HSBC A/C 41459759	55,189	450,295	-
	HSBC A/C 01459740	88	-	-
	Paypal	783	-	-
	Total cash funds	56,060	450,295	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Richard Max Robinson	31.03.2024	
		Kathryn Robinson	31.03.2024	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Rainbows 4 Children UK Trust

On accounts for the year
ended

31 December 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1116387

Set out on pages

CC16a 1 to 2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 12 / 2023**.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

14th April 2024

Name:

Jake Jones

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

MAAT, ACA

Address:

11 Elleray Road

Middleton, Manchester

M24 1NY

Section B**Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.