



Porridge and Rice

Feeding for Education

Porridge and Rice Annual Report

Registered Charity Number 1155841

Trustees' report and accounts

For the year to 30 September 2023

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Figure 1: Teacher Titus, headteacher of Excel School, serves breakfast to pupils

1 Introduction

Surviving COVID was a challenge for the charity as it lost major sources of fundraising, marketing, and volunteers. It took careful thought and new initiatives to raise money and continue to fund the operations of the charity. Thanks to a shift to on-line sales and remote co-ordinated working, Porridge and Rice made it through.

While the COVID pandemic restrictions ended in the UK in July 2021, the impact of the pandemic is still being felt in many ways by the charity and will be for a long time into the future. The charity is dealing with three big changes namely, fairs are fewer and have introduced new requirements, buying on-line has increased, and volunteers are now in short supply.

Fair organisers have for good reasons introduced new requirements, and raised their charges, presumably to deal with money lost when they could not operate during COVID. Stalls and attendees also seem to have decreased, possibly as, like Porridge and Rice, stall holders have found other sources of income.

The pandemic gave on-line shopping a huge boost. Porridge and Rice benefited considerably by selling second-hand books and plants. During the pandemic, it took quite a lot of organising to pick, pack and post orders, but this is now much easier with the restrictions being lifted.



Figure 2: Hand-knitted winter hats for sale at Church Street Christmas Fair

In light of these changes, the charity has had to adapt. It has done fewer fairs and looked to earn more through on-line sales. There has been a lot to learn and there have been many teething problems. Despite the challenges, the charity has succeeded in raising money to fund work in both Kenya and Ukraine.

The biggest challenge is that volunteers are now fewer. After not being called on for such a long time, volunteers have filled their lives with other activities and are not as readily available. The charity used to have a steady stream of people of all ages ready to assist with tasks from book sorting to fairs. There seem to be fewer people willing to volunteer, and even those willing to volunteer have lower availability than before.

2 The UK

Porridge and Rice attended two Christmas Fairs mainly selling craft items made by supporters, charity members and trustees. Both fairs were well attended by members of the public and products on offer sold well. The charity did not have enough volunteers to run its Petting Farm or sell plants. Some books were offered for sale, It was pleasing to hear from members of the public how many people at the fairs remember the charity despite the long break from view thanks to COVID. There were fewer stalls at both fairs than before although they were both well attended by the public.



Figure 3: Plants for sale at a Christmas Fair

The focus for raising money was second-hand book sales on Amazon, and plants and seeds on eBay.

eBay proved exceptionally profitable during the pandemic, but sales slowed afterwards. In addition, it got harder to get stock to sell as most came from people's gardens, and plants needed to regenerate. Despite that sales of plants and seeds on eBay were steady. Other products were offered for sale on eBay from items donated to the charity. Children's toys simply never sold, and the charity stopped taking them. Clothing seemed to be very hit and miss. Some items sold at excellent prices while others simply generated listing fees. Second-hand book sales on Amazon were both the most successful and the most challenging for the charity with books occasionally selling for over £100.

There was no shortage of book donations, in fact, quite the opposite with books coming in faster than they could be sorted. Sorting is a very labour-intensive task as each book needs to be checked to see what price it can achieve to see if it is worth listing. Because books can be expensive to post due to their weight, most donated books simply would not raise enough money to be worth listing. Books not worth listing were sold to World of Books raising very little money. The older the book the better. New books are simply too abundant and command very low prices, while older books frequently out of print are in short supply and in steady demand.

Once listed, prices must be checked each week because competitors list the same book for a few pence less. In some cases, a book will fall below its profitable level when several suppliers start to undercut each other. Bigger suppliers than Porridge and Rice review their book prices daily to attempt to make sure they are the cheapest on offer. Selling second-hand books is profitable but labour intensive.



Figure 4: Breakfast is served at Lizpal School

Working with Amazon is not easy. It is such a large organisation that it is hard to find assistance when required. Simple tasks can take a long time. Trustee names proved a problem, for example, as the Amazon staffer asking to verify charity details seemed to see the fact that some Porridge and Rice trustees not having a middle name as cause for concern and froze the charity store while this was investigated. While it was eventually resolved with a lot of communication and evidence like passport copies being submitted, the charity store being closed for over a month while the matter was being resolved, cost the charity money. The store was closed more than once without warning by Amazon for perceived issues, and each time the race was on to address the cause.

In addition, Amazon focuses on keeping its customers happy sometimes at the expense of its sellers. The charity received a donation of high-end stationary from a store that was closing, and listed items like pencils for in excess of £10 an item. One customer ordered over £50 worth of pencils, and despite the listing being clear that they were being sold individually, insisted that it was reasonable to expect a box of each. After many messages to and fro, the charity asked her to return the goods for a full refund of the order and the cost of posting them back to the charity. The customer complained to Amazon who sent her a full refund and told her that she could keep the pencils. The charity complained, and the complaint was rejected on the basis that Amazon had already made a decision. Based on feedback from other Amazon sellers this is not an uncommon experience with Amazon showing little regard for sellers especially smaller ones. While selling on Amazon is hard work, it remains worthwhile because of second-hand books.



Figure 5: Pupils at Excel School gather for school assembly

3 Kenya

The charity continues to support 5 schools in the Nairobi slums, with the feeding programme being the lead programme. Around 2200 pupils are fed each day, as below

	Pupils	Boys	Girls
Lizpal	346	157	189
Heri	1275	661	614
Greener Life	103	58	45
Forrester	156	78	78
Excel	326	177	149
Totals	2206	1131	1075

Drought in Kenya pushed food prices up, which meant big cost increases for the charity. For example, the price of a 2kg packet of maize and wheat flour hit 200 shillings (US\$2) from a low of 120 shillings in about three months. That is a 67% increase. The 12-month overall inflation rate reached 7.91% in June 2022 with basic food stuffs like those purchased by Porridge and Rice hit hardest. Despite the large increases in food prices, the charity continued to feed throughout the year.



Figure 6: Lunch served during exam time at Excel School

Exams are a stressful time for staff and pupils. The charity agreed to provide extra food for pupils sitting exams both KCPE and KPSEA national exams. All schools continue to achieve excellent results when compared to other local schools including government run schools.

Excel School has for years been plagued by unhygienic waste comprising run-off from surface water drainage and pit toilets in a channel at the entrance of the school. The school and the charity have constantly sought solutions, both because the situation is unpleasant because of the smell and unhealthy as it contains large amounts of faecal matter. The charity has actively cleared the drain, tried to direct it, and constructed bridges over it. The school and the charity have appealed to the landlord and local authorities to clean and re-direct the free-flowing sewage. Considerable effort has been made since Excel became a partner school, promises have been made by various people and authorities, but nothing has resolved the problem.

Early in the school year, the local inspectors from the education department stated that the situation was unacceptable and threatened to close the school down if the situation was not resolved within a month. Initially, the situation seemed impossible to resolve but fortuitously a nearby school closed leaving an empty school building and Excel jumped at the opportunity to relocate. Not only did this resolve the issue highlighted by the inspectors, but it improved the school facilities as the buildings in the new locations were of a higher standard and there was more space around the school. What seemed like a bleak moment for the school, when it seriously looked like Excel might have to close, turned out to be excellent for the school.

Everything had to be moved from one school to other which required hiring labour to help for a few days. In addition, the school needed new desks and benches for the new location, with more space to fill and some furniture aging. The charity helped with the costs of moving and new furniture.



Figure 7: The new location of Excel school

Excel settled quickly into the new location. The teachers and pupils appear to be happy.

Girls at Porridge and Rice partner schools continue to receive sanitary pads regularly. The charity continues to buy from an organisation whose goal is to provide sanitary pads at affordable prices for local people who cannot afford commercial brands sold in supermarkets. Both the product and the price are good.

It is difficult for poor people to access good quality medical care in Kenya. The government hospitals do not tend to provide very good medical care, and they are not free. While the charges are much lower than private hospitals, they are still higher than most people living in the slums can afford. In addition, they require payment in advance. The charity has built a relationship with Karen Surgery, a family medical practice, located in the wealthy suburb of Karen. Karen Surgery has agreed to see and treat people sent to them by the charity, and to help locate medical services that they do not provide. The practice sees the people referred to them, and later invoices Porridge and Rice. Two teachers and a teenage pupil have been treated by the medical practice, with a range of conditions from suspected breast cancer to stomach ulcers.

The charity continues to assist with other areas of need like staff salaries. Some parents have taken a while to find work since COVID, and when they do, often have debts to pay off because they could not work during COVID. As a result of this the total amount collected in fees has been lower for some schools than before COVID.



Figure 8: Breakfast Uji is served at Heri Junior

In 2022, the Kenyan government announced major changes to education affecting all Porridge and Rice partner schools. Classes 7,8, and 9 will no longer be considered primary education but Junior Secondary. Along with these changes, the government announced new requirements for schools to teach Junior Secondary classes such as conducting experiments in science and teaching sewing. Schools are wrestling with the whether to stop teaching classes 7, 8, and 9, or spend considerable money to secure the new equipment detailed by the government so they can continue to teach Junior Secondary. The charity is planning to help secure funds to help the schools with the purchase of the equipment they need if schools decide they wish to continue to teach these classes. It is estimated that Excel School alone will need KES200000 for the new textbooks, renovation to meet new standards, and equip a science laboratory. The school applied for a bank loan and was refused, so will depend on the money that it can raise from parents and supporters, as well as the charity.

4 Ukraine

The war continues in Ukraine, presenting challenges for all sectors in society including charity. Whether making sure your torch is charged for when there is no electricity, or getting used to be woken in the small hours when the air alarms go and traipsing down to the bomb shelter, everyone has had to adjust to the reality of being under attack.

After consulting with Orphans Future Ukraine, the charity collected money for rechargeable torches and power banks which were carried to Ukraine in December 2022, along with treats for the orphans. It is a long journey as there are no flights into the country at present. Currently one must fly into Poland, then take a bus or a train into Ukraine. From London to Ternopil takes over a day, sometimes longer depending on how busy customs is or the weather. With heavy snowfalls in both Poland and Ukraine in December 2022, the journey was slow and long.



Figure 9: Meeting orphans in Berezahany, Ternopil Oblast, Ukraine

Meetings took place with several different people and organisations to understand how best to engage to be effective. Orphans Future Ukraine is well-established, run by a small and effective team of former orphans, and has extensive contacts around the country with a range of organisations. It would take Porridge and Rice years to build the same contacts and knowledge of the country, so the strategy is to partner with Orphans Future Ukraine.

Orphans are supported by the government. With the government directing as much money as possible to the war at present, funds for orphans are in short supply, so that orphans rely heavily on donations by local and foreign organisations and individuals. These organisations and individuals are currently effectively making up for many goods and services the orphans need, but there are some noticeable gaps. For example, basic items like toiletries and underwear are in short supply and when available, usually of the poorest quality. The Forward Programme was launched with Orphans Future to help to fill the gaps in goods and services for orphans.

Orphans used to get pocket money, but since the war these funds have not been available. While orphans go to regular schools, they stand out because they cannot participate in simple ways like buying sweets at lunchtime. The charity launched a pocket money programme for orphans 14 years and older. Each week they will receive pocket money based on behaviour and performance at school. The basic amount will be 100UAH per child (£1.50) – fortunately, the cost of living is much cheaper in Ukraine so this small amount goes a long way. Ice creams cost 20UAH to 40UAH, and a small pizza can be bought for 75UAH.



Figure 10: Visiting the orphanage in Ternopil, Ukraine

The first pocket money was paid on 3 February and quickly had a big impact on the lives of orphans. One young man was able to pay for dance lessons for himself and his girlfriend, lessons organised by his school teaching final year students to waltz in preparation for the end of year celebration. Another young man was able to buy flowers and a bracelet for a girl he fancies. Orphans are so often isolated from their peers by small things like pocket money. The programme is in its early stages but is already showing to have a huge impact on the lives of the children included, much more than anticipated.

One of the boys approached the charity to ask for help securing extra tuition to prepare for his final exams. He had asked the head of his institution but was told there were no finances for extra tuition. All the children in the final year were asked if extra lessons would be helpful, and as a result Ukrainian History lessons were organised for three students in one institution funded by the charity.

The Ukrainian History lessons proved so successful that at the request of the orphans, Ukrainian Language lessons were added. While the Ukrainian History was very reliable, effective, and quickly built a rapport with the orphans, the Ukrainian Language teacher seemed less effective and did not bond as well with the orphans. The orphans stated that they wished to continue with both tutors. The charity funded both tutors.

Most of the orphans have few clothes. They depend on donations and rare times that they are taken shopping by their institutions. Most boys had 2 or 3 T-shirts, a single pair of trainers, and a single pair of shorts. Orphans often wash clothing when they shower leaving items to dry overnight. The charity organised with schools in the boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond to collect clothes which were then transported by road to Ukraine and distributed to the children, in most cases trebling the number of clothes owned by each child.



Figure 11: A university visit organised for orphans considering university in March 2023

When they complete their final year at school, orphans are usually signed up to an institution to learn a trade regardless of their ability or interest. There is no consultation with them. After talking to orphans about their preferred choices, the charity worked with Orphans Future to advocate for the orphans based on their wishes and ability. Orphans Future did most of the paperwork for the three orphans that wished to apply to go to university. All three were accepted for their courses of choice, one reading law at the prestigious Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

It is early days, but the charity has already been able to help Orphans Future to expand its support for orphans.

5 Legal and Administrative Details

Porridge and Rice is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Its registered address is 64 Rydal Gardens, Hounslow, TW3 2JH, its registration number is 1155841, and it is governed by a constitution lodged with the Charity Commission. Porridge and Rice has registered Uji na Mchele with the Charity Commission as an alternative name, and the acronyms PaR and UnM for English and KiSwahili use respectively.

Porridge and Rice owns the domains www.porridgeandrice.co.uk and www.porridgeandrice.com. The latter is automatically directed to the former, and the charity's website is located at the former. The website is hosted by 123 webhosting.

Porridge and Rice is represented on Facebook under the name of Porridge and Rice. The Facebook page is intermittently updated to reflect events of interest about the charity. Porridge and Rice is also active on Instagram with periodic updates.



Figure 12: Talking to Berezahany orphans about options for their futures

Porridge and Rice has a UK bank account with Barclays Bank and a Kenyan Bank account with Standard Chartered. The UK Barclays account number is 23708926, sort code 20-42-73, IBAN GB09 BARC 2042 7323 7089 26, SWIFTBIC BARCGB22, and address Barclays Bank Plc 210 High Street Hounslow Middlesex TW3 1DL. The Kenyan bank account is number 01-003340546-00 at Standard Chartered Bank Building, Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi, Kenya, and swift code SCBLKENXXXX.

6 Governance and management

In the UK, Porridge and Rice is run by four trustees that meet on-line using Skype. Trustees are appointed for a term of 2 years and registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The names of the trustees of the charity can be viewed by the public on their website. Trustees are all volunteers.

Porridge and Rice welcomes people who wish to volunteer with the charity, and volunteers are invited to participate in relevant meetings. The charity occasionally hires people to assist with tasks like sorting books.



Figure 13: Pupils at Compassion in lessons

The current trustees of the charity are in alphabetical order

- Brigitte Pickersgill
- Jude Hanlon
- Ken Surridge (chair)
- Vish Arora

7 Operational review

Porridge and Rice is partnered with five community schools, Excel Emmanuel in Ngando, Lizpal in Ngando, Heri Junior in Mithonge, Compassion in Githingoro, and Forrester in Kawangware.

Despite restrictions being lifted, PaR has continued to limit its work to breakfasts, sanitary pads, and emergencies. It will take time to restore the charity's income to pre-pandemic levels, and until this happens, the charity will not be able to restore shelved programmes. The charity is working hard to restore its income.

Visits to Kenya with volunteers have not yet been resumed. While the restrictions have been lifted, ongoing concerns about new variants like Omicron and added costs to travel, mean that the charity is not yet comfortable taking volunteers to Nairobi.

The Kenyan Leadership team is made up of the head and deputy head of each school. The leadership team in Kenya is in alphabetical order of school –

Evanson Njeru (Compassion School); Priscillah Mmugoh (Compassion School); Titus Kimongo (Excel Emmanuel School); Mary Kinyanjui (Excel Emmanuel School); Rispa Auma (Forrester School); Pascal Otieno (Forrester School); Ruth Mbithe (Heri Junior School); Haggai Panyako (Heri Junior School); Beth Wambugu (Lizpal School); Grace Mwangi (Lizpal School)



Figure 14: Excel pupils at the new school in their new school uniform

8 Financial Review

Despite restrictions being lifted, continuing concerns about COVID meant that public events were only being reinstated slowly and often with very strict rules. In addition, the number of attendees at events remained lower than pre-pandemic levels as does spending.

PaR decided to review its Amazon listings because of the large number of books being received and the increasing number of low margin sales. It was decided to focus on higher margins and fewer sales. This meant a complete overhaul of listings. Sales of plants on eBay were steady, and the charity is considering ways of expanding the range of plants it can offer.

Standing orders from supporters remain important to the charity. They provide a steady and predictable income.

Keeping administrative costs in the UK to a minimum remains a priority for Porridge and Rice. Costs in Kenya are incurred in Kenyan Shillings and currency conversion fluctuates. Trustees and members do not receive a salary from the charity and cover their own expenses.



Figure 15: Assembly at Heri Junior School

9 Accounts for 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023

These accounts were prepared on a receipts and payments basis using an exchange rate of KES150.03 to £1.

Receipts	GBP
Balance Year End 2022	5,061.68
Amazon	3,078.19
eBay	1,390.95
Donations	20,498.16
Gift Aid	1,196.87
WOB	112.04
Standing Orders	4,674.00
Total Receipts	36,011.89
Payments	GBP
Finance Charges	144.13
Travel	1,435.20
Website	231.56
Wages	2,489.50
Postage	3,944.90
Admin	460.00
Kenya	
Education and Sponsorship, Kenya	283.94
Facilities and Furniture, Kenya	733.18
Health and Hygiene, Kenya	213.29
Rights and Gender, Kenya	318.86
Extracurricular Activities, Kenya	-
Sustainability and Accountability, Kenya	-
Feeding and Nutrition, Kenya	7,596.70
Ukraine	
Provisions	1,647.60
Essentials	6,112.78
Support	1,939.52
Forward	3,636.32
Total Payments	31,187.48
Balance Total	4,824.41



Figure 16: Oleksiy, Mykola, and Misha from Berezhany with Volodia from Orphans Future



Figure 17: Andriy of Orphans Future talking to orphans about the Forward Programme