



Annual Report 2020/21

The LabAid Foundation

Registered charity no: 1168144

Web site: www.labaid.org

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The LabAid Foundation continues the work started in 1991 by the late Alan Welch. In effect, it is a re-cycling charity, accepting donations of used scientific equipment from schools etc in the UK. Mostly these gifts arise when a school is closing, moving site or refurbishing its laboratories. Often, the equipment is still serviceable or can be cannibalised/ repaired. After sorting and checking, it is packaged and sent to schools in developing countries.

So far LabAid is surviving the covid pandemic better than we had feared a year ago. We had totally shut down during the lockdown from March to June 2020 but made a cautious re-start in July following a risk assessment. Social distancing was impossible in the storage area so only 2 volunteers could work at a time, at opposite ends of the building. Despite this limitation from July 2020 to June 2021 we sent out 130 boxes to 15 schools in 7 countries: Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda and Somaliland, almost exactly the same as in the previous year 2019/20 up to the time coronavirus struck, when we entered lockdown and activities were completely



Unpacking the delivery from LabAid at Mchengautuba Community School in Malawi, May 2021.

suspended for the remainder of the truncated year.

Whilst we had feared schools would be under too much pressure to sort out redundant equipment for LabAid, we were heartened by an increase of about 50% in the number of donations offered by schools/colleges, including some large ones, as well as a warehouse clearance by suppliers Scientific & Chemical. However, transport did prove a problem in that for most of the period *The Entertainer* chain of toyshops was unable to accept boxes of equipment for delivery via their vans to Amersham. We set up some *ad hoc* routes which were partly successful and the net effect is that stock levels are higher than this time last year.

LabAid has continued to receive good support from the science advisory service, CLEAPSS, which for example agreed to add some unsuitable thermometers which we had been given to its own waste collection. 2021 would have been the 30th anniversary of the first appearance of LabAid at the Annual Conference of the Association for Science Education (ASE) and we had intended to celebrate that but unfortunately the conference had to be held on-line although we did get publicity in the November 2020 issue of the ASE journal *Education*

in Science. There were further generous financial donations from the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Amersham Free Church. We were approached by the family of a former physics teacher, Tim Akrill, who had some connections with Africa. They wanted to encourage friends and family to donate to LabAid in his memory and this generous thought raised about £600. However, sales of equipment unsuitable for schools in developing countries via E-bay and car boot sales ground to a halt as a result of covid. Although essentially a re-cycling charity we do need some cash for expenses such as insurance or the web site, or to purchase items in order to complete sets or for expendables such as batteries.

We do not pay to transport equipment out of the UK. Instead, we rely on the recipient school having a UK contact who can organise transport, perhaps an expatriate seeking to give something back to her/his homeland or a UK church with links to a particular village or an individual with such contacts. Mostly this has worked reasonably well and serves to reduce the demand to something we can manage to supply, given our limited resources. At the end of the financial year, we had about a dozen schools in the pipeline, which at the current rate of progress would take about 9 months to fulfil. We do have sufficient stocks to meet these requests (and more) but the need for social distancing and the declining numbers of volunteers are slowing the process.

Probably our greatest concern at present are our volunteers. One trustee resigned recently as a result of ill health and two others have stated an intention to do so at the next AGM because of increasing age. Whilst we don't have a succession plan as such, we were expecting that some of our other/younger volunteers would fill the gaps but covid is causing some of them to drop out. We are continuing to look for new recruits but often people volunteer who live a long way from Amersham, which limits what they can usefully do. So, although we have had a more successful year than might have been expected, both in terms of continuing to send out equipment to schools in developing countries, and receiving equipment and cash donations, the long-term future of LabAid must remain in doubt.

Dr Peter Borrowes (*Chair of the Trustees of the LabAid Foundation*).

LabAid Foundation Financial Report 1July 2020 - 30 June 2021

Starting Balance	£3322.65
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Receipts

Donations	£1645.00
Sale of stock	£99.51

Total Receipts	£1744.51
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Expenditure

Purchase of stock	£2490.59
Hut costs	£382.50
Other	£289.40

Total Expenditure	£3162.49
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End Balance	£1904.67
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