

ENABLING INDEPENDENCE FOR RUGANDO PARENTS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT FOR JANUARY-DECEMBER 2024

The Trustees of the Charity have worked closely with the School Director, David Matsiko and his senior management staff. Most of the communication is via Messenger, where the SOS needs of the school are raised directly by David; I react quickly for any small needs but refer bigger issues to the Trustees for their approval. The system works well. I make payments via World Remit, and the money goes straight to the school: this is much easier and cheaper than expecting him to take a taxi into town to draw cash from an ATM or bank. We receive written estimates for all proposed work, and school receipts for all payments for purchases and labour. We also receive streams of photos of each stage of every project we fund.

These are some of the more significant sectors of our work for this period:

NURSERY CLASSROOMS

We funded the Plastering, Glazing and Painting of the 2 Nursery Classrooms. David engaged an artist who added murals to the paintwork, so the buildings look friendly and inviting.

We raised funds for 6 sets of Tables and 6 Chairs, (as opposed to desks), for the nursery children to use. David tells me the children vie to get their place on one of these: clearly, we must provide more of the same. We funded a shelved storage cupboard and Book Boxes for the Nursery.

We still plan to build a veranda along the frontage: this will be a shaded area for hot or rainy days, where children can sit and play. We also plan to fund play equipment.

DESKS

We raised funds for 25 two-seater desks, which were built by a local carpenter. This was an urgent need, as many children were doing their lessons sitting on the floor. These were commissioned at £50 each or 5 desks for £150: we were able to take advantage of the carpenter's deal! Commissioning work locally provides some stimulus to the local economy.

TEXTBOOKS & BOOK BOXES

The school had NO books for the children and very few textbooks for the teachers. We launched an appeal to supply a Book Box for each classroom. There were issues, in that we Trustees envisaged library shelving for easy access, but local wisdom prevailed: apparently rats and other creatures would eat any paper left out on shelves, so the project included provision of metal trunks, which hold the books safely. We managed to supply 6 Book Boxes at £150 each, and David and his staff chose age-appropriate books for each box.

We still need to find funds for 3 more Book Boxes.

When the teachers request specific textbooks related to the National Curriculum, we fund these.

Adult Literacy

We held two weeks of these well-received events. £150 per week for 30-50 adults from the Rugando Community, to have lessons on basic literacy and numeracy, small farm agriculture, handicraft. The lessons are provided by two Adult Education teachers, a male and a female, as

required by the Department of Education. We would like to hold these classes during every school holiday, funds allowing.

Bridging the Gap (Teacher Pay)

This is a fund we launched last year and continues to be an essential part of our efforts on behalf of the school. A third of children do not afford their school fees at all. The consequence is that there is always a shortfall in funds to pay the teachers, as they approach the end of each term. We have learned that teachers are only paid for 9 months of the year, and receive nothing for 3 months, ie over the school holidays. This is far from ideal and must be exceedingly difficult for the staff to budget their own lives: it is not conducive to staff loyalty, and we aim to move to 12 monthly payments as soon as it can be managed.

SPECIAL EVENTS

We funded a Christmas Party for the Top Class (Year 7), as they prepared to move on to Secondary School.

We funded a Refresher Staff Training Day, and this was well-received by all staff

Teachers were also funded to attend sessions at Kayonza Zone teaching days.

SOS FOOD PAYMENTS

Because of the shortfall in fees, another confounder is a cashflow shortage for food for all the children. The Trustees would be very unhappy to see any child be excluded from the lunch queue, so we underwrite the food shortfall, term by term.

REPAIRS

There are always emergency demands on funds, for unforeseen repairs: eg Tap Washers breaking, replacing broken Solar Hot Water Tubes, Wires coming loose from the Solar Power system; Toilet modesty wall collapsing in heavy rain; steel door tearing from its hinges etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

We funded emergency admissions or clinic visits, for both staff and pupils with acute illness

We sponsored David Matsiko to attend a National Event in Gulu, TIST which is a learning event about Tree Planting and Management

We fund the PO Box, taxis to and from town as required, registration for national exams, purchase of exam papers

CHICKEN COOP

The Chicken Coop, which was our first major project success, has had mixed fortunes this year. We found that the staff were unreliable, partly because of their personal poverty, and not helped by a lack of literacy, when we tried to institute a stricter management regime. The chickens seemed to suffer repeated outbreaks of disease, despite the vet being called in. Ultimately, we need a more robust management system before we invest further in this amazing project. David and his staff are working on perhaps engaging some of the unemployed parents, in a cooperative team, to manage future flocks: this is a work in progress.

INCOME STREAMS

1. Most of our income is from Donations in response to direct appeals on my Facebook page. Friends and family often share these appeals, so that there is a regular small income stream for general purposes, and a small number of Standing Order payments too.

2. We have launched Project -specific Face Book Appeals, for eg desks, books; These have been successful and mostly, they have reached their targets.

3. The money from Facebook Appeals is paid into a dedicated PayPal Account. This was a useful discovery, because we had not realised that the FB Giving Fund also contributes to the charities who use the FB Appeals.

We plan to make more use of this account, by advertising it as an easy option for donations, on all our FB posts.

4. WATCHMAN'S SALARY: We are very lucky to have the ongoing support of a regular donor who ensures that his salary is covered, every month. This is a vital job, as he keeps a close eye on the school, as his presence discourages interlopers, and other misadventure. We need to be aware that the donor is elderly, and this income stream could end abruptly.

5. UNITE COMMUNITY: Our branch of this UK national trade union continues to be very supportive of our activity and donates funds each time we have presented a project to fund: The chicken coop & classroom desks being two of those.

6. BWINDI HANDMADE CRAFT: This is a woman's cooperative in a neighbouring village. We sell their goods at our fundraising events, for a 10% commission.

7. Stalls at The Priory CofE Primary School: We were given free stall space, for these monthly events. They commenced in July, and each event raised between £50-£70. Unfortunately, the school found these events not to be commercially viable, and stopped doing them, after Christmas.

BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD: £ 631

FUNDS RAISED: £ 6,868

FUNDS SPENT: £ 6,918

CARRIED FORWARD: £ 582