

# SEDCU

December 2017

Newsletter 8

Supporting the Education of Disadvantaged Children in Uganda

**Welcome to SEDCU Newsletter No.8 covering the period July – December 2017**

This half year has seen an important SEDCU project come to fruition with the completion of the roof for the new classroom block at Mgahinga. We are also delighted to have facilitated participation of children from KDS in the National Scouting and Disabled Sports events. The number of children now being sponsored through SEDCU at the start of the next academic year has risen to 27! Jan and Ben have just returned from a ten day visit to Uganda and this newsletter includes their up-to-date perspectives

## **FUTURE EDUCATION OF BATWA CHILDREN**

It was in October 2011 that Mgahinga Community Development Organisation (MCDO) first invited Jan and Ben to meet some of the Batwa people. MCDO and the Batwa elders had previously agreed that it would be beneficial for some Batwa children to start attending school in the context of greater integration into the community. As a result of that meeting, it was agreed that Jan and Ben would sponsor two children to attend Mgahinga Community Nursery and Primary School (MCNPS).



Six years later we are delighted that the Batwa school population continues to grow at MCPNS. This remarkable photograph shows a meeting convened last summer, in one of the remote Batwa communities, between MCDO and Batwa leaders, to discuss education. As a result, four more Batwa children were identified as candidates to attend MCNPS. SEDCU sponsors have been found for two of them to start in February and we have undertaken to search for a sponsor for a third child.

### **JAN AND BEN'S VISIT TO SOUTH WEST UGANDA IN NOVEMBER 2017**

Over the past few years the number of children sponsored through SEDCU has risen steadily and it is gratifying that a number have moved from primary to secondary and one to tertiary education. We now have 18 children in 3 nursery/primary schools as well as 2 children about to start nursery school in 2018. 4 are attending 3 different secondary schools, one is attending a vocational college and one has reached university (and another will hopefully be moving to secondary school in February). Consequently, we needed to visit 8 different schools and colleges to meet all the children and their teachers – quite an undertaking given their wide geographic spread and a limited road network. That said, it gave us an opportunity to explore some remote and beautiful parts of Uganda and everywhere we went we were met with courtesy, kindness and gratitude for what SEDCU and its supporters are doing for the children.

As well as meeting the children (and some of their parents or grandparents), we also needed to check on the progress – and in some cases completion – of projects funded by SEDCU. For the most part these have progressed well, and we were delighted with what we found. Needless to say, fresh needs were also identified, and we will need to reflect on priorities and compatibility with SEDCU's remit before we commit to any new projects. While supporting all the sponsored children wherever their educational journeys take them, we intend to continue to focus project funding purely on MCNPS and KDS.

### **NEWS FROM MGAHINGA COMMUNITY NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL (MCNPS)**

#### **Raising the Roof!**

Over the past four years the number of children at MCNPS has grown from 97 to 120 and there has been corresponding expansion of school buildings. Four new classes have been created. SEDCU has supported a number of projects at the school and these have been described in earlier Newsletters (all available to read on the SEDCU website).

Two years ago, SEDCU was briefed on the plan to build a new classroom block so MCNPS could replace the potato storage sheds where the school began, and which are no longer fit for purpose. We visited the potential site and discussed options for the building location and design as well as how to achieve transition from the old building to the new.

Land was purchased adjacent to the current school site, initial funds were raised, and construction got underway with full support from the local community. With foundations laid and the walls taking shape, SEDCU took the decision to offer to fund the majority of the cost of the roof and began fundraising. The construction project has involved large numbers of people, with many practical contributions by community members, and has provided employment for 150 local people as well as 50 volunteers. Like most building projects it encountered some issues, delays and minor cost overruns. Several months of severe drought created a serious lack of water needed for the construction. SEDCU has been kept regularly informed of progress and expenditure.

We are delighted to report that the construction of the building is now well advanced. We were informed in the second week of October that the roof was finished. This photograph shows the roof in all its glory, with the Board of Governors in the foreground following their meeting with Jan and Ben to discuss the future.



Through donations totalling £3000, SEDCU will have funded a very significant fraction of the roof, both labour, with smaller contributions having been made by two other charities and local sources.

### Catch a falling raindrop!

There is no water supply at Mgahinga Community Nursery and Primary School, which is in a remote area of south western Uganda on the borders of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. During a recent drought the school and community became desperate and had to rely largely on a police water tanker to provide water. This photograph shows adults and children queueing for hours for a meagre amount of water. Another photo shows people taking water from a water hole alongside their cattle.



In normal times, water is still scarce, and the staff and children have to rely on rainwater collected by guttering from the rooves of the school buildings. As the school grows they are in desperate need of a new larger water tank to provide more safe water for drinking, cooking and sanitation. This will mean that more children can gain the life changing opportunity of an education.



Kate and Lee Coulson ran the London Marathon in April 2017 and raised an amazing sum of money. Combined with a major donation by Welshpool and District Rotary Club this has enabled MCDO to press ahead with construction of a 20,000-litre tank for which SEDCU paid £1,930. This photo from mid-November shows the largely completed tank, just waiting for the gutters and pipes to be installed.



## **NEWS FROM KISORO DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL (KDS)**

KDS gives every impression of a school that is flourishing despite many financial pressures. SEDCU is active here, as are other charities. Sustain for Life has been particularly engaged with the enhancement of school buildings and the newly created school farm. It has also launched a substantial sponsorship scheme which runs alongside the SEDCU scheme and other individual sponsorships. The number of children with disabilities attending KDS has risen from 69 to 77. The new head teacher, Habiyaemye Stephen, is grappling with the challenges inherent in this post and works closely with his predecessor, Nkurikiyimana Gerald, who was promoted to Inspector of Schools for Kisoro Municipality. Both Gerald and Stephen hosted the SEDCU visit in November.

### **Arts and Crafts Project**

The Arts & Crafts project continues to flourish. There is an increased focus on sustainability and hence staff are challenged to teach the children to make products which can be sold through various channels. The activities which Ben and Jan saw on their visit included

- Continued development of the use of the knitting machine, now being used to make school uniform sweaters for sale. Some of the deaf girls can now operate the machine without supervision
- Production of embroidered/woven tote bags suitable for carrying school books and for sale for other purposes. The bases for these are made from recycled plastic bags originally used for cement and farming.
- Production of an innovative form of green fuel to replace the need for the population to cut down trees. Fuel briquettes are created from waste paper mashed up with water to form papier-mache to which is added powdered charcoal and cassava flour. The mix is turned into golf ball sized briquettes which are dried and sold.



### **Jazz Band**



KDS has been making reasonable progress towards the ambitious aim of forming a jazz band for the disabled children. They have been able to teach blind pupils to play the keyboard, drums and flute. A concert was laid on for Jan and Ben's visit when they were treated to a range of music, dance and song, It was very emotional. They handed over another keyboard which had been donated by a SEDCU supporter and this was loudly applauded.

Even more emotional was seeing SEDCU sponsored blind boy W settling down to rehearse on the keyboard before the concert. He just started to play on his own, then bit by bit children started to arrive from other parts of the school and burst into spontaneous song – pure magic.

The less positive news was that the guitar teacher left to attend college and so far a teacher has not been found to teach the clarinet – both instruments purchased by SEDCU – but we understand new teachers are being sought.



## Scouting and Disabled Sports Events

We are delighted to report that for the fourth year running SEDCU has been able to support teams of disabled children from Kisoro Demonstration School to participate in National Scouting and Sporting events. In 2017, donations to SEDCU made it possible for us to send £1,500 to the school. This enabled KDS to send 10 children and 4 instructors to the National Scouting Competition in Kaazi (near Kampala) at the end of August and 16 children and 3 instructors to the National Sports Event at Gulu (in Northern Uganda) organised by the Ugandan Paralympic Committee in September.

### NATIONAL SCOUTING COMPETITION

The following extract from the report prepared by Wenceslas, the Scout Leader, to the Municipal Inspector of Schools in Kisoro says it all!

*“Having been victorious during 2017 Kisoro District scouts inter-patrol competitions, Kisoro Demonstration school went ahead to represented Kisoro District Scout council in the 2017 National Scouts competitions under the category of **Junior Scouts with Specials Needs** as defending champions. While there was stiff and rigorous competition, the scouts from Kisoro Demonstration School were able to aggressively defend their championship, and they defeated all other competing teams in this category. We deeply and heartily appreciate every body who had a stake in enabling the team participate in both the 2017 District and National scout competitions. In a special way, we dearly thank God for guiding and enabling **SEDCU** get the vision to empower this category of the disadvantaged young generation. May God the Almighty reward them abundantly and enable them continue to help this category of young people to realize their potential as a way of creating a better world”*



### CREATIVITY AT ITS PEAK!

The Trustees of SEDCU are delighted that we have enabled these young people to enjoy and benefit from this amazing experience thus broadening their horizons and proving that their disabilities do not prevent them from succeeding.

## NATIONAL DISABLED SPORTS GALA

The following is an extract from the report submitted to SEDCU concerning the participation in this annual event organised by the Ugandan Paralympic Committee:

*“The team was composed of 3 blind boys, 2 blind girls, 7 deaf girls, 1 deaf boy, 1 boy with mental retardation and two guides. We travelled by public means from Kisoro to Gulu and we left Kisoro during the night, pupils enjoyed the journey though it was a long distance, as we reached Kampala we boarded another bus from Kampala to Gulu. When we reached Karuma falls pupils especially the deaf children had to see the source of river Nile and we passed through Karuma game reserve.*

*The children participated in the 10000m, 5000m, 3500m, 1500m, 800m, 400m, 200m, 100m, 60m track events, shot put, javelin, show down, table tennis, long jump, discus. With all the efforts of the children they managed to be in the second position among all the teams that were participating in this year 2017 events. We had one participant who won a gold medal by the names of Jasper.*

*It was our first time to visit northern Uganda and we found it favourable not as we used to hear about it as a war based areas.*

*All the children who participated in all the events received prizes from the Uganda Paralympics as rewards. We also won the trophy as we were defending the last year championship”.*



**KDS ATHLETES IN BLACK AND YELLOW AT THE 1500M START LINE**



**RECEIVING THE CUP!**

The SEDCU Trustees are delighted that an increased number of children were able to participate this year. They travelled a great distance to a war-torn area of the country where they demonstrated that they could overcome their disabilities and learn new skills as well as enjoy social interaction with children from all over their country. This is a practical realisation of SEDCU’s aims and objectives.

### FUNDRAISING

2017 has been successful for SEDCU in terms of fundraising, and of course 100% of funds have been transmitted to the schools for the benefit of the children. There have been many, many individual donations this year. We should also pay tribute to those who have organised collections on behalf of SEDCU during the second half of the year, notably the staff of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Rosemary Hallworth at the United Reformed Chapel in Upper Dean. Needless to say, we have started to receive requests for further SEDCU support for the year ahead, and will – as ever – be grateful for all donations large or small. Everything will make a difference to young lives.

**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.**

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