



# all our children

December 2015

Newsletter No. 4

## Season's Greetings and Thank You to our Supporters and Donors

From the trustees of All Our Children and the schools, community projects and individuals with whom we work in Uganda, **a big thank you** to our supporters and donors and best wishes for the festive season and the new year.

Thanks to your contributions, we have been able to increase the number of sponsored children to 52, 34 of whom are from the Educate A Child Street Children Centre in Kabale. The children at this centre have no financial support from parents and cannot attend school without full sponsorship to cover their fees, basic requirements like stationery and school uniform, and lunch at school. Junior Tukwasibwe, the wonderful young man who runs the centre, has sent the following message:

*"I wish to extend my love and greetings to all of you who support our children to get education, food and other essentials of life. You are all stars and you are doing a great job. We cherish you for your support for these*

*needy children and promise to do all we can to make our partnership stronger. You are so important in the lives of these children and in my own as the director. The children are progressing well in education and are now enjoying the long school holiday here in Kabale until the new school year starts at the end of January. They are happy to be at the Educate A Child Centre. We wish you a merry Christmas and a prosperous 2016."*

In the case of the other 18 students, we make a contribution to help with fees rather than pay the full amount. They are either from very poor families or from a family suddenly hit by tragedy, like the death of a parent, when the child is at risk of being sent away from school as fee debts accrue.

2016 will be a special year for All Our Children as our visit to Kabale in March will be the tenth one - an occasion to celebrate, of course, but also a good moment to assess the impact our involvement has had over the years. We are organising a special fundrais-

ing event at William Morris Sixth Form in London on **Wednesday, February 24th 2016**, details of which we will put on our website.

If you are reading this newsletter and are not already a supporter, please consider making a donation to help us continue our work. Every donation, however small, can make a significant difference to children in Kabale desperate for the chance to attend school. If you are a teacher and would be interested in joining us on our annual visit at Easter to work with schools in Kabale and meet our sponsored children, please email Liz Walton, Chair of Trustees, at

[lizwalton22@gmail.com](mailto:lizwalton22@gmail.com)

### Two UK students report on their Ugandan experiences

In previous newsletters we have featured the Ugandan children we support and our Ugandan partners. As our purpose is also to offer UK students the opportunity to join us in our annual visit to Uganda, we asked two former William Morris Sixth Form students to report on the impact their visits with us to Kabale have had on their lives and careers. Both wrote moving and thoughtful pieces which we have abridged for this newsletter and which you can read in full on our website [www.allourchildren.org.uk](http://www.allourchildren.org.uk)

#### Stefan O'Gorman

As a student at William Morris Sixth Form (WMSF) in 2007, I was part of the first group who made the now annual trip to Kigezi High School in Kabale, Uganda. This April marks the tenth year of visits and I have reflected on the past decade and considered what impact the trips have had on me. I am now a member of staff at WMSF.

When, as a seventeen year-old student at William Morris Sixth Form (WMSF), the opportunity arose to travel to Uganda, I was enthused by the prospect of visiting Africa. The trip was to establish the partnership between WMSF and Kigezi High School (KHS) in Kabale, South-Western Uganda.



Children at the 'Educate A Child' centre enjoy dance and music amongst other educational and recreational activities.

Before travelling it was hard to imagine what this partnership would be like and a general excitement about visiting Equatorial Africa took hold.

Amongst the many virtues of the WMSF trip to Uganda, one of the foremost benefits it has delivered has been to its own students. From the first trip onward, every single stu-



dent who has taken part has gained so much, from simply being offered a wonderful opportunity to experience another culture to being stimulated to re-shape their own ambitions as a result of new perspectives formed on the trip. As a direct response to experiences in Uganda, one student has decided to become a teacher, one has travelled extensively, and another has been prompted to realise and acknowledge his own Ugandan heritage, and has travelled back independently to his extended family's home in Gulu, Northern Uganda. The Uganda trip has a profound impact on the lives of the WMSF students involved, and these fortunate students acknowledge this impact and WMSF's responsibility for it. As for me – I'm halfway through an MSc in African Politics and my major study is on the Rwandan genocide of 1994. It's fairly obvious that WMSF has had a huge role in forming that interest.

The role of WMSF teachers is important. Whereas the students take part as unskilled non-professionals, the staff are qualified to offer their skills and their expertise. The work that teachers and support staff from WMSF do is invaluable to KHS and their efforts in collaborative teaching and learning is welcomed and appreciated. The sustainability of their work over ten years has encouraged increased participation in the partnership with KHS, and the success they've had in achieving effective exchanges of resources and skills has prompted the foundation of several other projects in Kabale, many of which are run in tandem with staff from KHS. This collaboration is vital so that work can continue year-round, but equally important is the function of reciprocity, which allows WMSF to benefit from KHS. WMSF is incredibly lucky to have such an effective partner school in Uganda, and the trip seems to have developed into an integral part of the school calendar. WMSF students are fully-informed of the partnership with KHS and through the hard work of the teachers and students who've been on the trip, the message transmitted is an extremely positive one. It promotes an image of KHS as a functional educational body and the students and staff are represented not as subjects of pity and sympathy, but as aspirational individuals and inspirational educators.

The model that WMSF and KHS have developed will hopefully prosper and in another ten years perhaps the mutual development I've discussed will appear yet more evident. In order for this to be achieved, however, and in order for future generations of WMSF students to benefit so massively, sustained funding and support for the partnership needs to be actively supported, not assumed. Long-

term projects run via the partnership need sustaining, which requires continuity of staff and student interaction. Reflecting on the past ten years, it's this, the interaction, which strikes me as the fundamental source of any mutual development.

### **Nassima Iggoute**

I joined William Morris Sixth Form the year of the first trip to Uganda, and still remember that assembly given by Liz talking with such passion about this exciting project. I definitely knew that this was something I'd be interested in doing; but unfortunately, I was unable to go during my time at WMSF. Fast forward 6 years, with my younger sister attending WMSF and me being in my final year of university, I found my chance to go. We went in April 2012 with a group of teachers, students and some former WMSF students. Having absolutely no idea of what was to come, we were excited and anxious at the same time. I think what I wanted to gain from that trip was a sense of giving back. What I ended up gaining was far more than just that.

We first arrived in Rwanda where we visited the Genocide Museum and met our beloved Peter, a teacher from Kigezi High School. We then travelled to Uganda, a bumpy and enjoyable ride. By then, we had all bonded and started to form great friendships which are still going strong today. Arriving at Green Hills Hotel, we planned the next few days. As an ex-student, I was able to be independent and join projects that I found interesting. I visited Kigezi High School, Wise Parents' Nursery and Tawfiq School, but it wasn't until Helen Mooney (with whom I still go on annual coffee dates) asked me to join her at the Street Children Centre that I found a place I fitted in. The first time we went, the lovely children danced and sang for us. My emotions were all over the place and they found a place in my heart. I remember crying my eyes out and Raj saying it happened to us all the first time. I grew fond of those beautiful children, even just with observing Helen teaching them simple vocabulary. It never crossed my mind that I'd want to teach them. I was just happy being there. Then at breakfast one morning, Helen was planning activities for the children and she suggested I teach something simple (I believe it was animals). I was at the time studying for a degree in International Business with French and working in Harrods, so teaching was not something I was trained for. Nonetheless, I gave it a go and found it the most rewarding and humbling experience. Before this trip, I didn't know what I wanted to do after I graduated, but by this point, I started to think about whether teaching could be an option for me.



Children attending a lesson at the 'Educate A Child' centre with UK teachers and students.

Finishing the trip with a picnic for the children was absolutely heart-warming and such a lovely experience. I almost didn't want to go back to working in Harrods as I felt my personality more suited to helping others rather than selling luxury handbags. I returned to my life and finished my degree, and took a year out working in fashion only to decide once and for all to become a teacher. It took a year of thoughts until finally I handed in my resignation and started contacting local primary schools to gain some work experience. I found that my experience in Ugandan schools was a world away from the schools here in the UK, but that didn't stop me. My primary school experience made me realise that I actually wanted to work in a secondary school. I started my teacher training in September 2013 and returned to Uganda in April 2014 (during my PGCE). As I was training to be a teacher, I had relevant classroom experience to offer and I will be joining the 2016 visit as a fully qualified teacher.

It is now December 2015, and I have been working as a full time languages teacher in a North London secondary school. Everything I am doing now, I owe to my experience in Uganda. In some ways, I wish I had been able to go when I was a student at WMSF, maybe my grades would have been better or I would have chosen something different to study at university. In other ways, I am grateful that I went with some more life experience, and with more maturity to truly appreciate what we had. I am also grateful that I was able to share this experience with my sister, who became more confident and outspoken thanks to this trip. I don't think anyone leaves Uganda without gaining something positive. I have made some great friendships thanks to these trips and currently sponsor some children at the centre. When I speak to people about All Our Children, I proudly say I'm an unofficial Ambassador and will continue to work to try to create more links with schools and raise more money for the children.

