

Ugive2uganda

UK Registered Charity No. 1115196

...in partnership with

East Uganda Youth Music Foundation

Ugandan registered NGO No. S.5914/8841

Spring Newsletter 2014

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter for 2014.



In January, Clive Quick (a semi-retired surgeon) made the long journey to see his two sponsored children, Benjamin and Hussein. Here's what he said about his visit:

"I travelled to Uganda in February and Philip met me at Entebbe airport. We travelled through huge traffic jams in Kampala and over roads of very variable quality to Mbale which took about 5 hours. We visited the Music Centre just outside Mbale and I was surprised to find the full Mbale Combined Schools orchestra already under way with their regular rehearsal in the newly completed and beautiful centre. At least 70 young musicians were being directed by Martin, the orchestra leader for six months, and I was impressed by their deep concentration on the task in hand. They played several brass band standards from music with occasional suggestions from the leader, and it was clear that band discipline was excellent and that leadership skills were being progressively developed. The orchestra then played some local tunes by ear and I was treated to a display of singing and dancing - all part of the entertainments the bands put on at paid events. Afterwards I met two of our sponsored children, Benjamin and Hussein who are hoping to go on to vocational training subject to satisfactory O level results. I was so pleased to see the material progress the boys and girls were making from their poor beginnings in learning essential social skills along with music. It was very clear that Philip puts all money donated to effective use and that the whole project is sustainable and immensely worthwhile."

Through our child sponsorship scheme we try our best to help children either complete their schooling or, increasingly, try and support them through further education. The challenge is that college or vocational courses are usually more expensive than normal school. But we try our best when compassionate people in the UK offer support.

So we are still appealing for sponsors for school children or students who want to go on to college or vocational training, and for our trainee music teachers while they develop their own music projects. We also have a number of children who just need help for one or two years.

Over the years we have re-focussed our child sponsorship program on older children who need some support to avoid unemployment rather than very small children whose abilities are not yet easy to determine. Youth unemployment is a world-wide problem but especially in Uganda. If you don't have a qualification or a skill then you really have little hope of meaningful work.

Please let me know if you are interested sponsoring a needy child or teenager in the scheme. If you can't afford it the best way that you can help is by telling your friends about the program and asking if they would consider sponsoring a child at £15 a month. They can download a leaflet from the website at www.ugive2uganda.org.

Healthcare and Community Projects



Last month we were contacted by a local lady who was desperately trying to get help for her son, Derek. She brought him to see us and, to be honest, his leg was a mess. It seems it had been broken and the operation to set the bone had not gone well and infection had set in. He was in a great deal of pain.

We sent him to a proper hospital to get the infection sorted out and we are so pleased that he is back on the road to recovery. This is just one example of the kind of intervention we make for medical relief when funds allow.

In January a group of four friends from Community Development Africa (CDA) visited us here in Mbale. As part of their fact-finding we took them to see an extended family in a village called Kwari-Kwari. The children and adults in this family are right at the bottom of any sort of scale that describes one's quality of life. At the time of writing, I know for certain that all the people in the photo below have had nothing to eat for two weeks except one meal a day of cassava (a starchy root a bit like a potato but much more bland). How the human body can cope with such deprivation still amazes me after all this time.

The leader of the CDA group, Eddie Enright, had donated £600 to the extended family prior to his visit and I know that he was pleased to see the house that the family had built with his donation, and that 15 children now had somewhere to sleep.



Visitors and Kwari-Kwari family in front of the house that Eddie built.

We always welcome visitors to our project – especially if they are musical! But, alas, air fares are very expensive. But please contact me if you had ever thought about visiting Africa away from the tourist trail and seeing how people really live.

Music Program

We manage our healthcare program for humanitarian reasons. But this has to be balanced with the need to help Ugandans develop themselves. Charities are not just about more and more giving. So we help

children with their education and training through our sponsorship scheme, and we enable them to develop themselves as individuals through our music program.

Thanks to the generosity of a few special supporters our new Music Centre is almost complete. It's the first purpose-built Music and Performing Arts facility in Eastern Uganda. In the smaller photo below you can see how we've built raised seating that allows the audience to see our performances clearly (although we've run out of money for the seats that we need on the right to make a full-width terrace).



You can't imagine how important it is for our project to have its own permanent home that we own (not rented). It will be our base forever and somewhere that people can come and visit us and see what we are trying to achieve.

We still don't have the practice rooms that we desperately need for our beginners and small groups and we just hope that in the future we might raise funds to allow us to construct them.

But in Uganda you can't just put your musical instruments in a store, lock the door, and go home. They would certainly be stolen. So security must always be a consideration – especially at night. For this reason we have to accommodate some senior boys at the Music Centre to guard our instruments and facilities. But at the moment we have nowhere for them to sleep.

At the same time, as elsewhere, to get a job our young children need to obtain qualifications through training and skills. And for this you need money for three things: fees; food; and rent.

What we are trying to do with some of our boys at the Music Centre is to give them somewhere to stay and therefore save them having to pay for food and rent while they study. At least in this way they have a fighting chance of raising money for fees.

This combination of a need for security and a desire to help to give school-leavers a chance to undertake further training means that we need to raise funds to build a small hostel where the boys can stay while they are on their course or at college. So I would appeal for any small assistance that people may be able to afford to enable us to expand on the facility that we already have and make it a fully-functioning practice, concert, and youth development centre.

On a separate note, in January, our main band, Mbale Schools Band, became the first ever Ugandan reading music brass band to make an international concert tour. Forty-three players travelled to Nairobi to perform demonstration concerts at some of the top schools and in a public concert. This was a real milestone for us.

- 1) The first time for our young players to play in a joint concert with another African band (a Salvation Army band)
- 2) The first time for them to play alongside adults in the same concert
- 3) The first time for them to be conducted by an African conductor
- 4) The first time for them to confirm that the music that they play from written parts is the same in other countries as it is in Uganda (they only had my word for it before!)

The band travelled to Kenya by bus (a 12 hour journey) and two hours into the journey both rear nearside wheels came off it! The children took this frightening experience in their stride and despite the delay (with no food and water) they had recovered their spirits by the following day.



John Lugaka, the Music Director at Alliance High School in Nairobi, said:

“We were so humbled and marveled at the spectacular performance of Mbale Schools Band during their visit here in Kenya!!! The kids have really mastered the intricate skills and techniques of brass band playing. They did not just perform but inspired many students and brass enthusiasts in Kenya. The two best Schools: Alliance High School and Alliance Girls High had an opportunity to benchmark with Mbale Schools Band and we now know what can be achieved and what we should aim for.”

We couldn't have made the journey without financial help from UK supporters and we send a big thank you to those whose support made it possible.

A video that the children made recently is here at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SimRABD7goQ

Finally, can I offer my wholehearted gratitude to so many for all the support that we continue to receive. We couldn't do anything without the help of our donors and child sponsors. A huge thank you to all of you and the difference that your compassion makes to so many in East Africa.

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