



Catering student Francis & hairdressing student Janet.

HELPING WITH VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The primary school system in Uganda is slightly different to the UK's in a couple of ways: firstly the academic year runs from February to December; and secondly the children leave primary later, so they're around 13-14 years old when they branch to the next stage of their education. In Uganda the PLE (Primary Leaving Exam taken in P7 class) is very important as secondary schools will only admit those who have passed it.

The better the secondary school, the higher they require the pass to be. As most of you know, passing exams is as much about memory and 'exam skill' as it is about actual academic ability! Over the years we have steadily increased our 'exam skills' in our kids and the results are improving. The results from November 2017 had all our P7 candidates passing in the highest 2 divisions (out of 4 divisions) so we are very proud of them, and it puts Child of Hope in the

top 6% of schools in Uganda. But, as mentioned earlier, just because you can pass an exam – does not necessarily mean a pure academic route forwards is the right choice. By the time our kids are leaving primary they have been with us for 10 years and we know them inside out.

We know which ones will relish the challenge of O and A levels, and which ones will be overwhelmed and discouraged. In addition, the economy in Uganda means that many secondary and university children graduate still not having achieved meaningful work-related skills, and spend years without finding employment. Therefore the Ugandan government is advising that a child whose potential is not 'academically based' should branch straight to vocational training after primary. They even offer part scholarships for such children and we wholeheartedly agree with their message.

We now have a total of 12 kids in local vocational colleges – courses include tailoring & garment manufacturing, carpentry & joinery, hairdressing, catering, concrete & bricklaying, agriculture, electrical installation, and motor vehicle mechanics. To help our P7 kids & their families make the right choice for their next move, we have established a 'Career Guidance' programme which includes field trips to local vocational colleges and secondary schools as well as a variety of local businesses.

We're also holding symposiums throughout the year with local professionals, giving talks & answering questions on what their work really entails. We will be giving the children individual counselling/mentoring so that by the time they finish their last primary year, they know exactly where they want to go next and they're excited about their future.



THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

Lucy Swift was given a two month sabbatical from her role of deputy headteacher in a school in Bristol – which allowed her to spend a sustained amount of time at our school and have a lasting impact.

I first volunteered at Child of Hope five years ago and this was my fourth visit. The fact that I keep returning is testament to the impact it has on me personally. It enables me to utilise my skills and experiences creatively and reminds me of the reason I became a teacher in the first place – to help make a difference in children's lives.

The link which my school has established with Child of Hope has really strengthened the children's understanding of how different children's lives are around the world. It is always

great to return and see how the school continues to develop and flourish.

I worked closely with Peter, the headteacher. It was great that he was so open to work with me and took on board all my advice so readily. Through our joint lesson observations and learning walks, we decided on the main priorities for the school this year. I carried out staff training as well as coaching staff. In my last couple of weeks Peter and I carried out joint lesson observations again and we were already seeing teachers trying a greater variety of teaching methods than 'chalk and talk'.

In P1 I demonstrated how 'Talk for writing' can really support children writing for themselves. It was fantastic to see some children

just having a go at writing for themselves. One boy in particular was very proud to go and show his accomplishments to a member of the senior leadership team.

The children also received letters from my school in the UK and wrote back to them. The communication was further enhanced by a video call between P5 and year 5 in my school. All the children absolutely loved talking to each other. One boy was so excited to talk to his friend Theo in the UK. The delight of talking face to face was apparent on his face as he couldn't stop smiling!

I am already looking forward to my next visit!



Lucy with two of the kids.

If you would like to volunteer with COH please visit our website.

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If you would like to join the team, please see the get involved page on our website.



Vicky with her mum outside their home

A FABULOUS PLACE OF LEARNING & FUN!

Whenever we have visitors they always make a bee-line to our nursery department, and it's easy to see why. It's a fabulous place of fun with, what seems like, a hundred different things happening all at the same time!

Don't let the 'chaos' fool you... there's real learning going on here and by the time our kids leave to head into our primary section, they are already reading single syllable words independently and doing simple double digit sums. That's great work by our teachers, but our family support team also have been beavering away in the background, keeping the kids healthy and training the parents on how to be, well, better parents!

Richard is currently in our nursery middle class. He has 7 siblings, 3 of whom stay back in the village. He lives in a semi-

permanent house (local bricks held together with mud, and a mud floor) with his mum, Agnes. His dad died when he was younger so his mum tries to eke out a living by selling scraps of charcoal and washing other people's clothes. She has some learning difficulties and often suffers with depression but is enormously courageous in keeping her family going. Richard loves being at school, enjoys drawing pictures and is incredibly friendly – always the first to offer help when someone is in trouble!

Vicky, who is in top class of nursery, has 11 full siblings and 7 half siblings! 4 of the siblings live together in a semi-permanent house with their mum, Betty. Again, her father died some time back. Vicky's mum makes money by digging other people's gardens/crops. Last year she received

training and a grant from our income generating team and now also sells vegetables. Vicky, meanwhile, is a real chatterbox in class and loves playing with her many friends!

Child of Hope has built a school in the heart of the Namatala slum in Uganda – one of the poorest places on earth – where it provides free education, healthcare, food and clothing to nearly 500 children from the most vulnerable families in the slum.

The charity has also developed a highly-effective family support team that enables life-changing help through social workers to families of our pupils and helps mums start a small business, which helps lift them from the worst extremes of poverty.

Registered UK Charity: 1136068



WATER HARVESTING

Water is essential to all that we do at the school. And we need a lot of it... water is needed for drinking, cooking food, washing hands, bathing children, and keeping the school premise clean and hygienic!

And yet the school regularly struggled to access water. But no longer! Now, with the rainwater harvesting system which St. Leonards Church, Oakley funded, we are able to harvest and store all the rain that falls on the school roof.

And we get a lot of rain in Uganda!

Whereas we previously had one tank, we now have three water tanks with a total capacity of 15,000 litres of water! Each tank is situated on a reinforced concrete slab, which is essential as 15,000 litres of water weighs 15 tonnes!

Now we have plenty of water and everyone is happy. Thank you, St. Leonard's!

Child of Hope receives no Ugandan government funding and relies totally on donations – please could you help us? If so, you will make a huge difference in the lives of slum children. Please see the enclosed donation form, or visit our website www.childofhopeuganda.org



FOSTERING AN INVALUABLE LIFE-LINE

We enjoy working alongside the parents and family members of the children who join our programmes. It's always a great joy to see them 'grow' with their kids.

Occasionally, a problem occurs and the child can no longer stay with the family either permanently or temporarily. This can occur through the death of the last surviving relative, a highly contagious/infectious disease endangering the life of the child or an abusive situation where the child is, again, in danger.

Because of these problems we set up a 'children's home' some years back so that these vulnerable kids could be kept safe. However, we became

increasingly uncomfortable with this arrangement as it is not ideal for a child to be living in an 'institution'. The government of Uganda had set out their policy in a document called 'The Alternative Care Framework' which shows that where the biological or wider family cannot look after the child, fostering is the next best route.

After a great deal of research and effort, we are pleased to announce that we closed our children's home last month (March 2018) and all the children have been found foster homes. All the foster parents are well known to us, either as staff members, local church members or parents of children who are already with us. They have all been trained in understanding how to look

after a foster child and our social workers conduct regular visits and counselling with both the families and the children.

In addition we give a very small 'appreciation' payment to these families. The good news is that, despite some apprehension by the children initially, they are all absolutely loving being in their new families and all say they much prefer it to staying in the old children's home. We are very grateful to these families who are coming from a culture where it is not the norm to look after children who aren't in their wider family, clan or tribe. We are still in the early stages but we are very hopeful that this new programme will continue to improve the lives, not just of our kids, but of the foster families too.



PARTNERING WITH NGO'S

According to The Beatles, we can "get by with a little help from our friends" and we're no different in our Family Support Unit (social workers, health workers and finance advisors)! We all have to recognise our limitations and that's where solid partnerships become a God-send.

We are very blessed to have several local organisations who step in to bridge the gap for us and for the community we work in. These are *Wise Choices for Life*, *JOY Hospice* and *Loved Day Care Centre* (overseen by *Jenga*) and, well – they do what they say on the tin! *Wise Choices* runs fantastic week-long courses for our secondary school kids during the holidays. They join hands with our FSU and help the students understand themselves and the world around them, giving them skills in communication and decision-making and the end result? The kids make wise choices ... hopefully (well, they are teenagers, after all!).

JOY Hospice has been a wonderful friend to Child of Hope since the start, giving expert advice and treatment when our children's medical problems surpass our small sick bay. The hospice isn't just for those with terminal illnesses,

they also offer a routine general practice clinic and have one of the best laboratories in the town. Every month a handful of our kids end up sitting in front of Dr Jan or one of her colleagues and their love and professionalism is incredibly reassuring. This year our school nurse, Stella, spent some days at the hospice and in their laboratory having a refresher course from their staff which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Finally, we have always wanted to help the poorest families in Namatala with their babies and tiny tots but have never found the funding or the right opportunity to start something. *Loved Day Care Centre* was started this year and offers a safe and fun environment for kids from 6 months to 3½ years old. Our FSU team works hand-in-hand with them to identify the neediest families in the area and then give ongoing welfare and financial guidance to the families, plus medical treatment from our school nurse. These tiny ones, depending on their home situations, will then filter into our nursery school when they reach 3 years old.

A huge thank you to these three organisations, and the many others who work alongside us in the Namatala community.



VISION FOR EDUCATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Karamoja is a violent and unstable area of Uganda with a history of gun violence and insurgency. It is totally under-developed, and consequently families see no point in education, preferring their traditional way of life.

Climate change has left them vulnerable and their traditional ways no longer provide a sustainable way of living. The result is extreme poverty and starvation, with the World Food Programme regularly handing out food. Approximately 40% of our COH children are from this region — their parents would have left in search of jobs, money and food, but their lack of education has left them no better off.



After a visit to Karamoja in January, Moses felt COH should start a nursery school in Arichek village to inspire the local community to accept education. He found a young Karamojong man with a heart to educate the little children in that area. This young man is now living with Bex and Moses while receiving hands-on training at COH nursery school. Once he has completed his Diploma in Nursery Education, the view is he will return to Arichek to run the new nursery school.

This is the start of an exciting project for COH with the potential to have a huge impact on this needy community.



A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO GROWING MAIZE & RICE

Child of Hope owns a couple of small pieces of land where we try to grow some crops. We've had mixed results in the past and last year we had a particularly poor harvest due to the 'army worm' — a nasty bug which eats and kills maize and very unpredictable weather.

This year our income generating team was encouraged to try a more scientific approach and we're hopeful that we'll see a bumper crop at the end of this season. For our rice field we consulted with the District Agricultural Officer who checked our soil pH and gave us some advice. We have worked hard to properly level the ground and put in ridges at the recommended distances. We've also changed the rice seed to one which sells at a higher price and added in fertiliser. If all goes well we should end with a profit of £300 — not huge but better than zero or a negative figure!

For our maize garden we have again changed the seed to a hybrid which is resistant to drought. The land has been properly levelled and the lines distanced apart scientifically! Instead of paying our IGA mothers weeding money, they are planting their beans/cow peas between the rows of maize (which doesn't affect the maize crop) — they have free land to use and we get free weeding!

All this means we have increased the planting from 10Kg of seed to 13Kg which should give us a harvest of at least 1500Kg to 1600Kg (up from just 650Kg last year). In addition this is also a good learning opportunity for our kids who visit the sites. Our experience is that it is enormously difficult to make money 'in-country', but we can be quite stubborn so we're going to keep going. Watch this space for our progress!