

Supporting Tanzanian
STOW
Orphans and Widows

STOW NEWS

January 2018

Issue number 22



Outdoor living

www.stowcharity.org
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Dear Members

I hope you all had a peaceful and happy Christmas and I wish you joy and good health for 2018. It sometimes seems unreal that STOW has been supporting vulnerable children to gain an education for the last 13 years!! In 2005 the membership was 24 and here we are at the beginning of 2018 with a membership of 184, including 6 new members just in the last month! Well done all you members for your amazing support in so many ways. You tell me that one of the many reasons you keep supporting STOW is that we keep you informed of how the money you so generously donate is spent. Mostly this is done through these twice-yearly newsletters and we use these newsletters to also let you know of any upcoming STOW events.

Feedback from STOW AGM

We had a brief discussion about how we let members know of events at the last STOW AGM. It appears that one member had not received the last 2 newsletters – we later found out that they had moved and we didn't know! So a plea **if you move house or change your email address please do let us know** (our contact details are on the back cover). We also talked about paper copies of newsletters versus electronic. Members were surprised to learn that the newsletters cost, with postage and envelopes, £2.25 per copy. Several times, we have been very lucky to have the newsletter sponsored by members but, in general, out of the £12 membership fee, £4.50 goes on paying for the twice-yearly printed versions. Several people said they would be happy to have an electronic copy, others said they preferred a paper copy. What do you think? Let us know! If we don't hear from you, we'll send you paper copies as usual.

Pre-Form 1 Tuition

Since the last newsletter, I have again been out to Tanga. The second visit of the year in October is a shorter one as there are no school uniforms etc. to distribute. However, there is always plenty to check up on. It was great being able to visit our end-of-primary-school students who had started their Pre-Form 1 course at The Novelty Youth Centre – all 12 of them (2 not in the picture as they were in a later session)!!



Without exception, all the students said how much they were enjoying the course and how much they appreciated the provision of lunch every day! I didn't know at the time but am now delighted to say that all 12 passed their exams and have gained a place at secondary school. I'll be catching up with them later this month to see how secondary school life suits them and whether they think the course has helped them to cope with having all their lessons now in English.

Unexpected bonus of getting our papers inspected!

As you probably know from previous newsletters, we now have to have a business visa each time we go out. We also visit the Tanga Immigration Office on the first day of each trip and our letter of invitation from TUMAINI is then stamped by them. This has proved invaluable when stopped by police/immigration/army. We are always stopped on our way back into Tanga town after we have visited our students at Zingibari – which is on the road to the Kenyan border. Last time we had a great chat with the army officer who stopped us and had carefully read the letter of introduction. He asked us what STOW did. He then said that he had himself been sponsored to go to secondary school but could not get sponsorship after A-levels so he joined the army. He said he still hoped to do a degree one day. Schola and he exchanged contact details and he has agreed to go to one of our secondary schools and talk to the children to encourage them to study hard and so have a career. Wish I could be there when he does this!

Water Shortage!

When we went on a home visit to Adamu and Zamda, we were horrified to see that their garden was suffering from drought. The children cultivate *mchicha* (a type of spinach) to bring in an income. The plot was completely dry and the *mchicha* had wilted. This was truly worrying as it meant no money. We sat down with the family



Mchicha plot in 2015



.... and in 2017

and Grandfather told me that they had been told not to water the plot and that they were due to be cut off completely as they did not have enough money to pay their water bill. They now had to walk quite a distance to buy water and would not be able to carry enough to keep the vegetable plot going. After some discussion, we suggested Grandfather should accompany us to the water office, with his outstanding bill, and STOW would pay it. He couldn't believe his luck! He said this meant that water would immediately become available and they would try hard to get the plot up and running again and earn some money from it. I will of course be checking what the situation is on my next visit. Thank you all again for your continued support, something that these vulnerable children would not have otherwise.

New students

It was agreed at the last Trustees' meeting that we would take on 10 new primary school children in 2018. I will let you know all about them in the next newsletter. One of the reasons we are able to do this is that some of our older (and much more expensive) students have left and got themselves jobs – great news for them! For the other reason see the Treasurer's article on page 6.

Students Moving on ...

One such young man moving on is Yohanna, who we were sponsoring on an electrical engineering course. He has now got a full time job with TANESCO, the government electricity supplier. Well done Yohanna! The great news also is that he is going to be working quite near to Tanga so will be able to support and see, in the school holidays, his younger brother David who STOW is also supporting at a government boarding school. Their grandparents are not often around so they look out for each other.



Yohanna

Micro loans for income-generating businesses

Thanks to refunds of previous loans, we were able to give out two new loans and a supplementary one to someone who has fallen on hard times. One new loan was to Regina who is Zuhura's mum. She lives far out in the bush, and so far we haven't been able to visit her home. Regina has been selling vegetables and fruit from her plot and asked if we could also help her with transport. Ideally she would like a moped but we sadly had to tell her that STOW could not run to this. However Helen, who came out with me and who sponsors Zuhura, has given us the funds to buy a bicycle for her. This will be one of the first things I do when I go out this month.



Zuhura and her mum

The other new loan was for Mwananvua's mum. She has been collecting wood from the surrounding area, cutting it to size and selling it on. She wants to diversify and try and make small snacks to sell in the school playground at break times.



Mwananvua's mum's wood business



Maimuna's mum's juice business

We were also able to help Maimuna's mum with a further loan. We had seen Maimuna at the Novelty Youth Centre and she told us that her mum had been in hospital. She had needed to use her savings to buy medication. Maimuna told me that they often didn't eat and she was so pleased to be at the Novelty Youth Centre where she was not only learning but also getting a meal every day! When we visited her mum at home she showed us what was left of her stock of juice and asked if we would consider giving her another loan to get her business back on its feet.

All the loans were agreed at the Business Meeting for Loans by all the other women who have had loans and are currently repaying them.



Meeting at which loans are repaid and new ones agreed

Thought for the Day!

I came across this the other day: "We can't save the world but we can give children hope for the future" – that's what STOW is all about!

Best wishes, Marie, Founder and Chair of STOW

Treasurer's notes — No dramas, we just carry on quietly with your support

Having now written a good many articles for the twice-yearly STOW newsletters, my initial response on being once more reminded that 'some words were needed' for this newsletter was along the lines of 'what? already? but so little has happened since the last time I wrote'.

This got me to thinking that perhaps, far from being an issue, 'little to report' serves to illustrate the nature of the long term, and life-changing educational support that STOW has provided over the last 13 years to some of the most under-privileged and deprived young people in Africa. The rural areas of Tanga in northern Tanzania where STOW children live remain some of the least developed and poorest areas of sub-Saharan Africa, despite some economic progress over recent years.

So, 'not much to report just recently' compares starkly to my message this time last year. You may recall the financially stormy times we experienced during 2016 from earlier newsletters when plunging currency exchange rates together with increasing Tanzanian inflation caught us in an unexpected two-handed financial squeeze.

Fortunately, early 2017 saw many members and friends alike responding positively to these difficulties and your

Generosity, along with more stable costs in Tanzania, has enabled STOW to both replenish reserves a little and make a commitment to support 10 new primary children (see page 4). Many thanks once again.

Our focus on providing primarily long-term educational support and continuity rather than shorter-term emergency aid is why STOW has been, I believe, so successful over time in massively improving the life chances of these vulnerable and often orphaned young people through supporting their successful ongoing education

Recent months have seen sufficient funds continuing to come into STOW from your donations, sponsorships and events to continue to meet our long-term commitments for the foreseeable future. Our STOW children are able to continue long term with their education which their otherwise impoverished circumstances would just not allow.

The mix of STOW financial support for fees, books, shoes, uniforms, bikes, bednets etc, along with the adult



School supplies



Bikes



TUMAINI — guidance, support, advocacy

guidance, advocacy and social support provided by our local TUMAINI partners is together what seems to make such a difference. This is why, I think, so many of our students improve their lives through long-term educational opportunities and go on to become financially independent and live more fulfilling lives.

So why so little drama? In part there is a positive mix of long-standing experienced trustees committed to what STOW provides in Tanzania for the longer term. My fellow trustees are, in my experience, quick to address longer term financial planning issues as they have arisen and made sure all the money is as effectively spent as possible.

When issues of unexpected spending or income have arisen as they do (and will) from time to time, they have been quick to find ways to increase funding and/or adjust the number of new children we have decided to support long-term and so ensure we secure the education of our existing students.

Please be assured I know the STOW trustees will continue to spend effect-

tively the funds you kindly donate and will continue to keep an eye out for stormy weather ahead.

So, my message to STOW friends old and new early in 2018 is: please just carry on with your generous regular and one-off donations.

Thanks once again to all who assist STOW so generously in their many ways with both their time and/or money – it really does make a huge lifelong positive change to the lives of our students and their future families.



Martin Stevens, Hon Treasurer, Jan 2018

Receipts and payments 1st June 2017 to 18th December 2017

RECEIPTS		PAYMENTS	
Members' subscriptions	£1,109		
Donations	£24,093.27	Grants to TUMAINI for 2018	£25,000
<i>(including:</i>			
<i>Thurston's Barn 2017</i>	<i>£1,372</i>	Cash for grants (Trip Oct 17)	£1,000
<i>Voxy Ladies Concert</i>	<i>£195</i>	Total Tz payments (94.5%)	£26,000
<i>St James's Place</i>	<i>£2,500</i>		
<i>Benhall Parish Church</i>	<i>£131</i>	2 x flights to Tanzania for	£657.80
<i>Australian Rotary</i>	<i>£15,408)</i>	Jan/Feb 18 monitoring trip	
		1 Business Visa	£180
		Fundraising expenses	£101
Child Sponsorship	£4,454.81	Public liability insurance	£280
Gift Aid	£3,344.54	Printing 1 newsletter	£258
		Stamps and envelopes	£37.20
		Total UK payments (5.5%)	£1,514
Total receipts	£33,001.62	Total payments	£27,514
Excess of receipts over payments	£5,487.62		
Balance brought forward from 1 June 2017	£34,341.74		
Funds in hand at 18th December 2017	£39,829.36		
Account balances:			
HSBC Community account	£19,089.40		
Virgin Money savings account	£20,739.96		
Total	£39,829.36		

Martin Stevens, Hon Treasurer, Jan 2018

Dates for your diary!

Beetle Drive!



Thursday 22nd March 2018 at 6 pm

Hotdogs, wine, beer & squash, followed by the Beetle Drive with a break for ice cream, cake & coffee!

St Johns Church Hall, Saxmundham
(Parking available up the church drive or Waitrose)



Adults: £5, Children: £2
(minimum age 6 years)
Family ticket (2 adults, 2 children): £12

To book tickets phone 01728 663583 or pay on the door

Midsummer in Kelsale!

(Note change of venue)

Saturday 30th June 2018
at 7.00 pm

Welcome drink, supper,
entertainment, auction, raffle
News of our work in Tanzania

Kelsale Village Hall, IP17 2PB
a beautiful Grade II listed building

Tickets: £15.00 per person available from:
STOW, Acorn Cottage, Kelsale, Saxmundham, IP17 2QY
Tel: 01728 603348, email: info@stowcharity.org

My Visit to Tanga with STOW and TUMAINI

'Shikamoo' (respectful greetings to an elder) and 'Maharaba' (thank you from an elder); 'Mimi naitwa Helen' (my name is Helen) and 'Mimi natoka Kenya' (I was born in Kenya) — these were the main phrases I tried to get my tongue around, as we visited the schools and homes of supported children. My first language was 'kitchen' Swahili, but Kiswahili is another matter. I was determined to improve my Kiswahili in the weeks before going to Tanzania, such that I could understand quite a lot of what was being said, and certainly knew more when I left through immersion, than when I arrived ten days before. Marie, whose Kiswahili is impressive, was gently helpful when needed!



Helen with Adamu

It was my first visit to Tanzania. The arbitrary line drawn across the map when Africa was carved up in the late 19th Century means nothing when you are looking at the hills and valleys, the wonderful towering baobabs standing like enormous upside-down sentinels, the white sands and coconut palms, all are very similar.

There is a shocking contrast between the glittering high rises and mansions in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and the tremendous poverty alongside them. People eke out a living, perhaps selling a few oranges, or pineapples by the side of the road from small stalls, or simply set out on the ground. Dukas (shops) line the roads in



'Dukas' line the roads

the villages, selling absolutely anything and everything.

I met Schola at the hotel in Dar and was immediately enveloped in her welcoming warmth. On the way to Tanga, which took eight hours, she told us about the new president, and his efforts to challenge the endemic cor-

ruption found in most African countries, and about the terrible floods they had earlier in the year, unlike anything they had seen before. Houses and roads had been swept away, but impressively the road had been rebuilt quickly, and mud and stick houses put back up. When we got to the office, she and Esther showed us where the water had reached up the wall.

The sensitivity, and generosity of Schola and Esther was palpable. And of course, they are business-like, efficient and when needed 'kali' (fierce!). I never ceased to be impressed by their in-depth knowledge of the children, their families – when they had one – and their progress through school. I saw the care they take to talk to children on their own, and to ask gentle but searching questions about their health and happiness at home and at school.



Schola and Esther

I could not fail to be moved and impressed by the tenacity and dignity of the children, who have suffered the most tremendous deprivation through HIV/AIDS, sometimes losing their whole family, sometimes living with AIDS, and at other times being looked after by a grandmother (hurray for grandmothers), or aunt, father or grandfather, in very real poverty.

Marie, Schola and Esther emphasise achievement through education all the time, in order to encourage the children to go on to secondary school, technical college or university. They had obvious good relations with the school heads, although recently some had been demoted for want of the right piece

of paper, despite many years of experience. I could see how very important home visits were, in order to take food parcels, or mend bikes used to get to school.

I met a young woman I had sponsored, who is trying to run a sewing and tailoring business with her sewing machine donated by the charity. She explained how hard it is to find work, and she only had bits of mending. Her mother had built a small fruit and vegetable stall attached to the house, in order to make some money.

The house we stayed in was inside a compound owned by an East African Asian family. One morning we were greeted by a drip on Marie's head, and looked up to see a leak coming through the roof. We were greeted every morning by two Alsatian puppies. The nights were a challenge – a large barking dog under the window, and cockerels and chickens, and the mosques starting up on loudspeakers at about 4.00 every morning. But we did manage to go to a local hotel to access wifi, and look out over the Indian Ocean!

On the last day in Tanga, the IGA meeting took place - micro-lending scheme to help women start small businesses. Again, I was struck forcibly by the dignity and courage of these women, and how proud they were of what STOW and TUMAINI had achieved for them and their children. Marie and Esther made sure that the meeting ran smoothly, and we had a long speech by one of them about their praise for the organisation!

I have so many images from my week in Tanzania, and it will take me a long time to process what I saw. I am left with a certainty that this is a charity worth supporting. It is tailor-made for every individual — the smallest of things making a tremendous impact in their lives.

Asante sana – thank you very much! *Helen Hepburn*



Tailoring business

Since STOW's founding in June 2005 we have funded over 2,500 annual school and further education places, helping well over 300 children to get education and training with many going on to paid employment.

STOW contact details
Email: info@stowcharity.org
Tel: 01728 603348

Dates for your diary (see p9)

1. Beetle Drive!

Thursday 22nd March 2018 at 6 pm

St Johns Church Hall, Saxmundham



2. Midsummer in Kelsale!
Saturday 30th June 2018 at 7 pm
Kelsale Village Hall, IP17 2PB



We are on the BT MyDonate website (www.btplc.com/mydonate) to help our fundraisers and to enable people to use a debit or credit card to donate to us. Just enter 1112424 or STOW in the MyDonate search box to find us.

Every penny of the money donated (excluding minimal card charges) comes to STOW including any Gift Aid due. We like to thank our donors so, if you use this service and want us to know who you are, please email us separately at info@stowcharity.org with your name and the amount you've donated.

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Registered charity no 1112424