

Supporting Tanzanian

STOW

Orphans and Widows

STOW NEWS

May 2020

Issue number 27



Our students are growing up!

www.stowcharity.org
Charity registration no: 1112424

Dear members,

What a lot has happened since my report to you in the January 2020 newsletter! It feels like a different world. Thank goodness Pam and I were able to go and help out with the distribution of school materials in January and February. As always it was a busy and productive visit. We bought 22 food parcels. For those in secondary schools, where we were not able to do home visits, we gave the students the equivalent of a food parcel in cash. We also bought 4 bikes (2 for girls and 2 for boys). Here is Chande with his (Emelia with hers is on page 11).



Chande with bike



Delivering materials to Zingibari

opted to be squashed in with them as, apart from Pam, Esther and me, we had one of our Zingibari students in the car!

Water bill

I've spoken to you about Zamda in the last two newsletters. She is doing really well at the Novelty Youth Centre and was hoping to sit her GCSEs later this year with a prediction of getting good grades. She's grown up so much. She spoke up on behalf of her grandmother, who had just had her water supply cut off as she was so much in arrears with her water bill.

We met up with her 'bibi' and took her to the Water Office in Tanga to see what could be done. Zamda came with us in support. The clerk was very helpful and said that once we paid the bill we should go to another office to talk to someone about a new project the government had set up to help poor people get water. This project's manager told us that the project is called "Urban Poor". She told us: "The government says everyone should have access to clean water". You have to write a letter explaining the situation, get it signed by village leaders, and then bring it back to the Water Office. They then assess whether you are eligible. If you meet the criteria, you are allowed 160 litres (not sure if that is per week or per day).

We left Schola with Zamda and her bibi to help write the letter to take to the village elder. The next day, we took the letter back to the Water Office and, by the time we returned to their home, the water was back on!



Bibi ready with bucket

Pay Back Time

In the last newsletter I told you about Jacky, one of our first students, making a donation to STOW. This time, we met up with Fadhili, another one of our early students. We were visiting Issa, one of our primary school children, who lives with his sister and grandmother in a small house which belongs to a neighbour. Whilst chatting to her, Fadhili came up and greeted us. He told us that he was working in the area as an electrician – STOW had funded him through college for his training

We were talking to Issa's bibi about her door frame, which we thought looked very unsafe. We thought that maybe if it was cemented around the door frame, it would make it a bit more secure. We asked Fadhili if he could kindly do this little job for us and offered to pay for the cement. Fadhili said he would be glad to help and there was no need to give him any money. "It's pay back time..." he said.

There seemed to be a lot of wood both inside and outside Issa's little house and we asked what it was all for. His bibi said that she does casual labour on a farm a few miles away but also collects wood to sell to try and get a bit more money. She seemed rather desperate and told us: "It's hard trying to feed two growing school children".



Of course, we left her with two food parcels and a bit of extra spending money. It felt such a small token of support but I keep hoping that things will get a bit better for her. I am constantly amazed at the resilience of the many people we meet who are in similar situations. Fadhili said he would keep an eye on this vulnerable family. He is now married with one child and feels blessed that he has a good job, thanks to STOW's support.



Moving on to A-levels

We met up with several of our sponsored students who had finished their GCSEs and got their results. Jabiri and Janet both went to the same primary school but the government chose different secondary schools for them. Schola and I had high expectations for Jabiri and we were also hopeful for Janet to have good passes. As it turned out we were right!! Jabiri got Division 1 and Janet got Division 2. They both want to study sciences at A level, Jabiri still saying he wants to be a doctor – a long-standing ambition of his - and Janet told us she wants to be a nurse. At the time, we didn't know where they would be studying at A level, but I have since heard that they – and 2 others of our students – were sent by the government to Chidya Secondary School in the Masasi District of Mtwara Region, where we already have a student who is in Form 6.

As you can see from the map overleaf, Mtwara is about as far down the coast as you can get from Tanga. You have to change buses in Dar es Salaam and probably have to spend



Tanga, Dar and Mtwara

go hungry and will have reasonable accommodation. At least, that was the plan when they set off to start their A-levels before the government shut down all schools and colleges in response to Covid-19.



Chidya Secondary School in Mtwara

Good Samaritan

I just want to tell you one more story. This one is about Rafael. He had finished his GCSEs and was trying to sort out his college placement. His uncle, who he lives with in Pangani, suggested that he apply to a college in Dodoma (the capital) to study Community Development. So he went to Dar es Salaam to stay with an aunt and sort out his application. We met up with him in Dar the day before we flew back from there to the UK but when I asked him: “How is Dar?” he replied: “Bad!”.



Rafael with Schola in Dar

His aunt was supposed to meet him at the bus station when he arrived in Dar. However, she didn’t show up. He kept phoning her but got no answer. By 9 pm he gave up and curled up at the bus station and fell asleep. When he awoke the next morning, he found that someone had stolen all his belongings while he slept: his bag with his clothes, his phone and his shoes. So there he was, far from home and completely destitute.

Amazingly, a young man called Jackson took pity on him and took him home. Jackson’s



family have since taken Rafael under their wing. With Jackson's help he has applied to a college and hoped to start in April. I have since heard that he got a place in the college he wanted in Dodoma, St John's College. A good result and a very heart-warming story.

The current situation

All seemed well for these A-level and college students then along came Coronavirus and all schools and colleges are now closed – after we paid the fees! All our students had difficulty

getting home – students aren't a priority on crowded buses, with everyone trying to get home. We have sent out emergency funds to help get the students back to Tanga, many having had to stay a couple of nights in a hostel whilst waiting for a place on a bus. The funds were also to buy food parcels for these and our other boarding students as they no longer have the meals at school that we have funded! In addition, we funded food parcels for all the other families of the children we support. Life was hard enough for the families that STOW supports but it is even harder at the moment where it is difficult to find work in an environment where normal life no longer exists.

We send you our heartfelt thanks for all the support you give STOW, without which we could never manage to help so many vulnerable children and their families. You'll see on page 7 some of our cancelled fund-raising events for this year. If you had planned to go to any of these and would like to make a donation instead, that would be truly amazing! Thank you all SO very much. (By the way, we are still hoping to hold our AGM on September 27th, see back cover).

Before signing off, I'd like to share this little story with you. I found it on another small African charity's website. It encapsulates why we do what we do.

A boy is walking along the beach and spots an old man kneeling often and picking up one of the thousands of starfish that have been washed ashore. The old man gently throws them back into the ocean because the sun is out and the tide is so low that they will die if he doesn't do this. The boy says: "Old man, don't you realise there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it! You can't possibly save them all, you can't even save one-tenth of them! Even if you work all day, your efforts won't make any difference at all." The old man listens calmly, then bends down to pick up another starfish and throw it into the sea. Then he turns to the boy, smiles, and says: "It made a difference to that one."

Best wishes to you all and wishing you many healthy months ahead,
Marie Adams, Founder and Chair of STOW

Covid-19 lockdown dilemma in Tanzania

There are serious problems surrounding the imposition of a strict lockdown in Tanzania. It would become a stark choice between contagion and starvation for many.

Although current confirmed cases in Tanzania are low, due to very low testing rates this is undoubtedly a huge underestimate and unfortunately we expect the numbers to rise substantially. Tanzania has an extremely unprepared health system, with only 0.4 doctors per 10,000 population (compared to 28 for the UK), and only 1.3 ICU beds per million population.

People rely on small, very underfunded and overcrowded district hospitals that cannot cope with demand in normal times, let alone with an influx of Covid-19 patients. High rates of HIV and malnutrition also make people particularly vulnerable.

Tanzania has taken what measures it can to control contagion including the introduction of quarantines, special Covid-19 hospitals, ramping up tests, suspension of school and college programmes, banning of sports activities, controlling the number of passengers on public transport and introducing the mandatory use of face masks in Dar es Salaam, the most affected region.

But most Tanzanians live from day to day. They rely on daily earnings to buy food and other necessities. A lockdown would promote extreme poverty and cause starvation. Most of the people live within extended families in small houses, with their social welfare provided by relatives. Locking them in will also cause starvation and unbearable despair. Tanzania cannot afford to keep its people's struggling economies non-functional and they cannot close their fresh produce markets otherwise people will slide into destitution and hunger so only limited lockdown measures are possible.

Jeremy Adams

Note: you can donate to us by a variety of methods.

- 1. By BACS online transfer to 'STOW' sort code 40-40-20 account number 61264370**
- 2. By cheque made payable to 'STOW' and sent to Acorn Cottage, Kelsale, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2QY**
- 3. By credit or debit card via VirginMoneyGiving (see back cover for details)**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY! NOT!

Beetle Drive!



16th April 2020 at 6.30 pm

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

St Johns Church Hall, Saxmundham



The Orwell Lady

Orwell River Cruise to Harwich Harbour

Sunday 31st May 2020

Live music from The Wednesday Men

**STOW summer do
28th June 2020**

The Coronavirus pandemic — an unexpected challenge for STOW both here and in Tanzania



Here in the UK we benefit from a well-established and sophisticated health service available to all. In the Tanga region where most of our STOW students live, there is, at best, very limited health provision.

There is also the challenging task of informing people and supporting those unable to work. With many employed on a daily basis, if you don't work today, you and your wider family probably won't eat tomorrow (see page 6 for more on the lockdown challenge in Tanzania).

I was struck by some of the comments in a recent article by a journalist based in Arusha. She says that, within an hour of the first confirmed coronavirus case being announced in Tanzania, all protective masks, gloves etc had sold out and hand sanitizer had doubled in price. Most STOW students and their carers would find it impossible to find the money to purchase such basics even were they widely available.

Although many less affluent Tanzanians now have access to an old-style mobile phone with texting, they cannot, like us, use it to access news and information from government websites. One was quoted as saying 'all I know is we should be washing our hands more'. We know first-hand that very few of our students have access to running water and STOW usually supplies their soap.

Transport is limited with cheap 10-seater minibuses often taking 20 plus passengers as a matter of course.

Although all education in Tanzania has,

like here, now been closed down, we have no idea whether fees and other charges STOW has already paid in advance will be carried forward or will just have to be written off. We also know there will be additional costs in supporting our young people through this period who would otherwise have been fed and cared for at boarding school, while others were at least receiving a main meal at school each day.

Here in the UK, our planned summer fundraising events will now not be taking place – so for example there will be no boat trip on the Orwell, no summer event, no pop-up cinema evenings. As I have said before, these events, as well as being good fun, also serve to bring supporters together, raise significant funds and recruit new members.

STOW, as you will be aware from previous newsletters, continues to hold planned contingency funds in reserve so we will have no problems in making some additional payments immediately to support both our NGO partners and existing students in Tanzania when requested to do so. We would however look to replenish our reserves in the longer term.

So, with my Treasurer's hat on (and I do realise there is an increased call for any additional funds to be spent here in the UK), if you were thinking of coming to one of our now cancelled summer events might you be 'persuaded' to divert some of your ticket money direct to STOW by way of an additional donation (for how to do this see above, page 6)?

Many thanks for your continuing and generous support, it really does make a big difference.

Keep safe and well,
Martin Stevens, Hon Treasurer

Receipts and payments 1st June 2019 to 18th May 2020

RECEIPTS

Members' subscriptions £1,860

Donations and fundraising £28,972

(including:

Summer Event at Kelsale £1,330

Village Hall 2019

Bryan's Barn 2019 £1,002

St James's Place £2,500

Orwell boat trip 2019 £150

Australian Rotary £14,395)

Child Sponsorship £10,850

Gift Aid £4,700

Bank interest £478

Total receipts £46,860

Excess of receipts £203

over payments ,

Balance brought forward £37,601

from 1 June 2019

Funds in hand at 18th May £37,804
2020

Account balances:

HSBC Community account £16,585.19

Virgin Money savings account £21,218.39

Total £37,803.58

PAYMENTS

Grants to TUMAINI for 2020 £41,500

Cash taken out for grants on £3,108

Oct 19 and Jan/Feb 20 monitoring trips

Total Tz payments (95.6%) £44,608

2 x flights to Tanzania + £866

coach to Heathrow for Jan/
Feb 20 monitoring trip

1 Business Visa for Oct 19 + £256

1 Ordinary Visa for
Jan/Feb 20 monitoring trips

Hire of Kelsale Village Hall £68

Public liability insurance £296

Printing July 19 and Jan 20 £487

newsletters

Stamps and envelopes £76

Total UK payments (4.4%) £2,049

Total payments £46,657

Martin Stevens, Hon Treasurer, May 2020

Return to Tanga *(This article reflects the situation before the pandemic)*

I returned to Tanga region, Tanzania, in January for the annual monitoring visit again this year, just 2 years after my last visit. Meeting the same familiar faces, Schola and Esther from TUMAINI, and our taxi drivers, Freddie and Athumani, reminded me how much STOW is dependent on the amazing work of our Tanzanian partners and friends.

Extreme weather events and climate change were dominating the news and political discussion in early 2020. Two years ago, the region was experiencing a severe drought and those families who relied on their small kitchen gardens or 'shambas' were struggling to get enough food. This year, the countryside was green again but several of our families had lost their homes and businesses to storm damage and it was unusually wet for the fortnight of our visit. Fortunately, most of the rain was at night and we completed all our visits to schools and the homes of our primary school children safely.

Perhaps as a consequence of the storm damage, there seemed to have been little progress in extending electrical supply to villages. However, portable solar lights suitable for reading by are now being imported from China and we were able to purchase some for students trying to revise for their GCSEs. As darkness falls by 7pm most of the year, this is extremely helpful.

One of the primary schools which we visited still does not have an electricity supply. However, the head teacher has arranged for their final year students to contribute to the purchase of electricity from a neighbouring property to light 1 classroom for a weekly afterschool revision session. We funded 2 of our sponsored children to attend. This highlights the challenges many students in Tanzania continue to experience into the 21st century.

While visiting our sponsored children and their schools, we assist with the distribution of school uniforms and equipment including pens, pencils, rulers, and exercise books. Ensuring the students get the correct size shoes is always a challenge. Feet keep growing after the orders are placed! Many students have a long walk (1 hour or more) to school so well-fitting shoes are essential.



Pam getting ready for distribution of school materials with Schola

Access to computers is now becoming essential to all college students. They are borrowing and sharing dongles so they can download college programmes onto their laptops. Keeping equipment safe and in good working order can be difficult when they are living in overcrowded conditions.

Our presence with Schola and Esther during this visit enabled us to give schools and families clear messages about the assistance we can continue to provide, but also clear messages about the limits and boundaries of our support. Prices are rising but our money still goes a long way and £45 buys a reconditioned bicycle with a luggage rack and lock.



Deborah with her laptop

We sat down on several occasions with Schola to discuss and amend the 2020 budget in response to the information we gained during our visits.

The exam results at GCSE level were good and 2 girls did better than expected and are now waiting for A-level places. We also identified 2 first-year secondary students who lived in insecure families out in the bush with long journeys to school. After getting agreement from their caretakers, we were able to arrange for their



Emelia and her bike

transfer to a state boarding school. We bought them all their bedding, trunks, cutlery and crockery. Shopping involves visiting several shops and stalls and Schola and Esther check both the quality of the items and the price to ensure we are not overcharged.

Thanks again to all our supporters. I can confirm once again that the funds you continue to give go a long way in Tanzania and continue to improve the lives of the students we support. I would also like to thank our Tanzanian friends who assist us with accommodation and hospitality during our visits.

Pam Stevens

Since STOW's founding in June 2005 we have funded over 2,600 annual school and further education places, helping well over 350 children to get education and training with many going on to paid employment.

NOTICE of STOW Annual General Meeting

**Lockdown permitting, this will be held at 3 pm
on**

Sunday 27th September 2020

in Bryan's Barn at

**Church Farm, Sweffling,
Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 2BN**

Please follow signs to carpark in field

**The AGM will be followed by a bring-and-share tea
(please let us know what you are bringing by phoning us
on 01728 603348)**



moneygiving

Donate >

Sadly BT MyDonate is no more! So we have moved to Virgin Money Giving (<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving>) to help our fundraisers and to enable people to use a debit or credit card to donate to us. Just enter STOW in their search box and scroll down a few lines to find us.

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.

(NOTE Printing and distribution costs for all our newsletters are now being covered by specific donations from generous members!)

This issue of the newsletter is supported by 'Christian House and Church Swap'
www.chacs.co.uk

Supporting Tanzanian Orphans and Widows (STOW)

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