

Autumn 2005

FOAG Newsletter

Welcome to the Autumn 2005 FOAG Newsletter.

FOAG has had a year of very good progress in 2005, with funds, sent to projects in the financial year recently ended, totalling over £69,000.

We must first of all, on behalf of our projects, express our great and sincere thanks to all our donors, during this year and in the past. It is quite humbling to receive a steady flow of cheques larger and smaller from Churches, schools, Rotary Clubs and other groups, and from many individuals. Your response to our appeals has been magnificent; we readily recognise the sacrifice this can entail and we accept the trust you place in our committee and officers to distribute your donations wisely and effectively.

The A in FOAG still stands for Action: not think-tanks, enquiries, sub-committees, steering committees, train tickets, conferences, junkets or talk, so without more ado let us proceed to the projects and describe where your money has been used in the financial year ended Sept. 30th 2005.

Budaka Cheshire Home and Rehabilitation Centre

This small but highly effective Home received £1,000 from us earlier in the year to pay for the construction of a kitchen building, and later on a further £1,000 for the purchase of cooking stoves which can burn a number of different fuels and are much more efficient than a simple open fire. FOAG members on last year's visit also paid for the purchase of a cow for the Centre, and for a printer for their computer.

Budaka's daily work of identifying and caring for children requiring orthopaedic operations and aftercare continues. Last year's Christmas Appeal for operations at Budaka and Butiru and Madera Homes raised almost £6,500, which we send out in June and December to help with the cost of this work. Once again this year we are asking for your help to enable this to continue.

Sister Leah is keen on the home's gardens, which not only yield food for everyone, but also help with teaching of growing skills among the patients. She reports that the gardens yielded well this year.

Long live FOAG" she writes, "we are grateful beyond explanation to our dear FOAG associate members for your love and kindness to our dear children at Budaka. Our good Lord will always reward you. Thank you for your continuous assistance."

Butiru Cheshire Home

There was a record response to our Summer Appeal this year, which was split between Butiru's need for a vehicle to transport its patients, and the Teso Oxen Scheme. We were able to send £9,500 to Butiru Home for the purchase of a vehicle to serve as an ambulance, which we expect to be

bought shortly. Sister Clare sends her warmest thanks to FOAG's members for making this possible.

Madera Rehabilitation Centre

This year we were able to send £1,000 to Madera Home in the town of Soroti, for the purchase of double-decker beds and mattresses, in addition to £1,000 for help with operations from the Christmas Appeal.

Namalu

For the past four months, the agricultural project at Namalu has been managed by a team of three Animators, headed by Zachariah Ikwol, after Giuliano Consoli stepped aside to pursue his church work in Karamoja. FOAG has provided funds to establish three zero-grazed milking cow demonstration units in Namalu sub-county, managed by the three Animators. The second stage of this development will be to extend such units to local farmers in each parish. In Iriri, the Animators are helping farmers to establish homesteads with areas of agro-forestry, by growing live fences around orchards; and also establishing woodlots with intercropping to maximise the tilled areas. The Oxen Hire Centre in Namalu continues to do good work and fulfils a great need in the area. Karamoja has had periods of instability, as often happens, which has meant that the progress of the project has been slower than the Animators would have wished, however at present the security situation seems to have improved once more.

Kumi Hospital

We were delighted to be able to welcome Medical Director Dr John Opolot on a rare visit to UK, and a rare break from work for him. Tony and Eileen Crook extended their unrivalled hospitality to John, and a number of FOAG members joined them at Burton Farm one evening in summer to meet him.

The generator which was bought for the hospital by the generosity of three Associate Members who joined our visit last November, with generous assistance from Stourbridge Rotary Club, has been loaded into its container (see below) and is now on the high seas. We hope to be able to see it working in our February visit.

During his visit John broke the news that the Hospital's ancient Xray machine was no longer working and was beyond repair. Much research was undertaken this end in the hope of finding a suitable machine to be shipped in the container which was going right to the hospital, but the advice we received indicated that the best way forward would be to buy one in Kampala. We are delighted to report that thanks to the outstanding generosity of several FOAG members, we have recently sent £21,000 to the hospital to enable them to buy and install the new machine. This is a much larger sum than we would normally see fit to vote from our general funds to any one project, and was all contributed specifically for this purpose. For many months the hospital, which now has 300 beds and has a very strong orthopaedic department, has been without an Xray machine, and it is

wonderful that we have now been able to provide one.

During the year we have also been able to send £8,000 to the hospital to fund the salaries of two additional doctors.

Further very good news is that CBMI (formerly Christoffel Blinden Mission) have completed the installation of a water pipeline and pumping station to bring water approximately five miles, from Lake Bisina to the hospital and a number of nearby villages. FOAG has helped for a number of years with providing water catchment and tanks, to which this will be a superb addition – a project that was way beyond our own resources.

Teso Oxen Restocking Project (TORP)

FOAG is committed to continuing its support for this project on two fronts:

Firstly, in the 'new' area. The Awoja village scheme, started in August 2004, has made good progress. 12 pairs of oxen were originally supplied, each pair being co-owned by 4 families thereby assisting 48 families. Thanks to the conscientious repayments which have been made by instalment it has been possible to buy further oxen bringing the total up to 20 pairs. This means that 72 families in the parish now benefit from the ability to cultivate their land more efficiently and improve their standard of living.



Oxen ploughing at Awoja village

Thanks to your substantial response to this year's Summer Appeal we have now been able to follow up our pledge to start a scheme in the village of Otatai, to the south-west of Soroti. 13 pairs of oxen plus ploughs were initially bought to which 4 further pairs have since been added making a total of 17 pairs - thereby assisting 68 families. This village has proved to be one of the most highly organised groups with which we have worked and it will be interesting, during our forthcoming February 2006 visit, to gauge progress. **Secondly**, in the original 'TORP villages' - so badly affected by the Lord's Resistance Army invasion in 2003. John Echeru (administrator), Leo Dijkman (auditor) and Simon Otim (accountant) have been assessing the extent to which oxen were depleted in the villages of Orungo, Katine, Olwelai, Otuboi, Apapai and Aparisa. Many of these villagers had all but paid

for their oxen and ploughs when the insurgents struck. They lost not only their animals but their homes, livings and, worst of all, many family members - particularly children abducted without any further contact or news.

It is proposed that FOAG help to re-start these village schemes and your Summer Appeal response is making this possible. The purpose of our February visit will be to see to what extent assistance is needed for each of these villages and how we can best share out the funds that we now have.

There is no doubt that the Oxen Re-stocking Project has been a remarkable success and, *despite* the horrors inflicted upon the area by the LRA, there has been a real desire amongst villagers not only to be accepted into the scheme as participants but also to make it work and to strive to maintain repayments with income generated, so that fellow villagers can join as well.

MTCEA (Multipurpose Training and Community Empowerment Association).

Not much recent news to report from MTCEA – they must be working so hard down there in the Iganga area that they haven't found time to let us know how things are going, but we'll catch up when we visit. FOAG's tentacles reach a considerable distance and recently a member of St Marks Overseas Aid Trust (SMOAT) in Reigate generously gave two concerts in members' homes which raised £600, half of which has been sent to FOAG for the purchase of more donkeys for the MTCEA project.

FOAG contributes to the salary of Peter Owor, the project co-ordinator

Guluddene Unit for Mentally Retarded Children

This home is part of the Occupational Therapy Department of Mengo Hospital, Kampala, although situated about 30 miles to the northwest of the city.

This year, we have been able to send over £1,600 to the Home, and thanks to the great generosity of one of our Associate members, a further £3,000 to the main OT department at Mengo for particular building improvements.

The autumn jazz concert was sadly not well enough attended to produce funds for bringing electricity to Guluddene, but since we had a container going into western Uganda anyway, we bought a 10 Kva generator for the Home, in partnership with Basingstoke Community Churches. We hope it will have arrived in time for the arrival in the new year of David Downer and a group of fellow volunteers from Basingstoke to wire up the Home.

Kiwoko Hospital Nurse Training

FOAG continues to provide £8,000 per year towards the costs of training nurses, and we look forward to meeting the trainees in February.

Masindi Centre for the Handicapped

This remarkable boarding school for over 100 pupils with a wide range of

disabilities is getting recognition in Uganda as a centre of excellence. To illustrate this, MCH has received two important visitors recently – the first one was a Government representative to see the school's work and progress, and the second was the Rotary District Governor for 5 East African countries to see how the work of the local Masindi Rotary Club and other Rotary clubs in the UK are helping the school. Eseri (the headmistress) and her staff were very proud to show the school at work with their academic and vocational studies.

FOAG, justifiably, can be pleased to be associated with the development of MCH since the mid 1980s as the charity has contributed over half of the annual running costs, and also supported extra projects and staff development. We have sent congratulations to Eseri, her staff and the children for their excellent work.

However, there is still work to be done as the photo of the school's kitchen illustrates. In fact, the next project for FOAG is to buy more efficient stoves for the kitchen with chimneys to take the smoke outside – certainly more pleasant and healthier for the cooks!



Present cooking arrangements

Recent progress at the school includes the development of a woodlot – 2000 eucalyptus trees have been planted, partly funded by FOAG. This is such an important step forward in the challenge to reduce the cost of buying wood for fuel. Extra staff latrines are nearing completion and the new water tanks are in use.

A further development for MCH is that the Masindi Rotary Club is funding eggs for the children once a week. This is so important to improve the children's diet. Unfortunately, the chickens that MCH were given to establish their own poultry project died from a bird virus, but at least it wasn't the Asian flu variety, H5N1!

Finally, it is with great pleasure that we can report that Livingstone Barongo's health is now stable and he was able to attend a meeting of the

school in September.

Kamarasi Primary School

Earlier this year a series of programmes entitled 'African School' produced for the BBC was shown on BBC4. It is currently being repeated on BBC2 on Tuesday evenings. The programmes chronicles life at two Ugandan schools, both in Masindi. State education is free in Uganda up to the age of 11; thereafter fees have to be paid which makes secondary education unobtainable for many children.

Kamarasi Primary School is a state primary school with a difference. Here the headmaster is developing a unit for special needs children who have considerable potential despite their disabilities. The series highlights his efforts to get this scheme up and running with almost no resources. At the invitation of the BBC, FOAG has become involved and we are at present bearing the day-to-day running costs of this Special Needs Unit. £23,000 will be required to erect a suitable building and we have been delighted to have received an offer of help from Roland Ballard and his colleagues (who make quite a speciality of running marathons, swimming the Channel, crossing the Sahara etc.) to raise what they can.

Masindi Secondary School also features in the series and there is much emphasis on the plight of teenagers who are denied an education simply because they can't afford the necessary £20 per term. Several viewers, moved by what they have seen, have been directed by the BBC to FOAG and we have agreed to act as a channel for sponsorships to enable children to receive a secondary education who would otherwise have stood no chance.

We are fortunate in having a resident FOAG member in Masindi. Sallie Wareing is a Derbyshire farmer who has been in Uganda for several years and who now owns the Masindi Court View Guesthouse. Sallie is very much involved on the ground with both schools and is our direct link with this new project.

Containers

On November 6th, two containers of equipment were shipped to Uganda by the Rotary Club of Stourbridge. It grew from a request from Dr John Opolot at Kumi Hospital for a generator to facilitate the work at the hospital. Stourbridge Rotary pledged themselves to raise the money to obtain the generator and then to organise the shipping of it to Kumi. Shortly after this, one of their members heard about the closure of Wordsley Hospital and that there would be a lot of usable equipment to be had. So, gradually the container filled with beds, physiotherapy equipment, wheelchairs and other desperately needed items. It was seen as a golden opportunity to send out tools and more physio equipment to the Cheshire Homes near Kumi also, so these duly arrived to be loaded in. It soon became quite obvious that more than one 20 foot container was needed, and so a second container was bought and quietly began to fill up; this time with a generator for the children's home at Guluddene and equipment for connecting it to the

electrical circuits being put in at Guluddene in January by a church group from Basingstoke. Mike McConville and Mike Clark from Stourbridge Rotary press-ganged friends into helping them re-paint the containers which, once unloaded in Kumi and Mengo Hospital, will remain there to act as stores. After an enormous amount of work ensuring that all was in order for the containers to make a smooth transit from disembarkation at Mombasa to their destinations in Uganda, the containers were professionally packed and finally waved off on 20th October. It is anticipated that they will arrive at the docks in Mombasa on 13th December and will arrive in Uganda a short time after that, hopefully in time for Christmas. FOAG is extremely grateful to the Rotarians at Stourbridge for their tenacity and ingenuity in seeing this project to fruition.



The containers leaving for the docks

Please note that, although we often get offers of books, sewing machines and other items, we cannot normally send these things out. This was a one-off event as a piece of sponsorship by the Rotary Club of Stourbridge.