

FOAG Newsletter for Spring 2005

In this spring's newsletter, we bring you updates from FOAG's 11 projects in Uganda.

Budaka Cheshire Home and Rehabilitation Centre continues its work with disabled children in the care of Sister Leah Njorege. As well as funding surgical operations and aftercare, thanks to our Members' generous response to the 2004 Christmas Appeal, FOAG has provided £6,230 to this Home in the past 18 months, to assist with the improvement of the water supply and construction of a new kitchen with improved fuel-saving stoves.

Butiru Cheshire Home

In April Sister Clare Kasedde wrote "once more I say many thanks for your untiring support towards the needy children of Butiru Cheshire Home." Sister explained that with the operations money that was allocated to her from the Christmas appeal she was able to have 12 children operated upon. Three of these children required neurosurgery which is expensive and she was able to have this carried out at the Cure Children's Hospital in Mbale. Seven of the children travelled to Mengo Hospital in Kampala for orthopaedic operations.

Thank you for making these operations a reality.

Butiru has one major problem. In December the pickup with which the Sisters transport the children was involved in an accident. No one fortunately was seriously hurt but the vehicle was extensively damaged. There is also new Ugandan legislation which is a good thing in that no one should be transported in the back of open pickups, but without a vehicle it will be very difficult for the Sisters to transport the children. FOAG has been trying to raise funds towards the cost of a suitable vehicle. FOAG has also contacted the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and they are looking into the situation. It is a difficult problem for the Sisters as not only do the children require operations but they also need follow up appointments with doctors and physiotherapists.

Madera Rehabilitation Centre

Sister Sophie Akim, who leads this vibrant community caring for disabled youngsters, is particularly keen to develop their life skills through growing their own food in addition to the education and vocational training they receive. As with the other Cheshire Homes we visit, this home also finds local children who need corrective surgery for limb abnormalities, which they arrange at Kumi Hospital and provide the aftercare needed. £500 has been forwarded to cover fees for surgical operations. This money was part of our Associate Members' response to our 2004 Christmas appeal.

Sister Sophie writes: "I am very glad to inform you that yesterday, Monday 2nd May 2005, we took 15 clients for surgery in Kumi Hospital and all are being worked on. We sincerely thank you for enabling us to help these

disadvantaged children through your prompt assistance.”

FOAG has been able to respond to Sister Sophie’s requests for 10 + 12 double-decker beds and mattresses with two grants of £1000. Out of this has also come four new tyres for the Home’s pickup truck.

The latest news is that Sister Sophie has had to move the home to a new site, near the rock behind the Soroti Hotel, as the Soroti Catholic Diocese wishes to turn the present home into a hospital.

The work at **Namalu** Agricultural Project will continue in the future without our good friend Giuliano Consoli who together with his wife Anna, will henceforth dedicate his life to his church in Karamoja. He will “step aside”, as he puts it, to allow the local people to move forward with the project which FOAG has supported since its inception. The success of Giuliano’s work has made this possible. The project will be supported by the team already in place to take on the task, headed by Zaccharia.

Further development in the region includes the completion of the scheme in Iri during the next two years, and the establishment of six demonstration holdings, to include Milk Cow, Chicken and Goat units in Namalu

Abwobwotoi Women’s Group

Cornelia Okwi and the women of this group have for several years reared chickens in order to sell eggs to raise money for children needing secondary education. Using a FOAG contribution and a loan from the Uganda Credit Women Finance Trust, the group have been able to improve a larger chicken house and to purchase 300 chicks. We wish Cornelia all the very best in the implementation of her plans.

Kumi Hospital

Until six years ago the only water source at the Hospital was the local well. Thanks to the support of FOAG and several other partners, the water situation is now much better, and we await news of Christoffel BlindenMission’s offer to pump water from Lake Bisina. However the needs are moving forward and FOAG has recently provided funds to pay the salaries of two new doctors. Further great needs at this hospital, which is a main host hospital for some of the children’s’ homes which FOAG supports, include nurse staffing, medical education, support accommodation, solar lighting and security.

When FOAG visited Kumi Hospital in November 2004 we learned from Doctor John Opolot that the hospital’s stand-by generator had broken down sometime before and remained inoperative. We also learnt that the Hospital is in an area of load shedding that means it has no electricity two or three times each week for considerable periods.

Two engineers in the group inspected the machine and found a diesel electric set circa 1950. The diesel engine was in pieces and very worn. It was evident that spares were difficult or impossible to obtain in view of its

age, and the whole thing was well beyond economic repair. We were told that the electrical generator part of it worked but in our opinion it was unlikely to produce its rated output.

During the remainder of our visit we came to realise just how important this generator was to the Hospital and three of the party undertook to provide a replacement machine.

On returning to the UK we obtained quotations for a replacement machine in both Uganda and the UK. The price difference of about 3 to 1 indicated that the machine should be purchased in the UK and in February a 60kVA set was ordered from YeoPower Manufacturing Ltd of York with delivery in May. The machine is to be financed by personal contributions, fund raising events and Stourbridge Rotary Club.

It was possible to purchase the machine in the UK because the Rotary Club of Stourbridge is to send a container of medical equipment to Kumi Hospital in the summer of 2005 and the generator can be included in that container.

As we write this we await the delivery of the generator for onward transmission to Kumi Hospital.

Teso Oxen Restocking Project (TORP)

The Awoja village scheme, which started in August 2004, continues to make good progress following on from our visit there last November. Although an ox was lost recently due to illness, its owning group is making strenuous efforts to replace it. Most of the twelve groups have already started making repayments which means that it will be possible before long to start extending the scheme to new applicant groups (there are four families in each group).

Awoja lies just south of Soroti in an area relatively unscathed by the LRA invasion of 2003/4. The local TORP committee were keen to re-establish the project despite the devastation caused further north where the scheme was well established in Orungo, Katine, Olwelai, Otuboi, Apapai and Aparisa. FOAG were pleased to support this move.

We witnessed at first-hand the appalling after-effects of the insurgency in Teso during our November visit..... all this in a region which had only regained stability in the mid 90's. Now that peace seems to be holding, and confidence amongst the many who fled to camps for safety is strong enough to return home, John Echeru (administrator), Leo Dijkman (auditor) and Simon Otim (accountant) are trying to assess how many oxen can be accounted for and how best to move the original scheme, which was so successful, forward again. We shall know more very soon.



John Echeru (right) with Members of the Awoja Oxen Group

MTCEA (Multipurpose Training and Community Empowerment Association).

Peter Owor, the FOAG-funded co-ordinator for this agricultural development with literacy project, reports that FOAG's grant of £500 for animal traction is helping to address the need for transport of crops from field to home and to market. This relieves the women and children, who do most of the cultivation of food crops, from having to carry heavy loads on their heads which endangers their health. He says that this need is rarely considered in other agricultural development schemes. Animals (oxen and donkeys) are also used for tilling the land thus enabling more land to be cultivated, giving families a reliable source of income with which to meet school, medical and veterinary fees.

From **Guluddene**, Patti Squire writes:

FOAG has mainly helped Guluddene Unit for Mentally Retarded Children, which is part of the Occupational Therapy Department in Mengo Hospital. This Department consists of :-

1. Providing an assessment service for babies and children, identifying handicaps etc.
2. Providing a daily disability clinic giving therapy to handicapped babies and children in the Early Stimulation Centre.
3. Mengo Unit for M.R. Children - a day school helping children with learning disabilities and multiple handicaps, to give them practical training and skills for life.
4. Guluddene Unit for M.R. Children - a day and boarding school for children with learning disabilities and multiple handicaps, to give them practical training and skills for life. The boarding section helps older children to learn more independence.

Guluddene Unit, continues to grow bit by bit. It is now in its third year of boarding children and the number of children is gradually increasing. We have in the past few years, obtained another acre of land which the children have divided into 6 plots, rotating crops in each section, each season. Their hard work supplements their diet with a variety of fresh vegetables.

We have another two goat houses, which now total four, and a cow shed, as we keep goats and are about to have a cow.

We also now have a carpentry workshop, where the older boys are learning to make simple items like stools as well as helping with the maintenance and mending of the school furniture etc.

Our Department deals with any disabled baby or child from birth upwards. Before, we dealt just with school- aged children and young adults. FOAG has however recently helped with the Early Stimulation Centre at Mengo. This is a new venture and is the first of its type in Uganda. This centre helps handicapped children with a variety of play equipment. It creates a stimulating environment manned by an occupational therapist.

We inherited the building which we use last September and it was very dilapidated and needs re-roofing and extending. A most generous recent gift from a FOAG Associate Member will cover much of the cost of this building work. We hope that work will start on this in the next month.

Kiwoko Hospital Nurse Training

FOAG continues to provide £8,000 per year towards the costs of training nurses, and the £7,000 raised in last year's Summer Appeal is being used to assist secondary-level students who want to train as nurses, to gain the required qualifications at school or in special classes.

We are very sad to report the death on January 30th, after a long illness, of **Sue Hocking**, the original inspiration behind the Nurse Training Scheme, who worked for so long with zeal and dedication at Kiwoko Hospital. We extend our sympathy to Sue's family, friends and colleagues

Masindi Centre for the Handicapped

FOAG continues to support the Centre in a variety of ways enabling the school to provide an academic and vocational education to the children according to their abilities and strengths. There are now 23 teaching staff and 25 support staff. Staff development is continuous and this year FOAG are supporting the training of Joseph Baguma, a former pupil of the Centre, in screen printing in the nearby town of Hoima. 35 teachers have had training in sign language this year at the Centre.

There were 23 new children starting at the beginning of the new term in January, who require assessment and special attention. It is expected that seven pupils will be resettled this year. An important aspect of the Centre's work is working with the local community as well as the families of the children at the Centre. Visits are made to the families to help ensure that the returning child is given a role in the family or community.

Maintaining the health of the children is an ongoing issue for the school. A healthy diet is provided partly from the produce of the Centre's farm. Malaria is an ever present danger and last autumn FOAG were able to fund the purchase of mosquito nets which will reduce the threat considerably and make life much easier.

In the past 18 months, FOAG has provided £13,800 to this Centre.

Our special thanks:

- To all of you who responded to our Christmas Appeal for money for surgical operations at Budaka, Butiru and Madera Cheshire Homes – you gave just over £6,000!
- To all those churches who made FOAG the subject of their Harvest Festival giving
- To the Rotary Club of Stourbridge for their particular support in getting a new generator and hospital equipment to Kumi Hospital
- And to all of you who have given so freely to FOAG in the past six months