

## Possibilities Chairman's Report 2014

Period covered 18th May 2013 - 19th May 2014

### Introductory Statement

The past year has been a difficult one for the charity. We have been faced with forced change and seeking new direction.

When we first went to Uganda in 2007 there was an obvious need. We met children and their carers living in squalor, doing the very best that they could for children that weren't their own with very meagre resources. It was the plight of so many children back then that motivated us to begin Possibilities. As time has elapsed obviously the children have grown and the needs have grown with them. Additionally some unscrupulous people have abused Uganda's childcare problem. This situation has been manipulated for profit and with no regard for Uganda's children. They have realised that the problem could be played to their advantage and that the caring charitable folk in the west could be taken for much money. It has also meant that a terrible business has flourished with international adoption. This has meant that a black market business in selling and trading of children has opened up with children being sold by desperate parents for as little as £2.50 per child into a better life. The children are then adopted from rich western countries for many thousands of pounds. There are many good and worthy orphanages and childcare facilities that have been caught up in what is now seen by the international community as systematic child abuse.

When we started working in Uganda there was a deep need that we met. After 7 years our well-meaning good-natured approach is now perceived as part of the problem and is not really seen as part of the solution any more. This was very difficult for us to take and adjust to in our thinking. We have needed to accommodate this and make positive changes for the future, whilst seeing that commitments that we had made were upheld and ensuring that where we could, children wouldn't suffer. This we have needed to do as the government of Uganda has enlisted international help to tidy up what they have been unable to deal with.

### Website

The Possibilities website was remodelled during the year. It now works reasonably well on mobile devices as well as computers. We spent some time adjusting our logo and motto. The children's photo that we had used for 7 years was considered now irrelevant as we have adapted and remodelled our approach to the extraordinary needs that Uganda has. The Orange tree is more indicative of what we are currently doing and speaks of what we expect our future to look like.

### Visits

When we arrived with a team in March 2013 and were confronted with the government's solution to the problem it meant that we had to act swiftly and ensure that the best possible outcome could be achieved. We spent several months trying to make adjustments whilst making every effort to preserve all that we had invested in and built over the 7 years.

**In August of 2013** Simeon Pattison and myself travelled to Uganda for 3 weeks to see what could be done to forge a way forward and ensure continuity as well as overseeing the necessary adaptations. The trip was important as we met with villagers where the centre has been built. We refined our thinking and agreed with the villagers at Malangata that the best way to serve them was to start a vocational training facility. We also made the decision to slow the development of the facility to allow us to divert funds into sinking a well to provide fresh water to the whole community. We then commissioned a company to start work. This was thrilling.

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We held meetings with government agencies and international representatives of Unicef. We met with directors of homes and tried to help them in their inevitable adjustments. We made major introductions between these various groups and began the process of having the Bula Children's Home closed in the best possible way. In addition no trip to Uganda would be complete without the delivery of livestock and the occasional recce trying to sort accommodation etc. for future volunteer trips.

Sim and I travelled again with Peter Gunter in **February of 2014** to prepare for a trip in the summer of 2014 and to open the well started last summer. We also needed to check on children that had been placed with clan members in the relocation of children from existing homes. We visited all of the children that we support and even though their situations are very bleak indeed they were happy and excited to be reunited with wider family members. This trip completed much more quickly than anticipated which gave us time to make new connections with businessmen and women in and around Kampala and to seek support from within Uganda.

### Groups that sponsor Possibilities

There are several groups that have been supporting Possibilities this past year.

Cedar's Park Primary School

Grundisburgh Primary School

Combs Middle School

have all been holding several fundraising activities in aid of Possibilities.

Christchurch, Needham Market adopted us for a 2-year period. We are being supported from their fundraising 2013-2015. This is a very useful connection. It raises further awareness in Needham Market and is giving a boost to our annual income.

### Links and Partners

SPAU We continue to work closely with Paul Lwanga and Sarah at Spau

### Fundraising

Major Specific Events

#### 2013

Summer Garden Tea Party

Combs Middle School

- Donations

Freddie – Sports Challenge

Rotary Club

Needham Market Crafts Street Fayre

SkyLarks Children's Choir Christmas concert

Omucungwa Day. £2100

### Craft / Possibilities with Beads

We still have a huge stock of beads that we need to sell.

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We have been selling palm leaf bags, small cloth animals as well as African sling bags and a small selection of other items. We want to shift all items quickly and keep a smaller stock of items. Opportunities to sell these craft items would be welcomed.

Various local groups had us to speak and present the charity's work for a donation and an opportunity to sell craft items.

### **SPAU**

Spau are managing the farm build / Malangata project for us. Paul Lwanga has been project manager at Malangata.

### **Possibilities for Children**

We currently pay for 12 Children's education. Benedicta's heart for children always pushes the boundaries and what we can afford. There have been some hard conversations as she has had to disappoint children, as we cannot keep paying for all the children that she finds.

We are currently paying for the 4 children that live with Benedicta. We pay for their schooling as well as for breakfast and lunch at the school. We are also paying for Juliet and Lydia's education. We have paid for their education from the beginning. Lydia had never been to school until we began to pay for her. Juliet and Lydia are the first of many children that will be relocated. They are now living with their mother, a stepfather and many siblings. The stepfather treats them well and is making a good effort at rearing pigs alongside caring for the small plantation and his family. They left Benedicta's care in January 2013. We are able to keep check on their welfare and progress, so have continued to fund their education.

We also pay for education of a further 5 who live many hours from Kampala in the north of the country.

Our responsibility will cease for the children at age 18 or at the end of their mainstream education. As the children grow older their education increases in cost, university will stretch our resources too far. We currently have several individual sponsors (always more needed) the rest is made up from general funds.

### **Farming with Possibilities**

The 3-acre plot, 26 Miles north of Kampala at Malangata in the Sub-district of Namayumba is taking shape. The current farmer is a man named Charles. This is a project that we should be developing but at this distance it is impossible to progress it to the stage that we would like.

The Land title has been released which we have in the UK for safekeeping

The farm is there to produce food for emergency rations for the needy. It will also be used to train youths and the next generation in agriculture and various related topics.

### **Volunteering with Possibilities**

This past year we have sent 2 volunteers to Uganda. After their experience and the ever changing shape of Ugandan childcare we have decided to step back from this facet of what we do.

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We would help with volunteer placements for older travellers but that would only be with specific job opportunities prior to travel.

### **Possibilities with Goats**

The goat project continues but doesn't really produce what we were once hoping for. What is needed at Malangata is a manager who carries our ideals, and the skills to implement a vision.

### **Travel with Possibilities**

This too has been a casualty of the changing face of Ugandan society. With limited opportunities for volunteering and with the current political situation across Africa we decided to withdraw this option for the foreseeable future. It was a disappointment for those who were due to travel this August but their safety is of paramount importance to us.

This may be something that we offer again in the future and we will make decisions about next year in the Autumn.

### **Malangata**

After the consultation of Summer 2013 we started raising funds for the development of the Vocational Training Centre (Ensigno Y'Omucungwa – The Orange Seed) At the time of writing this report we have just had windows installed but are still short of electricity and toilet facilities and internal decoration. These final elements will hopefully be finished before the year-end and then we can progress the facility and what it can provide for the people in the local district. The water well was opened in August and the community project was commissioned at that time. During the year Combs Middle School raised sufficient funds to pay for water harvesting. In August 2013 water tanks and guttering were installed.

This was a very challenging year. With many lowlights and considerable adjustments, but also with real achievement particularly in terms of water supply to Malangata

Rob Pattison

20 May 2014