St Nicholas World Development Group 

Registered Charity No.1225836

Annual Report 2015

Every year seems to bring more challenges and more success, and 2015 has certainly been no exception!

It has been a rollercoaster year bringing both bad and good news here and in the field; of hard work and of personal struggles overcome by the belief in the work of the projects. This will be a year which we can look back on with particular pride for the very great achievements which have been made by the Group, the Parish, friends and relations and the wider community. The year began with many worries about funding, especially for Feed My Lamb, and ended with a bank balance we could never have envisaged in our wildest dreams.

PROJECTS

We continue to support the same three projects: the Roma people in Albania; the elderly, poor and the trafficked women and children in Rumania and the Street Children in Kampala, Uganda. This latter project still receives the major part of our funding as we are the sole supporters of Feed My Lamb Community School.

ALBANIA

Sister Imelda continues to update us on the work of the doctor we help pay for who looks after the medical needs of the Roma children and their families in Tirana. He also provides health education for parents. The medical support has helped to buy medicines especially for respiratory, gastro-intestinal tract, skin, rheumatic and cardio vascular diseases.

RUMANIA

Father Petru, who works with Sister Kathleen and others, has written to thank us for all our support. He reports that the soup kitchen continues to provide hot meals and bread three times a week for the elderly people, but that they would like to support more single mothers and families with many children without income by offering housing, work training, food and clothing. He mentions five different families in particular who require help and the amounts necessary to support them. Maybe this is something we could consider in the future.

A HOUSE IN KAMPALA AND FEED MY LAMB COMMUNITY SCHOOL

1. We continue to support Dorcus’ children who are still in school. Phiona has just completed her final year and is eager, like John, to train to be a teacher. John has just completed his training and will begin teaching full time at FML this term. Jireh and Philip are still in school.
2. The year began with continuing to seek ways to meet the ongoing problem of finance for the FML project. Examination fees seemed excessive but results are needed by pupils if they wish to continue education or training in the future. A review on the impact of FML on the Street Children was considered, the hopefully positive outcome to be used as a tool to raise further funding from other charities in the future.
3. Then the new Education Officer for Kampala introduced rigorous new systems and standards for schools. Dorcus expressed grave concerns that FML school would not meet the new criteria, for example, permanent classroom buildings were required so room dividers currently used in the church hall were unacceptable. At the same time the deadline for slum clearance was drastically reduced and the developers were to move in in early 2016. Although the church buildings were not included in this, all the dwellings for the guardians and children would be demolished. There would be no appeal. Community meetings took place to discuss the situation and try to find possible alternatives. Land is expensive in Kampala and the children faced losing their school and their homes. If no solution was found there was a real possibility that the children would end up back on the street.
4. At this point came the amazing and wonderful news of Dorcus’ marriage and Paul, husband’s offer of ten acres of land in Gweeri, a small village outside Port Fortal, to be used to build a school for FML. This place is 300km and a 4 hour drive from Kampala. It is the area that Dorcus grew up in. Here was a solution, but could we uproot 72 street children and their guardians and transport them to the other side of the country? Where would the money come from to build a school and where would they live? Further projects to enable the group to become self-sufficient were also put forward by Dorcus and Paul – a sewing project, a fish farm, and dairy and arable farming. These would also offer skills to the older children so they could become independent after leaving school. Again, further cost implications for us.
5. In May, I went out to Uganda to investigate the realty and the possibilities and to meet Paul, Dorcus’ new husband. I found the area to be beautiful and the land ideal for the school and the other projects. I met the local Community Development Officer, the building contractor, local experts in the projects to be considered, a retired Head teacher and the Bishop of Fort Portal. The support from them all was very tangible. The local community would also benefit from any developments in their area. The overall costs, at this point, looked to be around £27,000. We would need to raise a lot of money very quickly. Dorcus wanted to help by reducing her staffing and the children’s mid-term examinations.
6. Back in England the Trustees agreed that we should try to move the children and guardians. There really wasn’t a choice if they were to stay off the street. An appeal for the school build and four major projects was launched in St Nicholas Parish to include all families and friends. The result was immediately incredibly successful and led to the wider community also becoming involved. The appeal is still on-going.
7. So far the progress that has been made in Uganda is as follows – the land has been cleared; plans for school passed; insurance paid; first phase of the building will be completed in January; rent deposit for housing has been sent; also funding for the arable farming, fish projects and firewood. The children and guardians plan to leave Kampala at the end of January.
8. Dorcus has sent further costings for school furniture, teaching materials, blackboards, uniform, transport, mattresses, outdoor play equipment and various other sundries. We hope to meet these costs next year. A request has also been made to set up a clinic for the community. This may be a consideration after further research and discussion but only if we have extra funding and support in Uganda.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We continue to monitor all three projects. Receipts and financial reports are received regularly. Photographs and other communications are displayed on the church noticeboard. Information is also disseminated to parishioners and other supporters through the public display of minutes; a bi-annual Newsletter and the Parish Magazine; verbal feedback at the Annual Appeal, the Annual Dinner and at fund raising events. This year I spent a week in Kampala and Gweeri monitoring and evaluating the FML project and its future development.

FUND RAISING

1. The Annual Appeal was an opportunity to thank parishioners for their wonderful and generous support in the previous twelve months for all three projects. It was also an opportunity to tell them about the difficult conditions facing the children and guardians in Kampala and its impact on the entire FML project. The solution was described and the appeal for funding the new project launched. The response was immediately and overwhelmingly positive both in the parish and beyond.
2. Talks and appeals have been made to other local parishes; local Rotary Club, 50+ Leisure and Learning Club and to family members and friends.
3. Our Pots and Pots event, a plant and cake sale held on a beautiful June day at Helen and Pete Middlemass’ home, was enormously successful as both a social and money raising event.
4. The Annual Dinner, as usual, was a great success raising a wonderful amount of money, but also providing a most enjoyable evening for all who attended. We managed to get a video clip of a speech from Dorcus thanking everyone for their huge efforts in raising sufficient funding for the new school building and showing how the ground had been cleared ready for the builders to begin when the rains stopped.
5. The Summer Quiz, as usual, entertained and made money throughout the summer.

OTHER FUND RAISERS

1. Planned Giving which enables us to plan ahead.
2. Gift Aid tax repayments which greatly enhance our income and which will increase dramatically next year due to our increased income which has more than doubled.
3. Gift Cards with vouchers for Sewing Machines, Bus Tickets, Cows and Fish and sold for presents, for example, at Christmas time.
4. Donations in the church collection box.
5. Use of Easyfundraising.org.uk when online shopping.

This year we have moved into a new era. One where we have agreed to accept greater responsibility and accountability for the Feed My Lamb Project, but also one where we have given greater responsibility and accountability to Dorcus and her community. And alongside this have harnessed the support and generosity of so many more in our own wider community.

We are truly living out our mission of enabling those in the Developing World to take responsibility for their own lives by giving them the means to educate and grow in confidence in the belief that they can sustain themselves and others into the future.

Maureen Hickey

January 2016