



OPPORTUNITY KNOX CHARITY CLG

ANNUAL REPORT 2021- 2022

Activities of Opportunity Knox Charity CLG 2021-2022

- Opportunity Knox Charity activities for the year from April 1st 2021 to March 31st 2022 were severely curtailed by the spread of Covid 19 virus across Uganda including the area of Tiira Village, Busia Town, and Eastern Uganda. Our activities covered by this Annual Report consisted mainly of ensuring that as many children as we were supporting prior to the Covid Pandemic returned to school in January 2022.
- The most recent visit by the Trustees, Harry and Ursula Knox, before the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic was completed in early February 2020. The operations of the Charity were streamlined during that visit so that the Trustees would communicate with the three Private Primary Schools through their Owners/Directors from that time going forward until the end of the project which was due to end at March 31st 2023. There was also an arrangement made to communicate directly with the four secondary schools with regards to students and the payment of their fees if necessary. There was the expectation that the Trustees would visit again in May and in September 2020. Unfortunately these visits could not happen.
- Harry and Ursula Knox had taken approx. 100 children into English Reading Classes using the Phonics method for 3 weeks of the Children's Summer Holidays for the second year running. All of this activity was presented in the 2020 Annual Report and was also detailed in a comprehensive newsletter circulated with lots of photos to all Donors in June 2020. The provision of Jolly Phonics Workbooks and the provision of second-hand early year's English readers along with several hundred African English Readers was made possible **by a grant of €10,000 from the ElectricAid Charity.**
- Two School Libraries were established and stocked with English Readers donated by schools in Ireland as well as with 24 copies of each of 46 titles of a newly published African Reading Scheme. The Children really enjoyed reading these books about African topics when we used them in the three week long Phonics classes in January 2020 that were then used to stock the school libraries.
- The Children could identify more readily with the situations portrayed in the books which were based on typical occurrences in their daily lives and portrayed with characters with their own skin colour.
- The Libraries were set up in the Provident Academy School and in Tiira Parents Primary School. Due to the smaller staggered numbers attending classes in the schools throughout 2021 because of the Pandemic both Principals reported a great interest in reading the Library books.
- The titles in this African series of reading books has expanded from 46 titles to over 70 titles and with typical classes in Uganda having 60 or more children in the classes we intend stocking, provided we can get some grants, the Libraries with class sets of 60 books of each title available. We hope to arrange this after Wilson observes if the books have been well cared for by the school and by the children. We will then purchase and stock the Libraries with the additional Copies during the second term of this school year of 2022
- As text books for each pupil is non-existent in the school classes, sometimes the teacher has to share their own book along with 3 or 4 other copies of the book owned by the school. This year, with the help of the grant from the ElectricAid Charity we donated 12 copies of the Primary 6 English text book to Tiira Primary school so that the three children sitting in the same school desk would one copy to share between them.
- All students enrolled in the project for the school year February 2020 to December 2020 had their fees and their lunches for term one paid for as well as exercise copies and pens/pencils. New school uniforms

were tailored and provided to each student prior to the departure of the Trustees from Tiira in February 2020. Many had received new schoolbags too.

- Unfortunately as part of the response to the Pandemic in Uganda all schools were closed down by mid-March 2020 as part of the arrangements to limit the spread of the Alpha Variant of Covid 19 virus. This was very disruptive for everyone including the 60 families being supported by Opportunity Knox Charity. The Trustees arranged for a 50kg bag of Maize flour to be supplied to each of our families being helped before the end of March 2020. This was to enable the families to come to terms with the initial shock of the lockdown restrictions and to ensure no family or child would suffer from hunger during the initial weeks of the lockdown which greatly unsettled the poorest of the poor families who could not work in compliance with the Government restrictions. The food was purchased and distributed to the families for us by Taaka Hellen, Principal of the Provident Academy Primary School, one of the 3 Primary Schools involved with us in our Project.
- The lockdown continued throughout the 2021 school-year with the return to school on a staggered basis for certain classes throughout the year. This consisted of students in state exam-year classes returning in October 2020 and continuing up to their final state exams for Primary 7 class and Senior 4 and Senior 6 classes which were held in March 2021 and they received their results in April 2021.
- On March 1st 2021 students in Class Primary 6 and Senior Classes 2 and Senior 5 returned to school. On 12th April 2021 students in Primary 4 and Primary 5 classes returned to school. Students in Senior 1 returned to School on the 19th April 2021 and in Senior 2 on the 18th of June 2021. Students in Primary 1, 2, and 3 Classes were scheduled to return to school on the 21st June 2021.
- The trustees were very pleased about the enrolment of students for the 2021 school year on a staggered basis. However, without much warning the entire education system went into lockdown for a six-week period during June 2021.
- Unfortunately, this second lockdown was not lifted after the six weeks and instead lasted six months and schools did not reopen until January 10th 2022.
- The Charity again distributed 50kg sacks of Maize flour in June 2021. All of this has resulted in widespread curtailment of Opportunity Knox activities since March 2020.
- Before we departed from Uganda in February 2020 we placed 5 students in a private Charity-based Vocational School so that they could be given some vocational skills that they could use to earn them some money throughout their lives. There were two students who had completed Senior 4 successfully who we had sponsored for the four years in secondary school. They were brother and sister and were 21 and 20 years of age. Caroline wanted to be trained as a Hairdresser and Joseph wanted to be a plumber. The 3 others were dropouts from the Secondary School and Primary school and were of lesser ability.
- They were in the Vocational School for 6 weeks before the first lockdown was imposed and returned in April 2021 and completed 5 additional weeks. They contacted their former Principal in Primary school and said that they were not getting what they had been promised. There were no tools for the job they were interested in and no work experience of the type promised. All they did was write notes all day and on top of that they were not being fed properly. The Trustees made representations to the Director of the Vocational School but no improvements took place. The students themselves decided to leave the School.
- Since March 2020 we have communicated continuously and directly with all of our schools by using WhatsApp, both by text message and by voice-note. This was to learn the names of the students and their Classes that required payments as they were returning to school. Some of the Primary 5 and Primary 6 students did not return for various reasons including a small number of girls getting pregnant and some subsequently got married. Some children had died or their family had moved.

- Because of the staggered nature of the dates that the students returned to school throughout the year, commencing in April 2021 vastly less money had to be paid for the students concerned, It did mean that there were more payment dates that had to be met throughout the year between April 1st 2021 and June 6th 2021.. Payment to the Primary schools and one Secondary School was made directly by the Trustees by using the World Remit Bank Payment App to the bank account of the Director/ Principal of the School.
- In the case of the other three secondary schools where payments are made to the School Bursars, we were glad to use the voluntary service of Pastoress Molly Namanda Tumusime, owner of Jireh Guest House, where we stay when we are in Busia, and whose help we requested to pay the fees due for the students in their secondary schools. This involved several trips by motor car for Pastoress Molly to cover all 3 schools. These arrangements for the payment of school fees enabled us to keep track of the students returning to school. Copies of all original invoices and receipts were sent to me by WhatsApp messages. The original invoices and receipts for payment are kept by the schools until the next time we visit. In the cases of the 3 secondary schools Pastoress Molly Namanda Tumusime has the receipts for us.
- A year's supply of Sanitary Towels was left with Taaka Hellen, the Principal of Provident Academy and Nursery School to supply to girls who are menstruating. The girls pick up a new supply at the end of their current Period so as to have a new supply at home at the time of commencement of their next period. We have this process in place because menstruation is the biggest single factor that leads to girls leaving school permanently in Uganda.
- It is easy for us to keep track of future payments to the schools because we know the Classes in which each student is enrolled for each year going forward and the only matter to be verified on the ground is that of their continued attendance at their school. No new families will be accepted into the programme. The inspection of the Roll books for each school and the physical checking that those enrolled under our sponsorship are present will be carried out by our volunteer of 4 years Mr. Wilson Bulwa, an employee of World Vision Uganda. He is very familiar with the concept and practice of sponsorship of students by Charities in Uganda and on monitoring attendance and payment of correct fees to schools and dealing with any other issues that pop up of an administrative nature.
- For this this 2022 school year Term 1 commenced on 10th of January 2022 and with the help of Wilson Bulwa and the cooperation of School Principals we were up and running at 100% capacity. Until the travel ban to Uganda is lifted the Trustees will depend on the service of Wilson Bulwa to manage the programme. Some families had moved away from Tiira. Some children had left school because they considered themselves to be too old, in their late teens, to attend Primary School. Some of these older boys had become involved in Gold-mining. Some girls had been married off to local men and others had become pregnant and wanted to stay at home to mind their babies.
- Wilson Bulwa will visit Tiira Village Schools during the second/third week of each Term. He will meet with the Parents, the Students, the school Principals and Bursars. He speaks the local language and has translated for us with all of the above groups on several previous visits. He knows the children and their parent(s) from previous visits and has photographed each family unit and each child on more than one occasion in the past. He has helped solve family problems and he has talked to some of the children previously about improving their attendance level and about discipline issues concerning some children. He has a very relaxed and sensitive approach and his chats bring improved behaviour from the Children.
- Wilson will check the roll books to see which of our children are currently registered and attending school. He will convene meetings of all of the children supported by Opportunity Knox in each school to be called together and have a roll call to check that all those on the roll register are physically there in attendance on the days of his visit.
- He will meet with the parents and deliver them our personal message which gives them real hope for their children's future and telling them that we are going to continue supporting them for the next couple of years. He will meet with the students to motivate them to have regular attendance and to give their commitment to study well and make the most of our sponsorship.

- The parents like to see us and to hear our words of encouragement each time we visit the village. They endure their daily hardship of life but take great encouragement from the fact that people from a faraway place donate money and clothes for their children. Wilson will continue to deliver messages from us until such time as we can again legally and safely enter Uganda. He will do this at the beginning of each Term.
- He will meet with the Principals and Bursars to deal with administrative matters including paying school fees etc. each term.
- He will deal with any existing problems and also to foresee any new obstacles that might arise during term one 2022.
- It is planned that Wilson Bulwa will visit Tiira Village and all the schools for one week (or thereabouts) during the 3rd week of each term. For this first term he photographed all the family units and then the children individually. He has taken these photographs on previous visits for us. He will do follow up visits on two different times each term to monitor attendance and deal with all administrative issues. For Term 1 he visited again in February and then in March. The schools have no prior notice of these visits. Corruption is rife in all aspects of life in Uganda and the Principles, Parents, and children have to know that there will be spot-checks to monitor attendance to ensure that Donors money is being spent correctly.
- Wilson used his monitoring visits during Term 1 to get all class lists for OK children in each school accurate and schools were only paid for students who attendance was regular.
- It will be interesting for us and our donors to see how much each child has grown during the 2 years since they were photographed on our last visit.
- The Trustees will return to their regular visits as soon as the Covid situation allows them to travel safely to Uganda. Wilson hires a car when we visit and he drives us from Entebbe Airport to Busia Town where we stay in Jireh Hotel for the duration of our visits.
- Opportunity Knox is a “no overheads” charity. This means the Trustees pay for all of their own travel and accommodation expenses as well as for all administration costs at home or abroad. The Trustees have made a donation of a minimum of €10,000 per year so far to the Charity, to cover these overhead expenses. They have donated over €10,000 for the period covered by this Annual Report for 2021-2022. They also pay for other out of pocket expenses resulting from their visits. They also pay other amounts directly from their own funds instead of taking them from their Trustee Donations.
- As is the same for all charities, donations over €250 made per calendar year, 40% of the Income Tax paid by the donor on their donation can be claimed back by the Charity from the Revenue Commissioners. This means that approximately €4,000 will be paid back to the Charity for the Trustees donation of €10,000. This brings their yearly donation for this year to effectively €14,000.
- As will be seen in the table at the end of the report as of the 31st March 2022 there was a balance of over €8,000 of Trustee Donations in the OK bank account. A further donation of €6,000 was made by the Trustees in December 2022 and with the expected reimbursement of €4,000 by the Revenue Commissioners in respect of the €10,000 donated in 2021, this mean that approx. €18,000 of Trustees money will be in the account to cover all “overheads” for the year commencing on April 1st 2022 and ending on March 31st 2023.
- A chy3 form has to be filled out by the donors who pay €250 or more so that the Charity can reclaim the tax on the donation made during the previous income tax year and these forms have been completed by the relevant donors.

- The end-date for the project was set for March 31st 2023 at the outset of the founding of the Charity in 2016. However, due to the time lost in school by the children due to the lockdowns during the pandemic, **the Trustees have decided to extend the programme for the full 2023 and 2024 school years.**
- As you will have seen in all expenditure statements going right back to the beginning of the Charity, there has all been an item called “India Project” paid from the Trustees Donations. It refers to help given for essential needs of teenage residents of an Orphanage in Bodhjunnagar, West Tripura State. It resulted from when the Trustees volunteered there in July 2016. In this past year the orphanage has closed. So now we are sponsoring one male student, whose parents died when he was 3 years, now aged 21 years, on a Course for General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) Diploma and a girl, aged 18 years in her final year i of Secondary education.
- The level of funds available to spend on our activities is vital to our continued existence. The majority of our funds come from Trustee Donations and Public Donations. Trustee donations are used to cover all administrative expenses at home and abroad. This includes all travelling expenses incurred by the Trustees in visiting Uganda. The Trustees have continued their donations in 2021.
- The knowledge that all overhead expenses are paid by the Trustees along with all administration expenses in Ireland and Uganda is a major factor in the decision by members of the public to donate to the Charity.
- Public donations are used to pay for all the expenses of students attending schools. These include education fees, porridge lunches, exercise copies, school bags, uniforms, short-term emergency food aid to families who need it and emergency medical aid when needed too. This can, for example, involve getting medical help for children with festering wounds due to burns caused by a pot of boiling water being knocked over while parents are cooking in cramped conditions in their mud huts due to inclement weather.
- We also encounter families that need treatment for a “jiggers” infestation. This is a parasitic disease caused by poor hygiene and so on and is found when children are walking barefooted and sharing the yard surrounding their homes with farm animals such as goats, sheep, or cattle.
- Public Donations have come back up to the level that existed pre Covid Pandemic. We circulated all donors and supporters in February 2022 telling them that children were back in school and the charity was now paying education fees etc and inviting those who could afford it to renew their donations.
- Locally, we had two fundraising events during the summer of 2021. Breda and Brendan Knox, 2 Ormonde Crescent opened their Award-winning urban garden to members of the public throughout the summer months. Small groups were accommodated every day and explored the garden. They were able to purchase young plants that had been propagated by Breda. They were able to sit outside in a suntrap by the fish pond and have some tea/coffee while sampling some of Breda’s home-baked confectionary. Breda has done the same for the past five years and has generated a sizeable amount of income for Opportunity Knox from the €5 entry fee and the sale of plants. Members of the various local Gardening Clubs have been great supporters of the event as well as friends from Kilmacow and other rural areas.
- Another great supporter of the Charity is Marie Ahearn from Lower Kilmacow. Previously she has donated funds resulting from coordinating the sale and exchange of school uniforms for the local national schools. In June 2021 Marie organised a Flowering Plant Sale along with a bring-and-buy cake sale. This was the result of a lot of effort on her behalf ably helped by many of her friends. She also ran a monster raffle comprising prizes donated by local business people and some of her friends. It raised a large sum of money, much more than expected. The fact that this was the first local fund-raiser in the village and parish since the lifting of some of the lockdown restrictions went very much in our favour.

Objectives and Activities of Opportunity Knox Charity.

(This is an extract from our Constitution and Agreed Memorandum of understanding.)

Main Object:

The main object for which the body is established is the promotion of education at primary, secondary and college level for the children from poor families in defined areas in Uganda and in the State of Tripura in North East India. The Trustees will decide on the families and children to be helped as a result of meeting the family and the children and assessing their level of poverty and need. This will be achieved through the payment of education fees for the children as well as providing other supports in terms of food, clothing and bedding, for the families of these children where needed so as to enable them to benefit to the maximum amount from their schooling. This will be further advanced through the provision of scholastic materials to the children as well as education resources and facilities to the schools (not funded by the local authorities) that these children will attend.

The provision of resources and community facilities that will enhance the lives of children and their families in their surrounding community will also be provided for the public benefit where resources are available to the body to fund them. The education of all girls and all boys within each family being helped to the end of high school level will be a priority of the body. All administration costs for the body as well as all personal expenses incurred by the trustees will be covered by the trustees donating at least the equivalent amount to the body. This means that 100% of public donations will go directly to paying school fees and purchasing goods etc that fulfil the objects of the company.

Subsidiary Objects:

As objects incidental and ancillary to the attainment of the Main Object, the Company shall have the following subsidiary objects:

1. Pay School Fees, at Primary, Secondary and College level, which includes a daily meal, scholastic materials and a school uniform, for children from poor families.
2. Pay for mattresses, pillows and blankets for these same children so that they will be best able to concentrate and learn while at school and where necessary to provide basic kitchen furniture as well as food for breakfast for those children whose family does not have the financial resources to provide.
3. Pay for mattresses and blankets for other poor children and their families in the same community where our resources do not allow us to pay their school fees and other needs outlined in (1) above
4. Provide educational resources to school management, teachers and school-going children. The educational resources will include stationary and basic writing and mathematical equipment along with other resources that will enable the school and their pupils to implement the school's curriculum.
5. Pay for small scale projects, such as playgrounds, meeting rooms, re-thatching of mud huts etc that will be for the public benefit of all members of the local community in areas which we support.
6. The body's resources will initially be concentrated in small rural communities in Uganda and in India which will be visited by the Trustees on a yearly basis. In Uganda it is Tiira Village, Busia, and Eastern Uganda. In India it is the Village of Bodhjunnagar, West Tripura State, and North East India.



What a great day! Marie Whelan of Lower Kilmacow organised a Garden Plant Sale and a Bring and Buy Cake Sale and a Monster Raffle. It raised €2605 on June 5th 2021.



The two top photos show some of the mothers of our Opportunity Knox children who got a 50kg bag of Maize flour in June 2021 to help feed their families during the first month of a second lockdown that lasted for six months. The lower photo shows the two boys and two girls from Class Primary 7, Tiira Super Standard School, who earned their Primary Certificate in March/April 2021. The 4th photograph shows a boy wearing his new uniform on his first day returning to Tiira Secondary School during April 2021. Tiira Village can be seen in the background behind the boy. This is the main street of the village. Our families live in their mud huts hidden behind both sides of the main street. Some huts have a small plot of land.