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## **TESO EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES (TESS) IN 2017 AND BEYOND**

I have been asked to write to you on behalf of the TESS Trustees.

### **Changes within Governance of TESS**

In the TESS December newsletter we informed supporters that that Eric Gavin was due to take over from David Sharman as Chair of the Trustees. In view of David's commitment and drive that have sustained TESS's ability to contribute so much to the future of many young people in Teso, we are pleased that David has remained a Trustee.

Although Eric took on the role of acting Chair in January, I am sad to say that he resigned recently from that role and also from being a Trustee. He remains committed to TESS but wants to concentrate on the important and urgent task of raising money without the inevitable and important challenges of being Chair and a Trustee. He says '*a strong focus on increasing TESS's income will sustain its huge contribution to the well-being of disadvantaged young people, their families and local communities, now and for many years to come*'. The loss of Eric is a major blow to the Trustees and Eric drafted much of this letter before he resigned but, following two recent tele-conference meetings held by the Trustees, I have brought it up-to-date.

Joanne Carver is settling into her role as UK Country Manager and the three new Trustees (Hassan Ejaz, Jim Emerson and Paul Phillips) have already made major contributions to governing and managing TESS.

We were hoping at this stage to be able to announce the start of a new Uganda Programme Manager (that new post title replaces the former 'Uganda Country Manager' title). In December we selected a very promising candidate for this post, but when we offered her the job she said she would be unable to start work for a few months because of other commitments. As you will read later, regrettably, a new Uganda Programme Manager will now not be appointed this year.

### **The positive impact of sponsorship**

The Trustees want to express how much we appreciate your contribution to the development of the young people TESS sponsors. Many are orphans because of AIDs or previous armed conflicts. Around 75% of our students are young women in a society where girls tend to lose out to boys.

During 2016, 10 students finished their TESS-sponsored Secondary education and 5 others completed degrees, diplomas, certificates and other advanced studies. Around half of the Tertiary students were in health-related studies including midwifery diplomas, nursing certificates and community health or childhood development courses. The rest were in degree programmes leading to careers in education, agriculture and business.

At the start of 2017 we had 105 sponsored students remaining with us:

- 66 in Secondary schools (59 working towards O level and 7 working towards A level)
- 39 in Tertiary education programmes (vocational and university)

Receiving education beyond Primary level makes a major difference to student's lives and prospects.

Many go on to work in roles where their success brings about lasting improvements to the wellbeing of so many other people of all ages in Teso.

Recent research from UNESCO shows that a Secondary-educated child in Uganda earns 158% more per hour than a Primary school completer; and the children of Secondary-educated girls are twice as likely to survive beyond the age of five as others. Recent estimates suggest that the GDP per head in Uganda (the commonly used indicator of economic output) is only some 5% to 10% of that in the UK. One of the reasons for the slow development in Uganda is the low number of people with education beyond Primary level.

### **The challenges of 2017**

Recent detailed analysis of TESS's income and expenditure in 2016 has indicated that we have enormous challenges to face raising the money needed to sustain our support for the disadvantaged children that we sponsor, to enable them to move through education and into worthwhile jobs.

Recently, three factors have come together to make our task extremely difficult. These are:

- **Exchange rates** - the pound is currently worth almost 10% less in terms of the Uganda Shilling than a year ago
- **Inflation in Uganda** - school fees are around 10% higher than a year ago and the general inflation rate is around 5%.
- **UK support** - Economic uncertainty in the UK means that many people cannot give as much as they did in the past or feel hesitant about taking on new longer-term commitments. Likewise, many businesses and charitable trusts are holding back on new charitable commitments until they have greater certainty about their future income and costs.

The first two points listed above mean that each pound we raise now will buy around 20% less in Uganda than it did just a few months ago and the third means that raising each pound takes far more effort than in the recent past.

Another problem we have experienced is:

- **High cost of Tertiary education** -The costs of university education is 2-3 times that of Secondary education, so as more of our sponsored students have moved from Secondary to Tertiary education the cost to TESS has considerably increased. Unfortunately the amount of sponsorship money received for each university student rarely covers these increased costs.

As a result of the four challenges just listed, for 31 of our current students, particularly those in Tertiary education, there is a shortfall in income. The shortfall over the 31 students is an average of £500 per student per year. In addition we have 4 university students and 21 Secondary students who do not currently have any sponsor who has pledged to support them.

Furthermore:

- **It is hard to obtain money to cover the overhead costs in Uganda and the UK** -Most people like all of their donations to be used to directly support 'their' student, rather than some of it being used to support running costs. Sponsor fees are therefore not currently set to include overhead costs. Whilst we have been able to obtain some funding from a Trust towards Uganda staff salaries we have no regular dedicated funding to cover other Uganda costs and UK costs (i.e. the UK Country Manager – the Trustees are all unpaid). We are urgently working to find ways to cover our ongoing costs including staff salaries.

In the light of the above challenges, the Trustees have had to make some very difficult decisions to immediately reduce TESS's expenditure until such a time as we have a reliable stream of income to cover the costs of existing students and overheads. The initial steps we have decided on for the remainder of 2017, or until TESS is financially stable are:

- Not to offer funding to any new TESS-sponsored Secondary school leavers (from 2016 and 2017) for places on university or vocational programmes
- Not to employ the new Uganda Programme Manager until we can find a stream of sustainable income to finance that cost and the hoped-for development of the Shalom Centre as a place for some vocational training courses.

### **Please can you help?**

Looking ahead, we will need to cut significantly the support we give to our current students and younger people in Teso unless we can raise at least £15,000 in the next three months – and a further £15,000 before the end of the year.

- **Please can you join us in reaching out to your family, friends, work colleagues and acquaintances** to enthuse them about supporting young people in Uganda so we can increase our income? As mentioned above 21 Secondary school students are without a sponsor and 31 other students (Secondary and Tertiary) are only partly sponsored.
- **If you currently sponsor a student please can you consider increasing the amount you pay?** This will help make up any shortfall in the cost TESS has to meet relating to that student (Joanne will be able to inform you about these). The cost per student varies enormously between different schools and colleges, their stage in education and whether they have to stay away from home during term time. If your student is fully-funded but you are still willing to increase your donation then the extra money will be used to make up the shortfall for another student.
- **Please can you arrange any other fundraising events?** Joanne has a list of ideas if you need any inspiration!
- **Please can you (or others you know) make a one-off donation?** Or maybe you can ask people to make a gift to TESS instead of giving you a birthday or anniversary present etc.

If you can Gift Aid your donation TESS will receive an extra 25% from the HMRC.

As Trustees, we will be working hard to attract new sponsors (individual and Trusts) and raise money from our own family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

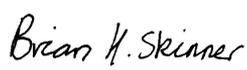
Without a major improvement in funding, Trustees will have no alternative but to cut back on the support we offer to currently-sponsored students, and we may have to withdraw all sponsorship from those who are currently unfunded. This would be very detrimental to the good-standing of TESS in Uganda and in the UK. We very much hope and pray that we can meet the shortfall and then go on to build a secure future that allows us to take on new students.

Moving away from the financial side, if you have some time that you could donate to the smooth running of the UK office, with admin, social media, IT support etc. your help would be greatly appreciated.

To those of you who pray can we also ask for your sustained prayer at this difficult time? If you have not previously asked for the monthly Prayer Guide and would like to receive it then please let us know.

I hope that you have found this letter useful. We thought it was most important to tell you about the great challenges facing TESS in 2017 and ask if you can help us overcome them.

Best wishes,



Brian Skinner on behalf of the TESS Trustees