



Christian **Partners** in Africa

WWW.CPAFRICA.ORG.UK

Spring 2016

the View

In this issue

Desperate Times

These Girls Can!

IT at St Paul's



HOPE IS BEING ABLE TO SEE
THAT THERE IS LIGHT DESPITE
ALL OF THE DARKNESS. 🌧️🌧️

Desmond Tutu

• The Heart of the Gospel?



Paul Quincey

Whenever we have visited friends in Africa one thing that has always impressed me is the faith of the people we meet. Whether Protestant, Orthodox Christian or Muslim communities, faith in God can be found in equal measure.

Yet it is in the midst of these people of fervent faith that I have also seen the most challenging living conditions and obstacles to well being. **Squaring this seemingly contradictory mix of strong belief in a just God who provides, with extreme poverty, is as great a challenge to me now as it has ever been.**

If opportunities of education and job prospects are denied, or poor sanitation and health provision are not available, if unfair trading opportunities and corrupt governance conspire against providing very basic needs for your children, is this faith no more than a leap into the darkness?

Is it possible that the very 'lack' of the basic things that we take

for granted increases the need for faith, in order to bring hope for a better future? Or is the fervent faith that we see in our friends the very catalyst that compels us to act on their behalf.

If like me you are a person of faith believing that the heart of the gospel is to act on behalf of those who are downtrodden, or if your conviction is borne out of compassion for a fellow human being, then in the light of what we see, we must act.

My hope is that as we tell the stories of lives shared you too will feel compelled to act.

Paul



● A Thanksgiving for 20 God-given Years

Ruth Cook

Birthdays are occasions for rejoicing and feasting. Friends and family gather together with happiness and offer their blessings. CPA's birthday was no different!

We turned 20 years old in 2015 and decided to mark the occasion with something special. The date was set; Saturday 21 November, the venue was chosen and the invitations were sent.

The days leading up to the celebration were hectic with long to-do lists (frequently amended!) There were phone calls to be made, presentations to prepare and write, long forgotten photographs to be located and filming, lots of filming! But with this came the opportunity to reflect on shared experiences and moments of happiness, sadness, gratitude and triumph. For me, hearing about the joy of the journey was inspiring, but it also presented a challenge...how do you pack 20 years worth of experiences into 2 hours of thanksgiving?! A challenge we readily accepted!

The day finally arrived. We had dotted our i's and crossed our t's... the time had come for us to share our journey with you... our trusted friends and supporters. The party food was delicious, the setting was perfect and **the place was buzzing with chat and laughter as old and new faces connected.**

The presentation began! We were blessed with messages from our African friends, we heard stories from our Project Children, we laughed with the poet laureate and remembered those we had loved and lost. **There was an outpouring of compassion, love and determination to continue a race that was started so long ago.** The CPA story was told with fondness, laughter, reflection and at times tears!

And then, the celebration was over, guests began to depart, but the journey, the journey continues... carried by you, inspired by you, driven by you... you remain at the heart of it all. **Thank you!** Thank you for believing in us, trusting us and supporting us. What a difference we are making together. **Happy Birthday to CPA!**

CPA NEWS

KOMAMBOGA MINIBUS



Over the last year our wonderful friends at The King's Church in Motherwell set themselves the task of raising £10,000 towards a new minibus for the Komamboga Children's Home in Kampala, Uganda. We are delighted to report that at our 20th Year Celebration they were able to present us with **a cheque for £10,000!** Thank you to Louis Howson, our friends at The King's Church, wider family, friends and work colleagues for this brilliant achievement.



EPHRAIM GENSI

In September 2015 our beloved Ugandan partner, Canon Ephraim Gensi, sadly died. Ephraim was a key contact and advisor to us for many, many years but more importantly a much loved friend. He was the founder of St Paul's Primary School in Rukungiri and was always passionate about children's education, especially for girls. He was widely respected and loved by so many and will be greatly missed by all of us.

CPA OFFICE MOVE(S)



The second half of 2015 was a busy time for us in the CPA office. In October we packed up and moved into a temporary office to accommodate some building work and then packed up again at the end of November to move into a lovely new allocated workspace. We soon settled in and had the Christmas decorations up within a few days! We are still in the same building so all our contact details remain the same.



● Desperate Times

Paul Quincey

Revisiting familiar places and meeting old friends is always a joy.



In November last year Chris and I returned to Ethiopia to visit our good friends in Sefi Beret, but while we were there it became clear that a worsening situation was unfolding. **The most serious drought for decades was already evident** with dead cattle at the sides of the roads as we travelled. At that time 8.2 million people were in need of Emergency Food Aid and this figure has since risen to 10.2 million. The UN stated at the time "Food insecurity is forecast to worsen over the coming months especially in Ethiopia".

The increased impact of climate change and the strongest El Nino pattern ever recorded has resulted in erratic rains over the last eighteen months. The effect of the drought on the area we know so well has **dramatically reduced the supply of water and ruined the harvest**

for many farmers. While we were with the community in Sefi Beret the local farmers were harvesting their crops; **the yield was pitiful, as it has been for two consecutive seasons.** The large pond facilitated by CPA and Tearfund was empty and people were walking miles to get water. Ground water and river levels had seriously decreased and fodder for cattle had gone.

Due to the El Nino effect, the weather is not expected to return to its normal pattern until the middle of the year. Locals told us that they might have just enough to last until the end of December. If the rains do return in mid-March it will be too late; many families will have already eaten the seed for planting, to keep themselves alive. **It is obvious that assistance will be required for some considerable time.**

It was extremely difficult to leave our friends not knowing what the future held for them. Much of Ethiopia is affected and the scale of the problem is difficult to comprehend.

Our partners VWDO, who have had previous experience with food relief programmes, have been asked by the Ethiopian Government to focus on the area where they work. Together with them we want to work to **mobilise resources, help with food relief and supply nutritional supplements for younger children.** As the international community begins to mobilise we will be keeping a close eye on the situation and our friends in Sefi Beret.



The drought is probably going to be worse than in 1984/85. Although Ethiopia has changed enormously in the last 30 years, 80% of the population depend on rain-fed agriculture, which means they remain vulnerable to drought and changes in weather patterns.

The Ethiopian government has made it clear that this is a serious drought and we should expect the situation to get worse.

Home from Home – Girls on Tour!

Ruth Cook and Susie Williamson

Stepping into St Paul's is like going through 'the back of the wardrobe' and into a children's storybook. A world so familiar from pictures and stories comes to life in front of us! We feel so welcome as we walk through the gates and then we see them, Moses, Martin and Shivan, our email companions, and it's like greeting long lost relatives!

The trip holds many memories: gathering in the eating shelter for lunch with children and staff; the cackle of laughter as Jane the Matron spots Ruth and spinning her round exclaims, "You are a good size!" Yes, we most definitely feel right at home!

We spend a few wonderful hours with Apothea, the three Joys, Jane and Charles, guardians of project children from the local community. They came to recount stories from their youth, told by their parents and grandparents around

the fire. **There was so much laughter!**

At our assembly on the theme 'I am Special', the children and staff love learning the song written especially for them to the tune of 'Frère Jacques'. We even attempt to sing it in a round – which ends in more hilarity! We leave the words behind so they can keep singing it.

Our visits to the project families in the community fill us with both delight and heartache. **Such desolation and barrenness greet us, but such proud, confident children, beam with**



excitement because we have visited their homes. At times it's overwhelming: a feeling of being so very useless, but equally knowing that **the scholarship programme at St Paul's makes such an extraordinary difference to every child it supports.**

We meet with one of the community groups who cook the most amazing feast for us. We sing and dance together and they tell stories of how the scholarship programme is helping them and the community. Through our translator, we are able to thank them for their love and care for the children. In turn, they thank us for our love, support and prayers. **We are humbled at the generosity of these amazingly strong and dignified people** and the welcome given to us (and we may have cried)!

On our last day we are invited to spend time with the Nursery children. Oh my

goodness, such beautiful faces full of intrigue and confusion, as we try our very best to communicate with them! Colouring, painting, storybooks, building blocks, face masks and finger puppets are the order of the day. We soon combat any language barriers and the children became our very best friends for one magical morning.

And then, before we know it, it's time to say goodbye, **but not until we march with the whole school twice around the field led by the brass band!** The children sing a special farewell song for us which includes our names, and if that wasn't enough to reduce us to tears (again!) they present us all with thoughtful gifts. All that is left to do is hug and say a teary goodbye.

It now appears that we've all left a little piece of our hearts behind at St Paul's School, our home from home.

STAND UP FOR CHILDREN MISSING OUT ON SCHOOL!

Give a child an education at
St Paul's Primary School, Rukungiri, Uganda

An Educational Scholarship provides a child with everything they need to attend school:

- Resources and school books
- Uniform, shoes and sports kit
- Porridge in the morning and a hot meal of beans, rice and vegetables at lunchtime
- Life skills such as planting and harvesting
- Trauma counselling
- Support for the whole family by designated Social Workers

For £20 a month you can change a life forever.

REAL POVERTY, REAL CHILDREN, REAL LIVES, REAL OPPORTUNITY!

Contact us at office@cpafrica.org.uk or
telephone 01522 544830 if you would like to help.



LOOKING
FOR NEW
SPONSORS!

● Uganda



● IT Training at St Paul's School

Dave Collins

As Chris, the accountant unravelled the twisted spool of electrical wire, I wondered if I was ready for this training session.

With some rather precarious adjustments and a 'shove' the projector came to life and we were ready to begin. Despite the dubious extension lead I was rather looking forward to my first IT training session in Uganda.

Having watched Rosey's Social Media workshop the day before, it was now my turn. Presently the school have some very basic IT equipment, including printers, laptops and an Internet connection of sorts, which is currently used to communicate with CPA and for general administration.

The aim of this training was to help **establish good practice** – we discussed backups, maintenance, updates and filenames. We also explored introducing IT into the school curriculum, to attract students who wished to learn these skills. Currently no other school in the area offers this. It was great to see the team **creating their own IT policies at the end of the sessions** – these will ensure that hardware is kept safe and that software is being used effectively.

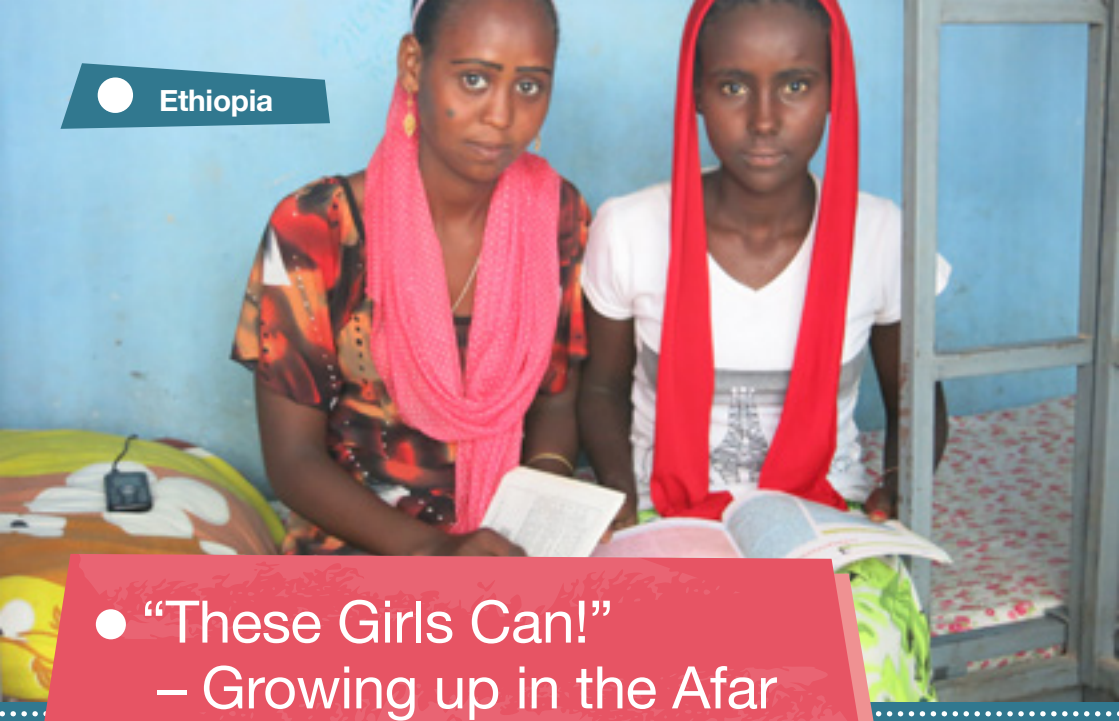
The IT industry is booming in Uganda; last year almost a million people used the Internet for the first time (+). **This upward trend shows just how important it is to get future generations learning these vital skills.** The staff at St Paul's recognise IT as being an important part of the future curriculum and training staff to deliver this, as well as computerised office processes, is a great start.

The next step, to prepare children for the world in which they live and for their own safety, is **to introduce IT into the curriculum and provide a small IT Suite for the P7 children.**

If you would be interested in getting involved or contributing to this project we would love to hear from you.



(+) www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/



● “These Girls Can!” – Growing up in the Afar

Chris Shelbourne

For many centuries the lives of the 1.5 million people living in the Afar region of Ethiopia have been nomadic, with families following their cattle across vast areas in search of good grazing. Life is lived according to a culture and code of conduct that has remained largely unchanged. This is not a culture that champions the rights of women or looks to protect the welfare of its children. They are expected to work hard and children are expected to prioritise family responsibilities before their own needs, including going to school.

Girls have it particularly rough. Most of them are subject to the traditional practice of female circumcision and often find that marriage has been arranged for them by the time they are 12, often to a member of their extended family. Despite

the Ethiopian government banning the marriage of girls before the age of 15 and trying to eradicate the practice of female circumcision it is proving difficult to stop.

It is in this context that our partner in Ethiopia, Voice in the Wilderness Development Organisation (VWDO), is working to promote education among Afar girls. With the blessing of the Government and with funding from the Japanese Embassy, they have managed to build the first senior school in the Afar region and have built boarding facilities for girls to live who are studying at the school. This is a far cry from what we have here in the UK but nonetheless the dormitories where the girls live are clean, there is a dining area where meals are taken and there is access to clean water.



Perhaps most important of all is the **reassuring presence of Roman**, the Ethiopian lady who has given herself to helping these girls. Despite not being from the Afar region herself she is committed to seeing their situation improve and acts as **a mentor and mother to the girls**, making sure they make the most of their opportunity for an education and acting as a barrier against voices in the community that see no benefit in girls being at school. She has on several occasions had to call the police when family members have tried to kidnap the girls and take them back.

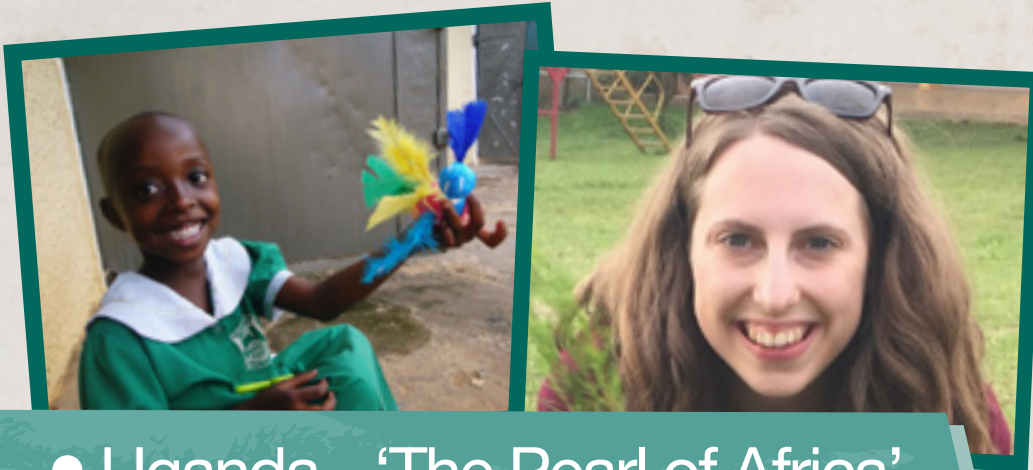
Despite the difficulties of promoting education among Afar girls, Beletew Mengesha from VWDO remains undaunted. Not satisfied with educating girls through senior school he wants to see them get to university and is devising ways of encouraging them to continue through to the equivalent of 6th form and then to university. He is also working with primary schools to ensure that teachers are sympathetic to the challenges facing girls and that teaching materials are

adapted to take into account gender issues. Not wanting Afar communities to continue standing in opposition to promoting education of girls, he works hard to get the message across to communities in any way possible.

Slowly but surely some attitudes are softening but this is a long, hard road. One day we may be able to look back and see this as a critical time of change, just like we look back on the British Suffragette movement. In the meantime we should **salute the bravery** of these people who are looking to change the lives of Afar girls for the better, now and for all time.

CPA is committed to working with VWDO on this project. If you would like to help support this work then please contact us and we'll send you more information.





● Uganda - 'The Pearl of Africa'

Jemma Collins

Dry, barren, warm - whenever I thought of Africa, I thought of this. But during my first trip to Uganda, I realised I couldn't have been more wrong.

I was told about the warmth of the people and the friendly welcome we would receive, but what happened was so much more than that. We were welcomed in **like long-lost family**, immediately accepted and I felt as if I had always known them, our friends at Komamboga Children's Home.

Walking into the courtyard, everything was lush and green. The garden was full of plants and high hanging matoke. It was beautiful. The Home is run as a family and each child is supported through Primary, Secondary and Further Education.

One of the main things that struck me about the Home is that children come back as adults. **You always go back to 'family'**, and the love shown there was evidenced by the way children who had entered as babies, now came back to visit as adults with jobs, spouses and degrees. This project has helped generations and I believe has had a bigger impact than first imagined.

For children to get an upbringing in a loving, protective home means that they themselves can grow up safe in the knowledge of who they are and this is hopefully passed down when they have

their own children. Who knows, as the children grow up and start their exciting careers, maybe some will begin teaching and pass on the important values that they have learnt in this place.

Meeting the Director, Julius made a big impact on me. His vision was clear and as he prayed on our arrival **he described the uniqueness of every child and the huge potential they have**. He had such clarity and confidence when he spoke, it was almost as if he could already see the great future just waiting patiently in the distance for these children.

Some highlights of the day were the outbursts of song; the food; the joy of balloon fun - not just from the children but the Aunties too!; the crafts; and the surprise when we asked the name of the chickens, the response being.. 'Why do they need a name, they are about to be eaten?!'

A lot of people told me how brave I was to go to Uganda before I went, but what

I found was that this place was **home away from home**; I had been missing it all along, and I didn't even realise it until my visit to this lush, flourishing, warm, **pearl of Africa**.





W W W . C P A F R I C A . O R G . U K



ChristianPartners in Africa

15 Newland | Lincoln | LN1 1XG | T: 01522 544830

CONNECT// office@cpafrica.org.uk

DONATE// www.justgiving.com/christianpartnersinafrica

Reg charity No. 1043695. Directors: CJ and RJ Shelbourne, RL Evans, P Quincey, RJ Lambert

Front Cover Photo: Afar Girls, Ethiopia

Back Cover Photo: CPA Tree, Ethiopia | Design by creativehopestudio.com