

## December Newsletter 2020

### Dear Supporters,

When HUGE undertook the handover of NCLC approximately a year ago we were excited yet nervous, especially given the dynamic and experienced shoes, we were trying to fill. However, despite a flourishing start to the school in February 2020, we never foresaw what was ahead and the devastating impact the pandemic would have on Africa and Uganda in particular. With the exception of P7, all other NCLC children have been unable to go to school and have had to stay away since March. Shutting the doors of NCLC at any early stage in March, was a bold and brave act by the government, and thankfully Uganda has to date, fared better in terms of Covid 19, than many other countries in Africa. However, the closure of schools and many workplaces, has brought other life-threatening challenges including lack of food, hunger and disease. Without the safety and routine of school, many children have been forced to work in the fields or sell goods such as tobacco on the streets, leaving them vulnerable and at risk.



These dangers were the very reason why NCLC was originally established and throughout the year, **the children's welfare has been the highest priority** to the staff and everyone at HUGE. Although the pandemic has disrupted education around the world, the crisis is more acute in Africa, where up to 80% of students don't have access to the internet and distance learning is out of reach for many. In rural Nabugabo, this is even more apparent. However, it is thanks to the ongoing help of our Supporters, that the staff and HUGE, have been able to put in positive safety and well-being measures for the children, their families and also those in the community who are vulnerable and at risk. Whilst HUGE is in daily communication with NCLC, the staff have had to work independently without physical overseas support and much praise must go to all of them for their tireless positivity, energy and dedication to support the children and the community.



**It is worth highlighting the Ark** which was an initiative set up by



Dave and Judy Batten, as a safe residential place for vulnerable, high risk children. There are currently 6 children in the Ark. Five of the children have been there long term and whilst it has always been the school's intention to get them back with their families, in these particularly difficult times, this has sadly not been possible from a safeguarding perspective. More recently, we have had another admission of a child and whilst this is very sad, we are all relieved that there is a safe and secure facility like the Ark to care for these vulnerable children. It is not surprising that during

lockdown, children generally have been subject to far greater hardship and with schools closed, have not been able to rely on regular food, schooling and kindness. The Ark has been open since mid-April this year and Oliver, on the NCLC team, has done an amazing job caring for all of the children. It is thanks to our Supporters that we have been able to provide this unique support.

**Primary 7 have now been back at school** for 3 months and Headmaster Vincent is pleased with how the children have coped. The teachers and children have been working hard to catch up and are focussed on the Primary Leaving Exam which will now be at the end of March. In January, we welcome back all of the remaining classes and the staff are working hard to ensure that the school is safe and secure in terms of Covid 19. Ugandan authorities have quite rightly set standards that schools must meet before they can admit students. Schools must have enough hand-washing stations and enough room in classrooms for social distancing. In many schools across Uganda, the relief over the gradual reopening of schools has been overtaken by anxiety over the financial strain caused by the pandemic and how to protect students in often crowded classrooms. Ultimately, this impacts on the parents and guardians, in terms of increased school fees and faced with no money, many say their children will now have to miss the new term because they cannot pay fees. Fortunately, thanks to our Supporters, the parents and guardians of NCLC are not faced with these difficult decisions and all the children can resume school in January 2021. Moreover, the school is well equipped for wash stations,

temperature guns and social distancing

Irene, our well-being officer and Headmaster Vincent **have carefully monitored all the children** at the school particularly in terms of mental and physical health. It is worth noting that the following factors are typical:



- 70% of children are cared for by a guardian or single parent.
- The main source of income for most households is farming. In May, Nabugabo was hit by destructive floods which ruined crops and fragile housing.
- The average household size is in excess of 5 and some are as large as 10.

And last but not least **Seasons Greetings from David and Judy Batten** to all friends and supporters of NCLC from sunny Spain.



*"We hope you are all well and looking forward to a bright and gentle 2021. This year Covid strict restrictions have left us with time to tackle our old farmhouse and sprawling garden, every cloud has a silver lining, or so they say. Our growing menagerie keeps us active and the hens keep us in eggs. Hopefully, the garden will give us a bountiful harvest next year. In the meantime, we wish you all a very restful end to what has been a difficult year for so many of us around the world. Thank you once again for your continuing support of a very meaningful project. Thinking of all of you this Christmas, stay safe"*

### **A HUGE Thank You to all of our Supporters**

None of the above would be possible without the tremendous support we have received from individuals and schools across the globe. We thank Sotogrande International School/The Kindred Project for their commitment to fund raise in such difficult times. Above all, we thank everyone for their support and interest as it is now more important than ever to help these rural communities.

**We are positive about 2021** and look forward to welcoming back all the children and supporting them in what will be a challenging year. Thanks to your continued support, the school has the team and infrastructure in place to move forward with strength. Although, we know that 'normal life' may yet be a while away, we remain optimistic and hopeful that 2021 will be a better year for everyone.

### **The HUGE Partnership**

The HUGE Partnership is UK registered charity which has been set up to make a difference to children in Uganda. It specifically provides financial and resource support to the Nabugabo Community Learning Centre, a primary school set up originally by David and Judy Batten solely to provide free education and support to vulnerable and disadvantaged children, who would otherwise not be able to attend school.

At present the Trustees of the HUGE partnership are unable to travel to Uganda because of the pandemic. However, we are in constant if not daily contact with Headmaster Vincent and his team. If you have a specific query or would like to speak to one of the Trustees please email **Mel Batten** at [melanie.brandon@icloud.com](mailto:melanie.brandon@icloud.com).

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