

King George VI Centre

January to April Newsletter 2023

YouTube link to Independent Living Video: <https://youtu.be/i3h2neWSMRQ>



Night to Shine

Just look at our beautiful young people getting ready for their special night. This was an event organised with the CURE hospital and sponsored by the Tim Tebow foundation



Cupcake Donation

Nothing like a cupcake to cheer up our little ones. Donated for child cancer awareness



Local Donations

It's always good to get donations locally and the children really enjoyed the potato chips!



Outreach Workshops

A well attended workshop on toileting was one of the several workshops held this term.



Capacity Building

We have held a number of workshops for staff including photography and report writing, proudly run by our own alumni, Farai and Constantine respectively.



Easter Bonnets

We even managed a small celebration of Easter although Easter eggs were in short supply the children enjoyed making hats!



Courage Chipatiso

Integrity Icon

We are very proud of Courage who won an award as a civil service integrity icon in a competition sponsored by USAID



A photo says a 1000 words!



Agriculture with production. A group of our seniors learnt how to make grass slashers to keep our grass under control

Sports Day

Despite all the problems the school faces, sports days went ahead for both infants and the rest of the school



FACT 1

Zimbabwe continues to lead the 10 countries with the highest food price inflation globally, a World Bank report has revealed.

Nyasha is our newest bursary student. You can see how much he is enjoying becoming independent!



Our Bursary Students

This is such an important project for us and the children who benefit. Please consider sponsoring one of our children and of course thanks to those of you who continue with your amazing support!

Management Support Team

Thank you to the MST who have led KGVI through another very tough term with endless shortages, ill health, behavioural problems and even drugs making their ugly appearance!



Stop Drug Abuse!

Our Bursary Club students conducted a clean-up campaign as a protest against "fellow youths" who are engaging in the abuse of drugs. "As King George VI students, we would like to encourage our fellow youths to take charge of their lives and say no to drugs" said one of the students who was in the forefront of the campaign.

SBU (Small Business Units)



Value Added Production

Our chili crop with pickled chilies on the left and Michael with pickled beetroot and beetroot crop to the right. Michael is one of our deaf school leavers doing well in the garden and spearheading our pickle and jam projects.



Orchard

After some care and attention our orchard trees are looking good and bearing fruit.



Outpatients

Taking outpatients in our refurbished physio department is another one of our SBUs. This is Milan enjoying an OT session.

FACT 2:

We now face 3 day water cuts and regular 1 or 2 or even 3 day electricity cuts. How can a city operate like this! Health issues are already a problem!

KGVI March 2023

I know that these days most people don't like reading screeds and the KGVI pictorial newsletter can capture most of the news. If you follow us on Facebook you will get more news and some lovely photos. However I thought maybe some people would like a more in depth newsletter, depressing though it may be.

The Bad!

This has been such a difficult term and I really feel for the new Management at KGVI who have been not only facing crises at KGVI but also struggling with their own personal health issues. They continue to learn new skills all the time from wherever we can find material. For now we have to concentrate on finding funds to keep supporting our children. This ongoing capacity building is in addition to dealing with the everyday disasters of life in Zimbabwe! I don't think I have ever known such a sickly term and it wasn't even winter. We had stomach and flu epidemics – possibly the flu was COVID – who knows. It resulted in staff having to take days off and full sick bays in the hostel, with just recently 9 or more children taken off to hospital with temperatures that just wouldn't come down. I can only think that when a country is sick it is contagious to the people who live there! Thank goodness for our hard working nursing team so that we are returning all our children home for the holidays in reasonable health.

The ongoing electricity and water cuts don't help the situation and these can go on for up to 3 days at a time. The water situation in Bulawayo has not been sorted out since the original dams were built way back in the 1950s, all on the same side of town. Yes, we had loads of rain in Bulawayo this season and the trees and grass loved it but on the Bulawayo catchment side the rain was patchy and the dams did not fill. Add to this the incessant electricity cuts and the result is 72 hour water cuts – not good for anyone's health. The shortage of electricity is directly linked to the crisis in South Africa as they can no longer manage to bail us out. Then, we took more than our fair share of water from the Kariba hydropower supply and Zambia also now doesn't want to help us out. So we are reliant on Hwange power station run on coal and antiquated equipment, which we do hear rumours is being updated – fingers crossed! How our power supply company keeps any electricity coming is a miracle. Not to mention the regular theft of overhead copper lines which can plunge a suburb into darkness for days on end.

Thanks to some wonderful donations from the past, at KGVI we have solar power, solar water heaters, a generator and boreholes. These are doing a great job at keeping us self-sufficient but sadly they all need updating, but bit by bit even this is happening. We really do have some good friends out there – thank goodness!

It's the education system that makes me saddest. We all know that post COVID young people all over the world have struggled with education and life in general. Add to this the general lethargy and depression of our teachers and you can imagine how far behind the children have fallen with their education. Teachers in Zimbabwe are reviled and are the lowest paid of all civil servants. Their monthly salaries aren't even enough to cover the daily transport to school. Is it any wonder that they are unmotivated with even the most dedicated teacher unable to perform. Those that can are leaving in droves mainly to the UK, Australia and Canada where, along with our nurses, they are welcomed with open arms to do the jobs that first world citizens just aren't interested in anymore. To replace all the teachers that have left KGVI post COVID we are sent any old teachers, not those with specialisation. So we end up with 10 or more new teachers with no knowledge of disability and certainly no sign language. With the therapy department, we held an induction workshop with new

teachers and were horrified at their lack of knowledge on disability and the special care that so many of our children need. As a result of course, they concentrate on the children without disabilities and our children with special needs fall even further behind. It's encouraging though to see how our boarders hang in there and do their best to catch up with the huge number of subjects now forced on them in the 'new curriculum'.

The Ugly!

I am afraid this is very depressing and only gets worse. Children in Zimbabwe are not stupid – they know they are not being educated properly and they know there is very little for them out there once they leave school. Every province in the country now has its own university and some of them are turning out well educated graduates. Every university has a programme of work experience where the students are interned wherever they can find an opportunity. These are good kids, eager to learn and helpful – I wonder how many companies and organisations are presently being run largely by their student interns! We certainly have some wonderful social work interns who do amazing things with our kids, making up for the lack in their daily schooling! The sad thing is that when these young people graduate there are very few jobs available. Far too many leave the country for greener pastures and the others are on the streets. As school children see this they see no point in education and they take to drugs or any other diversion they can come up with. Yes, even Zimbabwe now has a drug problem – and a serious one! Not for us the expensive and varied imported drugs, our children turn to everyday household supplies that can be mixed together with some nasty extras to make up some pretty toxic substances.

and ...The Good!

However, it can never be just doom and gloom! Time for some more positive news. The support that our staff give not only the kids but also each other is always heart-warming. Zimbabweans always make a plan and they always rally round. I don't know how many times Innocent was dragged out in the middle of the night to take a child or children to hospital! These past two terms the MST and I have been training up our next level of management. We chose 11 Department Supervisors and we have all enjoyed their input and enthusiasm. They are now a tight-knit team and give each other great support. We divided the therapy team into 4 separate departments and this way gave two very promising young men a chance to show their leadership skills. One of the departments is our Outreach programme and with Tend now in charge this has become a very vibrant programme with regular workshops for caregivers and even the forming of parent support groups. Training has included making pads for girls, jam and pickle making, gardening, toileting and leadership. The parents love coming to KGVl workshops as they know they will always get a good meal as well as new skills!

Despite all the school problems the children have still had fun with two new sports being introduced – Wushu (a form of martial arts) and Badminton, where KGVl won gold, silver and bronze medals in a recent tournament. For the boarders at least we introduced all sorts of afternoon clubs to try and make up for some of the lack in their lessons. Despite shortage of funds we have kept going with our events calendar and even though materials were in short supply the kids had a great time making Easter hats. We have to find a way to keep going with the all school/centre events as it helps to inspire us all.

We have had visitors both local and from overseas bearing gifts from potatoes to knitted blankets and toys from OAPs in UK. It was wonderful to have a visit from old scholar, Fisiwe and her family from the States. Hugs from Fisiwe cheered us all up! Our Facebook presence has been strong led

by Constantine and Farai with a different Supervisor in charge of finding material each week. And every week they found something new to post, so we aren't doing that badly are we!

We are so grateful for everyone who has helped us with our funding target which will keep us going through 2023 – thank you! Those who are supporting our bursary children will know from their reports how well they are doing and how much they appreciate your help. We always insist on them doing something for others and we were very proud of them at the end of term when they all went around the local neighbourhood picking up rubbish (and there was plenty of it) and carrying signs raising awareness of the danger of drugs.

For those of you who have persevered reading to the end, thank you! And thank you to everyone who helped in whatever way this term. We now need to start thinking of finding funds for 2024 as we certainly can't just pack up at the end of this year! Please look around and if you find any organisations prepared to fund projects in Zimbabwe and on disability, let us know.