



**FRIENDS OF
IBBA GIRLS SCHOOL
SOUTH SUDAN**

NEWSLETTER
May 2015

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Send to: 12 Ash Grove, Chinley, High Peak, SK23
6BQ

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moneygiving

If you feel you're able to contribute please do so through our link [HERE](#) to Virgin Money Giving! Every contribution counts and anything you do will make a huge difference to our cause! Thank you, from all of us.



Friends of Ibba Girls School

May 2015 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Ibba Girls School

We begin this Newsletter with a brief profile of Yoane Kumbonyaki, the classroom teacher who has been at IGBS from the very beginning, when the first 40 girls started in March 2014. Read the moving story of his long walk to freedom.

1. We also share news, photos and poems about the school, (including news of the sad and untimely death of Bridget's sister, and the birth of head master Richard's first son).
2. We discuss the challenges of how to improve the quality of teaching in South Sudan, and how we are planning to tackle this.
3. We share news of further generous gifts and donations, and invite you to Boogie or Bike or Tithe for Ibba, as well as get to know more about Chernise and Titilayo, and their unlikely passion for zumba and rowing!
4. We specifically ask you to support the 83 current students, and the next 40 ten year old girls who arrive in February, by making a monthly standing order.

1 - Yoane's long walk to freedom - and schooling

As told to Paul Sanders in February 2015



Julia Yoane was born in Western Equatoria State, and at the age of four his father gave him to his uncle to bring up. His uncle had no children of his own and effectively became Yoane's father. It would be twenty years before Yoane would see his real father again.

When Yoane was six the civil war broke out and he and his uncle and others had to flee the fighting. Leaving all their possessions they travelled on foot using tracks through the forest scrub, eventually arriving in the D.R Congo. They lived here for a short time but Yoane's uncle became concerned as persecution from the Arabic fundamentalists was continuing even here, and they heard that a man close to where they were staying had been killed. It was decided that a move to Central African Republic would be wise so they made another long journey on foot.

It was while living in a UN refugee camp in the Central African Republic that Yoane first went to school but the teaching was in French. To support the family Yoane worked long hours in the fields and his uncle made him stay up late into the evening, which made him tired and unable to concentrate at school. Yoane's education suffered. However, with persistence he managed to complete 8 years of primary schooling and then went on to study up to secondary level 4. During this period Yoane had to take a number years out to earn the fees for his secondary school education.

Yoane eventually decided that he should return home to South Sudan, but had difficulty persuading his uncle that this was the right thing to do. He eventually left the Central African Republic and arrived back in Yambio, South Sudan, to be reunited with his father after 20 years apart.

Yoane enrolled at the Solidarity Teacher Training College in Yambio for their two year course. He completed teacher training in 2014, gaining the top marks for his year group, and, with the full support of the college principal, Sr Margaret Scott (who is also one of the Trustees of Ibba Girls School), took up his first teaching post as a classroom teacher at IGBS. He is strongly committed to IGBS and has now moved his whole family to set up home in Ibba.

Yoane is keen to study and develop further as a teacher and would eventually like to gain a degree in education. We hope to be able to raise funds to bring him and two other IGBS teachers to the UK in January 2016, for a month of study in UK schools, and to meet FIGS supporters.

2. Mr Paul's noisy science lessons in Ibba



Part of our strategy for teacher development at IGBS is to bring trained teachers from the UK to Ibba three times a year, as volunteers to teach alongside the African staff, working shoulder to shoulder, and trying to combine the best of African and Western approaches to education. Two experienced UK teachers, Paul and Julia Sanders, came to Ibba for 3 weeks in February and will be returning again in November. Paul taught several maths and science lessons alongside Yoane. Here is his description of one of them:

One girl sitting in a wheel barrow and one girl on the back of another student raced to the other end of the building and back. When asked which was easier all the class agreed that carrying a load in a wheel barrow was easier than carrying it on your back. P5 students were studying a topic called 'Machines that make life easy'. This introduction to simple machines was followed by small groups carrying out an experiment, and at this point the lesson came unstuck. The groups were asked to raise a desk using a lever. One end of a stick was to be placed under the rim of the desk and the back of the chair was to be used as the pivot. The students were asked to move the chair to find out which pivot position would make lifting the desk easier. Despite several attempts to explain the testing procedure again, it became

clear that the girls had never carried out an “experiment” and stood around the table and chair probably thinking that Mr. Paul had been in the sun far too long!

Not to be defeated Mr Paul then asked the class whether he could lift student Margaret off the ground with just two fingers. “No” was the response. Using the longest piece of roofing timber available as a lever, and a brick as a pivot, Margaret rose majestically into the air when a small force from two fingers was applied to the far end of the lever.

Reflecting on this lesson it became clear that the lack of 'hands on' practical experiences in the students' previous educational life had not prepared them for an experimental approach to learning which we take for granted in western educational settings. Or perhaps it was all down to Mr Paul's Lancashire accent!

3. Two poems from Ibba

Margaret Eddershaw and Keith Sturgess are major donors and supporters of IGBS, and have visited Ibba twice. On their last visit they taught drama and sewing, among many other things. They brought back glimpses of life at IGBS in these poems and photos.

SEWING CIRCLES



Teaching Ibba girls to embroider:

A chorus line of green gymslips
clasps squares of canvas,
bright silks and sample stitches,
then glides into circles
beneath the outstretched arms
of mango-trees.

Shaved heads,
smooth as chocolate eggs,
bend over,
hands raise high the needles
trailing coloured threads,
dive down in unison,
stitch forward and back
side to side
in circular chains.

Girlish whispers drone
over shared scissors
before the sewers sway forward
graceful as giraffes
for each pattern
to take its bow.

Through the throng
pushes a skinny girl,
hands closed tight
on an 'insect' that lurked
in her sewing-kit;
she uncurls fingers to reveal
the orange carapace
of a plastic thimble –
laughter ripples round,
a dragonfly dancing circles
on the water-hole.

GAME ON, GIRLS!

Friendly match between eager girls
taking on the beautiful game:

our team's donated kit
in Ethiopia's rainbow colours,
with fluorescent yellow boots
supplied by Hermes, perhaps;
the local priest,
long-limbed as a stork,
on the whistle.

Coach Agnes,
in fake 'Abbibbas' tracksuit,
bare-bottomed son on hip,
a challenge to Jose Mourinho;
supporters' muddy toes
press to imaginary sidelines,
restless vultures behind goal
screech at every misfire.

Many talk of Africa's 'own goals'
but these young women
tackle disadvantage,
dodge and dribble
fleet of foot as antelope
across the uneven playing field,
pass fiercely
between misaligned goalposts,
shoot for that distant winning score.

Both by Margaret Eddershaw, March 2015

4. The death of a sister; the birth of a son

South Sudan has the highest level of maternal mortality in the world (2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births). There is only 1 qualified midwife per 30,000 people, and a woman has a 1 in 7 chance of dying from pregnancy-related causes. Infant mortality is improving slightly but is still completely unacceptable - 104 children out of every 1000 live births die before the age of 5. Overall life expectancy in South Sudan is 54.64 years (compared with 79.5 years for men and 82.5 years for women in the UK).

So people in South Sudan live very close to the fragile line between birth, and life and death. We have just heard of the sad death of Commissioner Bridget's sister, whom several of us met at the opening ceremony for the school in June 2014. We send Bridget and the rest of their family our loving thoughts and prayers, at this time of grieving.

However, we are delighted to hear from our head teacher Richard Aluma and his wife of the birth of a son, to join them and their two daughters. We send them all our blessings and best wishes, and look forward to meeting them before too long.



5. Deep damage caused by long-term conflict

World events are reminding us of the profound long term damage done to people, families and communities by disasters like the earthquake in Nepal, the horrifying drowning of refugees from conflict zones, and by protracted wars between fundamentalists of all persuasions.

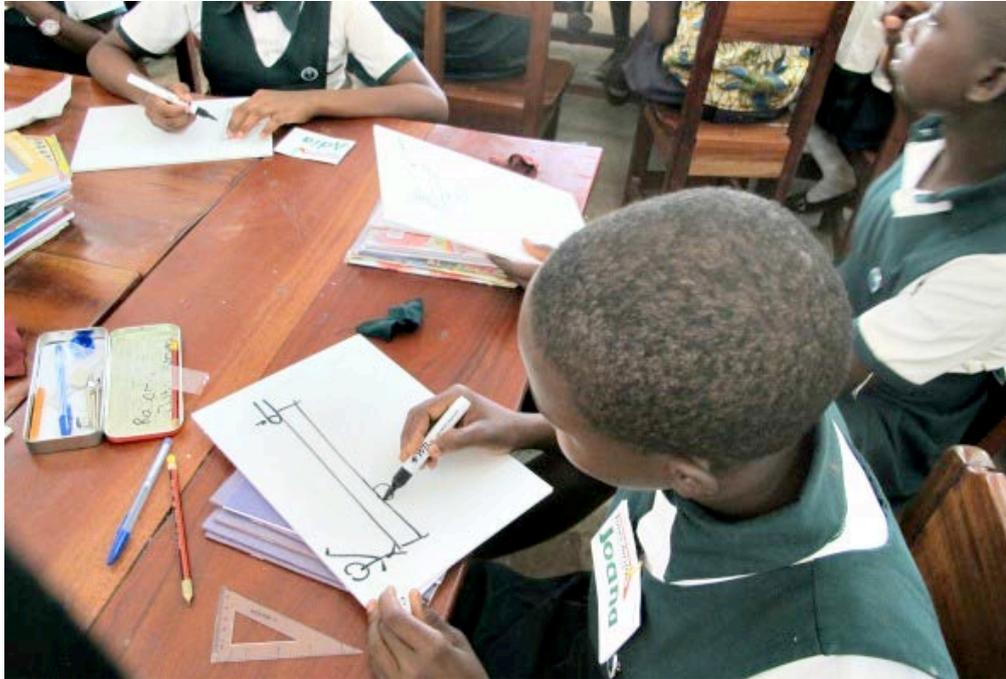
Similarly, our regular visits to South Sudan keep revealing what a terrible toll their 25 years of war have taken, and the damaging long term consequences including:

- The lack of basic physical infrastructure (e.g. safe water, sanitation, electricity, drive-able roads)
- The primitive level of social provision (few well functioning schools, hospitals, health services, businesses)
- The dearth of people with the training, skills and experience to lead the necessary programmes of uplift and improvement.
- The demoralisation and despair arising from years of having to live hand to mouth simply to survive and subsist throughout the long war years.

“Post-conflict reconstruction” trips lightly off the tongue of many international development agencies, but in practice recovery takes a very long time and depends upon painstakingly detailed, unglamorous work often starting at the local level.

Which is why we are trying to develop IGBS as a small visible example of what good schooling might look like in practice. However, the destruction and the after-math of the long war with north Sudan means that everything (including schooling) starts from a very low base indeed.

6. The need for teacher training and continuing professional development



A recent report from the DfID funded Girls Education in South Sudan (GESS) programme has highlighted the need for some very basic training and development of teachers.

They found that a high proportion of teachers in South Sudan lacked basic proficiency in English and maths; had limited ability to apply literacy and numeracy skills to routine teaching duties, such as classroom administration, keeping records, calculating students' test scores, spotting patterns in students' achievements, and using resource materials to develop lesson plans.

These results may, in part, be attributed to teachers' lack of training and qualifications. Almost half of teachers have only primary school education and about 60 percent have not received any teacher training at all.

We are trying to tackle this problem in Ibba by:

- Appointing African teachers who are already well trained and qualified.
- Selecting experienced UK teachers to go to Ibba as volunteers three times a year (once each term) to teach alongside the African team and to run capacity building workshops to support their further training, and on the job development.
- Trying to raise funding to bring IGBS teachers to the UK once a year (in January, during their Christmas school break) to work in selected UK schools, shoulder to shoulder alongside experienced UK teachers
- Offering intensive English language lessons for all staff and students at the beginning of each year and throughout the curriculum
- Creating a learning network among teachers - extending these development opportunities in South Sudan to the teaching staff of other schools in Ibba County, including St Peter's ECS Primary school, and the state secondary school.

7. Introducing Chernise and Titilayo

As a small UK charity we depend heavily upon the generous giving of literally hundreds of ordinary people like yourself, and teams of volunteers to help raise the funding and get things done. We pride ourselves on the fact that 98% of all donations received goes straight to Ibba to build the school and support the staff and students.

We also realise the importance of a rigorous professional approach to managing the money, the contracts, the volunteers and the school - and to keeping all donors and supporters properly informed and involved. We therefore strive to be accessible, relational and transparent.

So it's in this spirit that we have recently hired Chernise Neo, from Westwood Fundraising, to help FIGS with fundraising and coordinate our relationships with FIGS donors and supporters*. Chernise will further be assisted by Titilayo Adebola, a PhD student from Warwick University who has kindly volunteered some of her time to help FIGS.

Chernise and Titi will receive and respond to the vast majority of your emails and letters. Let them introduce themselves...

Chernise

Hello, I'm Chernise, and I coordinate all the supporter communications for FIGS across emails, website, social media, post, events and so on. Growing up in Singapore, I had the opportunity to attend an excellent girls' secondary school there – effectively the Ibba Girls' Boarding School of Singapore – and then went on to study Politics and Sociology at Warwick University in Coventry.



Travelling to Ibba last June, I'm second from the left.

I've been passionate about social justice since doing a school project on Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement at the age of 10, but only realised that this could become a career after raising £10,000 for a charity one summer. Since graduating, I've worked as a fundraiser for some wonderful charities, and part-time for my local church. In my spare time, I enjoy cooking Singaporean food, Zumba, and having heated discussions with John and others about Generation Y!



Interviewing the first intake of 40 girl students.

It was fantastic to visit Ibba for the school's opening ceremony in June 2014 – the singing and dancing and the girls' stories are unforgettable – and I'm really looking forward to bringing you updates as the girl students progress through to Secondary 4.

[Titilayo](#)

Hello, I'm Titilayo and I volunteer for FIGS. Growing up in Nigeria, I attended a girls' secondary school similar to the Ibba Girls' Boarding School and my memories of secondary school are filled with laughter, friendships and optimism. Significantly, I had teachers who genuinely cared about my academic progress and invested in helping me fulfil my potentials. This spurred me on to study law at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State, Nigeria and subsequently, International Economic Law at the University of Warwick.



During my studies at the University of Warwick, I took an Intellectual Property Law course which included a topic on intellectual property rights for the 'software in seeds'. I was particularly intrigued by the notion of protecting seeds, and this informed my decision to undertake a PhD at Warwick. My doctoral research is concerned with intellectual property law- making for plant varieties in the Global South.

In my leisure time, I enjoy cycling, dancing and more recently, rowing. I discovered my love for rowing last year while visiting a friend in Durham, where despite the trepidation of falling into the River Wear, I successfully rowed for about 30 minutes.

I decided to volunteer with FIGS after Chernise told me about it because the Ibba Girls' Boarding School reminds me of my secondary school and I would love to contribute, albeit in a small way, to giving Ibba girls the same opportunities that I had.

8. Raising the roof for Ibba girls every year



We are building and developing IGBS in a series of annual steps, starting with the first 40 ten year old girls in 2014, the second intake of 40 ten year olds in February 2015, and increasing by 40 girls each year until the school reaches its target of 360 girls in Feb 2022.

This means that each year we aim to raise the funding for an additional classroom, dormitory, and staff accommodation on site; plus the wages of an additional teacher and matron, as well as the costs of teaching, feeding and accommodating all the girls.

Chernise Neo and a team of volunteers (John Scouller, Jane Hill, Natalie and Phil Rothwell, Carl Pearson and John Benington) coordinate this fund-raising, with support from many others like you.

1. Sponsor Students At Ibba!

A growing number of people are committing themselves to giving £27 per month to support the girls at IGBS throughout their schooling. [If you have not already joined this groundswell, please sign up now](#) (details below).

2. Tithe for Ibba!

St Nics Church in Nottingham have donated a further £10k on top of their previous donation of £32k! This extraordinary generosity is a 10% "tithe" of the costs of the refurbishment of their own city centre church building.

3. Saints Alive for Ibba!

Further generous donations have also come from some of our existing church supporters, including Christ-the-King, Radford (Coventry) and St Stephen's Canley (Coventry). Two other churches have also chosen to support FIGS, with gifts from St Margaret's Wolston and from Kenilworth St Nicholas & St Barnabas. Together these gifts amount to over £7,000. Thank you all!

If you are a member of another [church](#) or [denomination](#) which may be interested in making a donation, please contact John Scouller on johnscouller@hotmail.co.uk.

4. Pray for Ibba!

If you would like to receive a regular prayer letter please e-mail Jane Hill on jane.hill@btinternet.com.

5. Bike for Ibba!

Dawn Hart is doing the London 100 sponsored cycle ride in August, with a target of raising £1000 for FIGS. Go to [Dawn's webpage](#) to donate.

6. Boogie for Ibba!

Jane Hill has organised a jazz concert on Saturday 26th September to support FIGS. Bring your friends and bopping shoes!

An Evening of Jazz with Julie Dunn on vocals/piano and Ray Butcher on trumpet on Saturday 26th September, 8pm, at [Kineton Sports and Social Club, Little Kineton, Warwickshire, CV35 0DT](#). Julie is a versatile and highly talented pianist and singer, who regularly plays in jazz clubs and hotels, as well as other venues including the National Theatre foyer. Ray has played in international jazz and blues festivals, and has worked with some top names

in the field, including "King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys". It promises to be a great evening! Proceeds to FIGS. Tickets and more details from Jane Hill: jane.hill@btinternet.com.

Sponsoring students at Ibba Girls Boarding School



Some of our first cohort of girl-students at IGBS.

Please would you consider sponsoring a girl-student at Ibba Girls' Boarding School (IGBS)?

Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS) has taken some time to compare the child sponsorship schemes run by other voluntary organisations, to learn from their experience.

We have now designed a sponsorship programme that meets the specific needs of Ibba Girls' School at this early stage in its development. The programme aims to identify sufficient sponsors to support everyone in our two classes – now totalling 83

girl-students in Primary 4 and Primary 5 – on a cohort basis. In a country where over 50 percent of the population live below the poverty line, and GDP is a mere £880 per capita each year, we did not wish to single out and give preferential treatment to just a few sponsored girl-students. We do not know of a single student's family who can afford the full cost of fees at IGBS, and some struggle even to pay their nominal contributions each term.

So we are searching for 83 sponsors who will commit to supporting these girls through the 9 years of their schooling – from Primary 4 to Primary 8, and then Senior 1 to Senior 4. The level of sponsorship recommended is **£27 per month** (plus Gift Aid). While higher than some child sponsorship schemes, it still does not meet the full costs of running a residential school in the challenging conditions of South Sudan – where in addition to the classroom teaching, we provide a safe, caring living environment which enables the girl-students to learn without the pressure of heavy domestic duties or, even worse, early marriage and childbirth. This means providing dormitories, beds, matrons, cooks, food, water, internet, transport, security, pastoral care – as well as teachers and other staff living on-site around the clock.

As one of our highly valued sponsors, you will receive:

- A monthly Newsletter about the school, staff and students
- An annual review of the school as a whole
- An invitation to our Annual Meeting (this year Saturday 17th November in Coventry)
- A detailed report every six months about the specific cohort of students whom you are sponsoring, with names, photos, stories and their progress through the school, until they complete Senior 4.

It is intended that during their time at the school each of the girls in the cohort will have been profiled at least once in these reports, so that you will get to know their individual stories. Because Trustees and others from FIGS regularly visit Ibba, we know the girls we will be updating you about.

So please would you set up a monthly standing order for **£27 a month** (plus Gift Aid), or increase your existing giving to that level, to sponsor the first 83 students at IGBS?

[Please do it now – and please ask your friends to do the same.](#) You will find our

bank details on the giving form below; simply set up your standing order and return the form to Gary, our Treasurer, at: Gary Bandy, Honorary Treasurer – FIGS, 12 Ash Grove, Chinley, High Peak, SK23 6BQ.

Should you have any further questions, please contact Chernise, our Student Sponsorships Coordinator, at chernise.neo@gmail.com.

Of course we are continuing our fundraising for capital cost - for the buildings and resources required for the next in-take of 40 girls in March 2016. If you feel you're able to contribute please do so by clicking on the 'Donate' button below! Every contribution counts and anything you do will make a huge difference to our cause!

Thank you!

With our best wishes and warm thanks for your continued support and generosity.

John Benington Chair, on behalf of the Trustees and Friends of Ibba Girls School

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SIGN UP HERE FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS NOW
