

King George VI Centre

January newsletter (Report No 1)

Please can you all share with your contacts our fund raising effort in support of the kids at home. The more we can send this around the better. <https://gofund.me/87c603c4>

Link to our COVID song, written by Laura and sung by Prudence: <https://youtu.be/OOtzoBnKZdY>

Best wishes to you all for 2021. I know we all had hopes that this year would be better than last but I guess for most of us it will be just as difficult. Our thoughts go out to all of you all over the world who are struggling with lockdowns and soaring infection rates.

From KGVI there is little news but bad news! Zimbabwe has been locked down again since early January as our COVID numbers are now increasing in a very worrying manner. We managed to escape the worst of the pandemic last year but with all the movement of people between Zimbabwe and South Africa our numbers are now spiralling. Despite all the threats most people continue to ignore the lockdown as economics probably have a more dire and direct effect on most people. Added to our problems are that we have no health care worth speaking of and only a couple of private hospitals with any capacity to care for intensive care patients. Vaccinations? Not likely any time soon and we have already been told that when and if we get any, these will go to the selected few – and we all know this does not include the most vulnerable!

What this all means for our children is that once more they are not able to come to school. In a bizarre move it was decreed that despite the lockdown regulations, those children writing public exams had to come back to school to finish the exams they had started in November. For KGVI this meant we had a handful of children still to write O level exams but all but one of them decided to come for the individual exams from home, leaving us with only one girl in the boarding. She was supposed to go home after her last exam but as travel between towns was shut down she was stuck at KGVI for some time.

At the end of last year we had to deal with a number of nasty problems. For our disabled children more than most, lockdown is tough. We know that many of our families can't wait to send them back to school after a short holiday. How much worse it must be for these children when they have to spend months on end feeling unwanted. We had a very serious issue with one of our senior students who came back with the exam students. He was already depressed when he got back to KGVI but questions about his owning 2 mobile phones pushed him too far and he ran away leaving suicide notes in his room. After some frantic days when, despite all our efforts, we could not find him anywhere he was finally seen north of Harare. In the meantime his family attacked KGVI on all social media platforms and stirred up a total storm which was very disturbing for everyone. Our main concern was always the safety of the boy and we were all very relieved when he was tracked down in Harare and taken to stay with a sister. He is one of our bursary students and has been well cared for by KGVI since he was a little boy. In 2019 we had arranged for him to stay at KGVI whilst attending a neighbouring school as he was passionate about IT

and we couldn't offer him this speciality subject. Now we really worry for his future as he is an orphan and regularly passed around among family members.

On top of all this we have had two break-ins and theft where we have lost chickens and pump components. Desperate times always result in an increase in thefts and KGV I is a big property to keep a watch on. It's all very depressing and doesn't help our pledge to become more self-sufficient!

All these challenges have tried the strength of the new management at a time when everyone's stress levels are way too high. Hats off to Loma who has stayed committed and done her best through it all. Now we just want to move on and get our children back safely so we can attend to the physical and mental problems they have had to face, never mind the lack of any kind of ongoing education. When they do eventually come back we know we will have to put in place a counselling programme to help them all with the traumas they have been facing.

In the meantime, as this lockdown moves into February, we will have to find the funds to continue to feed our children as this is essential for their health and wellbeing. By the end of last year we were sending our food packages to an unbelievable 180 children. Thanks to everyone who helped with this tremendous effort.

The only bit of good news from Zimbabwe is that we have had amazing rains and hopefully rural people will be able to harvest the staple maize crop. However this will only be from April onwards and in the meantime people have nothing and in towns they will continue to have nothing. With informal traders shut down for the lockdown most families have no regular income and I fear without our help, yours and ours, our children would really suffer.

Our own bit of good news is that we have just had a meeting with a new orthopaedic hospital that has amazingly enough been situated in Bulawayo. (*Our vision for the CURE Children's Hospital of Zimbabwe is to create the first specialist children's orthopaedic unit to serve the children of Zimbabwe, which will operate alongside and complement existing healthcare provision in the country. The CURE Children's Hospital of Zimbabwe will treat children who are living with disabilities helping them return to normal life.*) This is an amazing facility that will treat our children for free (!!!).. Because of the COVID restrictions they want to start working with KGV I children rather than bring in children from farther afield. A great new project for us to get excited about if only we could get on with our lives!

KGV I would like to express our sorrow at the loss of the American gentleman who has been giving us such amazing support for over ten years. We will of course miss his financial support but also his caring and his commitment to our children. He was a wonderful person and I will always be sad that he never managed to visit the children he so steadfastly supported. May he rest in peace.

Please will you all take care of yourselves wherever in the world you are. Our thoughts are with you as we know yours are with us. Thank you again for all your amazing support and it is comforting to know you will not abandon us despite all the troubles you are facing in your own countries.