



FRIENDS OF
IBBA GIRLS SCHOOL
SOUTH SUDAN

February 2017

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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.



"There is a crack in everything – that's how the light gets in"

Dear Friends,

Leonard Cohen's song 'Anthem' contains the moving line "There is a crack in everything – that's how the light gets in."

The capacity to see small chinks of light breaking through the darkness is necessary for all who live and/or work in South Sudan, where the cracks are all too evident just now.

Continued political volatility, economic instability, and social breakdown have created conditions of dire risk, poverty, homelessness, and hunger for thousands across the country. And now famine has been declared in the northern parts of the country.

However, mercifully, Ibba has remained calm (and adequately fed) throughout the disruptions that have destabilised many other areas, even including Yambio, Yei and Kajo-Keji.

Courageous leadership has been offered by Ibba's County Commissioner Tito Gerusama, by the Chairman and Board of Governors of Ibba Girls School, and by our Headteacher Richard Aluma – all of whom work tirelessly to tackle differences and conflicts through dialogue and negotiation rather than by fighting.

So, you will be pleased to know that Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS) re-opened as planned on Monday February 6th, for the start of its 4th year as a school.

Read the rest of the good news and the challenges below – and see how you can help support FIGS and IGBS on International Women's Day March 8th.



Headteacher Richard Aluma in the staff room.

1. Students - the long, hard road to good schooling

Against all the odds, 160 girls aged from 10 to 14 years are now enrolled in primary classes 4, 5, 6 and 7. Most of these students have already arrived safely back at IGBS for the start of term. Others are arriving daily as their families find ways to make the long, dusty, difficult and sometimes dangerous journeys to IGBS by bicycle or boda-boda (small motorcycles, on which a family of 4 or 5 will often ride together). The staff are in touch with many of the remaining families and aim to have the full 160 in class within the next few days.



The new cohort of girls enrolled in Primary 4.

2. Staff - committed to improving teaching and caring

All existing staff are back at work at IGBS, apart from Agnes who is on maternity leave. Her baby arrived safely after a Caesarean operation. Both are doing very well.

An additional classroom teacher, Uyaka Joseph, has been appointed and is already at work as part of the teaching team led by Director of Studies Vicky Dratia, already including Yoane and Fabiano. All three of these classroom teachers have been trained at the Solidarity Teacher Training College in Yambio. We are aiming to help them continue their professional development up to diploma level while on the job.



"I was born in Nzara County and went to school in Yambio in the former Western Equatoria, so know this area well. I am an experienced primary school teacher, having taught for a total of 5 years in Government and private schools in Nzara County. I have also recently completed a two-year pre-service Certificate in Primary Teaching from Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio." - Uyaka Joseph, our new classroom teacher.

A new senior woman teacher, Pascah Kimeli, has been appointed after an extensive selection process (involving FIGS Trustee Julia Sanders via Skype) and is expected to start work on Sunday February 27th. In addition to classroom teaching, Pascah will be responsible with Nurse Jovia and the 4 matrons (see below) for the pastoral and extra-curricular care of the students, including personal, social, health and sex education.



Pascah Kimeli, the new senior woman teacher at IGBS, has a BA in Education and English Literature from Kampala International University, and 5 years teaching experience, most recently at Loreto Girls Secondary School in Rumbek, South Sudan.

A 4th matron, Ms Joyce Angelo, has been appointed and has received a week of induction and training with the other 3 matrons, in preparation for the arrival of the 40 new P4 girls (who for the time being will share one of the existing dormitories, until we can raise the remaining funds for Dorm 4).



Our new matron, Joyce Angelo.



The other matrons and teachers at lunch.



3. New buildings and upgrading equipment

The existing 4 classroom block has been redecorated, some floors repaired to reduce the dust levels, and additional plug sockets for computers installed in the staff room – all is now fresh and back in use.

The new 3-classroom block is nearing completion - the electrics and ceilings should be finished this week, and then the building will be decorated inside and out.

We are also upgrading the solar system and the backup generator to provide more reliable electricity so that students and staff can study in the evenings. Being near the Equator, Ibba gets good sunlight most days from 7 am to 7 pm, but there is no “mains” electricity supply in most of South Sudan, so IGBS is totally dependent upon its own solar powered electricity supply.

We are also upgrading the satellite internet system, as there is now no telephone service in the Ibba area, since the mobile phone providers have pulled out. The nearest phone signal is now in Maridi – 1 and a half hours drive away. Reliable internet and Skype are needed to provide security for the school, access to online learning resources, and good communication links to the outside world.

We owe warm thanks to our architect Malcolm Worby and our builder Joseph Anzeti for the good quality and sustainability of all this work.



The new 3-classroom block.



The existing and redecorated classroom block.

4. Fundraising

The funding for all the new staffing, buildings and equipment mentioned above has been made possible by remarkable giving by literally hundreds of generous people like yourself, plus repeated donations from a number of loyal churches, and family Trusts:

The China-based Zhejiang Wonder Public Foundation, which last year gave a grant of USD135,000 towards the third dormitory block, has now agreed to give an annual grant of USD90,000 towards dormitories and other school facilities until 2022. The Foundation is firmly committed to education, and particularly to continuing girls' education even in desperate and difficult circumstances. We are thrilled to partner with them and look forward to working together to reach our key developmental milestones over the next six years. (Warmest thanks to Chernise Neo, our part-time fund-raising co-ordinator, who negotiated this partnership agreement – largely through an ancient and modern exchange of text messages combining Mandarin and Emojis!)

Joyce Carr Doughty Trust (chaired by our Friend Anthony Lawton) is undoubtedly one of our favourite Trusts. They have taken a close interest in the Ibba school project since its inception in 2011, meeting regularly with FIGS Trustees to hear about needs, responding quickly to practical requests, without asking for reams of paperwork, and above all keen to make a rapid practical impact. They have funded

the school's Toyota 4 x 4 vehicle; the purchase of bicycles to help support staff (cooks, cleaners, security staff) travel to work from Ibba village, the building of a septic tank and food store, and most recently the upgrading of the solar system. Thank you, JCD!

The Horne Family Trust is another loyal long term partner in the development of IGBS, contributing around £27,000 per year towards the costs of teaching, learning and caring for the girls in Ibba. Thank you so much Rachel and Mike!

Other Family Trusts and individual donors who are committed to supporting IGBS through thick and thin include the ABC Trust, Deus Laudamus Trust, Margaret Eddershaw and Keith Sturgess, Serena Lancaster, Hugh and Eleanor Paget, Eric and Joanne Shepley, - and many more whose permission to name we will seek.

Big Give 2016 - Huge thanks go to all of you who supported Ibba Girls School in the Big Give 2016. Thanks to you we were for the first time able to exceed our campaign target, unlocking every penny of our £24,400 matching funds. Along with Gift Aid, this means that £54,000 in total was received for Ibba school facilities.

Pensioner Power - John Benington's 75th birthday appeal has now raised £16,769 plus Gift Aid, from a network of 115 very special friends, many of whom came to one or other of his 75 birthday parties (1 party still to come). See the list of donors on our website. Thank you all of you - and please get ready for his 100th birthday appeal!

Churches - Donations by churches to FIGS exceeded £15,000 in 2016. Whilst much of this was repeat giving from a network of loyal churches in Coventry and Warwickshire, we were delighted that several new churches with whom our supporters have connections made donations: St Peter & St John Church Rugby; Nailsea Methodist Church Bristol; St Catherine's Stoke Aldermoor; Grosvenor Chapel London. A significant proportion of church giving is linked to activities (such as Lent Lunches, community cafes), and events like film nights and talks about the school. So not only is FIGS receiving gifts, but many more people are coming to hear about Ibba Girls School through this outreach.

Student Sponsorships and Standing Orders - Warmest thanks go to our 51 Student Sponsors, who give at least £27 each month, many more, so that girl students can receive books, stationery, clothes, food, and all the other basic requirements that allow them to live and learn undisrupted at the school. We would particularly like to welcome Tim and Chay Cochrane, Brenda Hunt, Robert Kornreich and David

Markall, all of whom have become Student Sponsors in the last few months. We look forward to sending your first Student Sponsor progress reports soon.

We would also like to thank the 49 regular givers who have monthly standing orders to FIGS. Many of you give generously, and even sacrificially given your circumstances, so that girls in South Sudan can stay in school, and we and they can't express our gratitude enough.

If you would like to become a Student Sponsor or a regular giver yourself, there is no better time, with 40 new girl students just starting at Ibba. Do get in touch with Chernise at connect@ibbagirlsschool.org to let her know.

5. 'Be Bold for Change' on International Women's Day, Wednesday March 8th

Pamela Lomoro and Jean Hartley, both FIGS Trustees, and both academics at The Open University, have been invited to speak at the OU lunchtime event on International Women's Day. With the theme of 'Be Bold for Change', they have been asked to talk about the education chances for girls in South Sudan, and how they themselves got involved in building and developing Ibba Girls School.

They will be part of a 2-hour event with several speakers on the theme of women, education and change. The event will be advertised to all 6,000 staff and many of the OU's students so we are pleased to be able to get such coverage in the UK's largest university. Jean has also been asked to speak about Ibba Girls School at another OU event in May.

6. Speak Up for Ibba and #wearitgreen on International Women's Day

Wednesday March 8th

Would you tell the extraordinary story of the Ibba girl students?

This year's International Women's Day theme is #beboldforchange. We think there is little bolder than girls and young women continuing to go to school in the face of conflict, threats to personal safety, spiralling costs, gender norms, water, sanitation and hygiene issues, and countless other barriers to learning in South Sudan.

Ibba Girls Boarding School aims to systematically tackle each one of these barriers, giving girls the power to learn. And so, as the school opens its gates for the fourth year of teaching, learning and campus life, we want to celebrate this miraculous re-opening with you.

This March, we're asking that you would **speak boldly for the girls studying in Ibba**, who each day are showing that girls' education is possible and beneficial.

Is there a local forum where you might be welcomed to speak about the school – maybe your local Rotary Club, Church, School or Community Centre? Or perhaps you would like to hold your own event, inviting friends and family.

Wherever you'd like to speak, we want to support you. Please get in touch with **Anya** (at connect@ibbagirlsschool.org) if you're planning a talk in the near future, and we would be pleased to send you a "Speaker's Pack" containing PowerPoint slides, keynotes and pointers for your talk, and publicity materials that you can customise and print.

Last year's popular #wearitgreen campaign returns for International Women's Day 2017.

In addition, we are showing our support for the courageous Ibba girl students again this 8th March, by 'Wearing It Green'.

Simply post a photo of yourself wearing an item (or an entire outfit!) of green clothing on Facebook or Twitter, with the hashtag #wearitgreen and a message for the 160 girls starting a new year at Ibba Girls Boarding School. You might want to write particularly to the returning girl students, who will be raring to learn for another year, or to the 40 new girl students who are just enrolling to start their IGBS journey.

This International Women's Day, please stand with the Ibba girl students boldly, to support and spread the word about the change these girls are bringing in South Sudan.

PS. If your local community organisation is only able to offer speaking slots later on in the year, you are of course still very welcome to Speak for Ibba then! Do email **Anya (at connect@ibbagirlsschool.org)** to request a Speaker's Pack; we will be delighted to support you.

PPS. And if speaking isn't your thing, but you'd like to Bake, Ceilidh, Cycle, Hike, Run, Sing or Write Poetry for Ibba – or something else entirely! – then we would equally love to support you, so please do contact **Anya (at connect@ibbagirlsschool.org)** to let her know.

Thank you!

With our best wishes and warm thanks,

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

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