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Under Tree Schools is a Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No 1117679
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Dear Supporters

December 2022

Alongside the pupils, staff and school community we thank you for your continuing support for our school for girls in South Sudan.



Not only school lessons are part of a day at our school, but looking after the land and clearing the school compound!

In our last newsletter in July we told you of the record numbers of girls keen to come to our school, 460 turned up to lessons in the spring! Clearly the school has an excellent reputation in the area. Parents like the idea of a school just for girls, rather than the mixed sex schools run by the state.

But numbers able to get to school took a tumble in the autumn when the area was deluged with heavy rain leading to severe flooding. A number of the girls walk substantial distances to come to the school, and the route was often impassable. Younger girls were unable to get across the river that blocked their path. Amazingly, we learn, a number of the older girls actually swam across the river to keep up their attendance at classes! We are not sure that would happen in our home lands!

What floods like these mean in terms of the loss of the prospective harvest is devastating, especially in communities that so heavily rely on what is grown locally.



We have continued to send funds to the school every two months to pay the staff a modest wage which supplements their salary from the state. Their government salary is paid often late and irregularly. We have 20 teachers and 18 admin staff, including the cooks who produce the children's daily lunch, the two cattle keepers who look after the school's herd, the caretaker, the pastor and his staff at the chapel. Then there are the regular running costs, including for stationery, funds for the sewing teacher who makes the free school dresses the girls get, and repairs to the school.

Then there are occasional capital costs. We said in the last newsletter that we had sent money to erect a fence to keep the school's herd of cattle from roaming around looking for food. If the cattle are enclosed they put on weight faster and become more valuable to the school.



The latest capital project is the replacement of a number of chairs and desks used by the girls. They have been using the original ones we bought for the opening of the school in 2009. Not surprisingly a lot of them are beyond repair. So we have sent money to replace the broken ones. Material costs for such items are inevitably high in the current economic climate, and given the number of chairs and desks needed we have sent nearly \$16,000 to pay for them. But if they last for another 15 years, the cost does not seem unreasonable. We can't have the girls sitting on the floor.

High prices do not only impact on the cost of furniture. The staff are finding that food prices are also continuing to rise and they have made a concerted plea for our help. So we have sent each of them a special extra payment at this Christmas time. We will need to keep the amount we pay the staff under continual review: the staff have been remarkably loyal to the school and we do not want them to have to leave school employment because they can't afford to feed their families.

It is good that the international food agency that sends free supplies of food to the school is still able to do so. It means that the girls still get their free lunch at school every day. The meal is normally vegetables. But once a month we buy them a bull to enable them to have meat with their meal.



In a previous newsletter we wrote about some of the school staff. Here are seven teachers who have joined the school team since 2015. It is so important for the girls to have woman teachers and to see them in action! This encourages the girls to see themselves in professional roles.

We love their brightly coloured dresses, which is common in South Sudan as in most of Africa.

You will see on our website that we are now able to process electronic donations via the Wonderful organisation. This is free to use, both for UTS and those who make donations, unlike some other online donation platforms which charge a commission. Please tell other people about it, perhaps friends or fellow members of organisations, who might be encouraged to send UTS a donation online.

Our annual report and accounts for 2021/22 are now on the Charity Commission website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission. You can type in our CC number 1117679 to access the report.

We are all so grateful to you in the ways you support our school, for ensuring that the girls can continue with their education in what now its fourteenth year of operation! Thank you all so much.

We send you our best wishes and wish you a joyful Christmas

Geoffrey Barnett, Peter Boyling, Helen Chauncy, Ron Sullam

The Trustees of the Under Tree Schools Charity