Natalya's Fund News

December 2023

The sky's the limit

Soap manufacturing by Lilongwe Youth Organisation, Malawi

On 28 September we initiated a payment of £520 to Lilongwe Youth Organisation to release the Sky Reach Soap brand, enabling the soap to be exported to neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Mozambique. As a result, full use can now be made of the recently-mechanized production process, while the old, manual process equipment can be used for local production under the Kayso brand.

Our grant is paying for the following items:

- Malawian Bureau of Standards (registration fee to this organization which tests products for safety of both users and producers): £152
- Registration as a business and a tax-paying entity: £182
- Safety boots (required by Malawian Bureau of Standards): £78
- Cartons, 200 off for 1st batch of soap for export: £76
- Labels, 200 off for above: £30

The Malawian Bureau of Standards has already assessed both the product and its production process; it has passed all aspects, with the proviso that safety boots are worn.

Once the first batch of soap has been exported, further packaging expenses will come from sales revenue.

Onwards

Making *Room to Learn* at Bughungu Primary School, Uganda

Two classrooms have been built in the last 12 months, and are now in use. We had hoped to raise the remaining £9,000 by November to complete the project, but in the event we only managed £3,500, not quite enough for even one of the two remaining rooms. So a number of us spent some time in listening and reflection, to discern the way forward. As we reported back, there were some common factors along the lines that we should proceed with confidence in the plan – it may simply be that we must wait a little longer than we had expected before it comes to fruition.

Office being built onto the second classroom

We had a video meeting with Teddy to report the situation and agree a way forward. The next room to be built would be the office. We discussed the best time of year to build, avoiding the rainy season, and the time and money required to build just the office (which is smaller). It was agreed that we continue fundraising with a view to Bughungu receiving at the very least £4,000 by 21 October. They would then have the money in time to build in earnest in November and December – the best building months.

Taken as a whole, this is a very large project for the Fund, so it has been helpful to break it up into manageable lumps. Teddy has responded positively and thankfully. She sends lots of photos of the progress, together with detailed budget estimates and actual spends, so we can keep track of the funding.

With some additional help from our supporters we managed on 30 October to send £4,049 to enable the office to be built. This room will be in a pivotal position at the angle of the 'L' shape. Placing the office in this position allows the three classrooms maximum natural light.

In December 2022 Abergavenny Symphony Orchestra chose Natalya's Fund as the charity to support in their annual children's concert, and the money raised helped to build the first classroom at Bughungu.

We are grateful that the orchestra has chosen us again this year for their 'Heroes & Villains' concert with music from James Bond, Mary Poppins and 101 Dalmatians.

It will be at 4 p.m. on 10 December at King Henry VIII School Hall, Abergavenny. It is a free event, with refreshments, and donations are invited. There is no need to book tickets.

For the final classroom to be built we will need to raise an estimated £5,000, according to the original budget.

More opportunities

to help underprivileged children and young people overseas

We often receive requests from overseas charities seeking support for their work. Here are some of the potential projects we have received enquiries about recently:

- helping young people set up tailoring businesses in Malawi
- transforming the lives of refugee children and young people through music in Kenya
- education of refugee children aged 4–6 in Kenya
- training and freeing street children in Malawi
- building a children's church for refugees in Kenya
- establishing young people in musical careers in Uganda

Only after investigation, and a video meeting with the organization requesting support, can the trustees come to a decision on funding.

Currently, however, lack of funds is restricting the help we can give. We are therefore seeking to extend our reach and recruit more supporters. Please help to spread the word if you can.

Around 100 girls free to attend school

Gateway – Girls' Access To Education

A new cohort of girls at Kaputu School, Malawi, is needing effective protection during their monthly periods. The Gateway scheme provides kits containing environmentally sustainable pads which are washable and reusable, and last for two years, all for about £3 per girl. So we raised £300 to free 100 girls to continue going to school during their monthly periods. Otherwise they tend to miss several days each month and that badly affects their progress, putting them at a severe disadvantage. Support for this project also helps the local women in sewing groups that make and sell the sanitary kits.

We were not able to provide a grant at the beginning of their school year in September as hoped because our funds were earmarked for another project. We therefore decided to raise the funds in October during Environmenstrual Week, and in November we sent £300 to Starfish Malawi, who run the Gateway programme. Past experience indicates that this will result in a dramatic reduction of absences among girls. We thank our supporters for enabling this to happen.

Saliza's story

"My name is Saliza Karim [not her real name]. I am 14 years old, … sometimes I would skip classes when I was in my monthly periods because I was unable to afford sanitary protection as I come from a very poor family … This has been affecting my performance and this is my second time repeating standard 7.

"Now that Starfish has given us these packs am very happy because it will help me reduce stress when I am approaching my monthly periods … The sanitary packs will also help me improve my performance as I will be attending classes even when I am in my monthly periods and I believe that this term I am not repeating standard 7 again."

To Donate

Please send a cheque payable to 'Natalya's Fund' to our address below. Let us know if you would like a Gift Aid Declaration.

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