

Zest for Life AGM 2018/19 Chairman's Report.

2018 was another busy and successful year for Zest for Life and a special milestone was achieved as we celebrated 10 years of operation. Those 10 years have seen many challenges, changes and memorable moments. Our purpose, though, remains the same. To support the education of the poorest, most vulnerable and needy of children. We now know, from our own wide-ranging experiences along the way, that the small interventions we make represent a very big difference to the lives and futures of the young people we support.

Our porridge programme at Innis continues to offer a meal for hungry nursery children at Innis – there are 52 in this year's intake. The number has grown steadily over the years as increasing numbers of poorer parents enrol their children in school knowing they will receive a meal. Keith and I saw the nursery class take porridge and called in on class one. The children here would have had porridge the previous year and were visibly flagging by lunchtime. The school want us to extend the programme to cover class one but this will mean doubling our commitment – so that's our first fundraising target for this year.

The secondary school bursary programme currently offers tailored support for fewer, higher achieving students from Innis. The increase in the number of students receiving offers to national schools increased partly due to our establishment of a school library. During our visit we saw that the books and resources are now in dire need of replacement. Thus, our second target this year is to raise some funds for the library.

The results of this tailored support at secondary level have been astounding. All the students supported have worked hard and earned places at University. All 6 girls from the first 4 years intake are now at university studying Law (Tracey & Phenny) Education (Sheila, Merab and Brenda) and Linguistics (Belinda). We have 7 students still on this scheme at schools across the western region – mostly boys. Last year, Keith and I were fortunate enough to meet all of the parents of the students

on our scheme for the first time. Hearing about the circumstances of the families, receiving their grateful thanks and hearing of their hopes for their children was a moving experience that has reinforced our belief in the benefits of the scheme. We continue to look for more sponsors to cover the costs of giving these students the opportunity to study at some of the best schools in Kenya. Fundraising target number three then.

Further Education bursaries are also awarded at varying levels. Two-year Teacher Training bursaries are offered to capable, needy young women graduating from Miriu. Dorothy is the latest of 5 to graduate. A young mum who was married at 14, following the birth of her first child, she was allowed by her husband to return to school to complete her education (and had another child along the way). Dorothy now has a teaching career and the means to pay for her two girls to attend school – vital as her husband has now abandoned her. Treazer is currently the last on the scheme and is due to finish her course soon.

Feedback from the grant recipients is essential and it is such reports and testimonies, that help the Trustees evaluate the impact of the support the charity has provided and plan for the future. During our visit we met many of our students and connected with others. All have been asked to send us their stories – some of these appear on our website.

Zest for Life was fortunate to benefit from three grants this year, two of them enabled us to construct modern latrines with washrooms for the girls at both schools. The third enabled us to replace the 'tin shed' classroom at Innis (at last) and deliver training courses for the two women's cooperatives we support. The latter was a huge success in terms of the learning outcomes, the potential for future income generation for the groups and for the development of the charity through the appointment of a project monitoring officer who helped to develop and deliver the work. Geoffrey will continue to work for us in maintaining regular contact, carrying our monitoring and evaluation tasks and helping us to develop new initiatives.

We celebrated our 10th year of operation with an afternoon tea event at the Moatshed. We also commissioned the creation of a new website and adopted a new logo that represents who we are and what we do. Regular sponsorship, especially for the Porridge programme, continued to form the basis of our funding stream and this was boosted by grants, income from fundraising events and significant one-off donations from supporters.

A visit to Kenya by Chairman Karen and Treasurer Keith enabled us to reaffirm our close relationship with our Kenyan partners, to meet our beneficiaries and re-connect with old friends. Our aim is to re-establish the 18-month re-visit programme to enable us to better monitor progress and maintain our close relationships with the students and families we support.

This year, 2019, we're planning a number of things:

Rotary, Whitchurch, recently awarded us a grant and have offered to host a fundraising cheese and wine evening. The event will be hosted by and the profits shared with the Bradbury Day Centre in Whitchurch. We'll be issuing invitations to join us shortly!

Gary Jones has offered to undertake a sponsored walk along the canal from Llangollen to Whitchurch – he'll need a bit of company and some support! Likely to be early July, more details coming soon.

We will once again be taking part in the Shrewsbury Charity Christmas Card Shop in St Mary's Shrewsbury.

Finally, Karen's hosting a Coffee Morning at home on Saturday 6th April to kick start the fundraising for the library at Innis.

Finally, many thanks go to all our supporters and sponsors for their continued involvement and to the Trustees for all their hard work in maintaining our progress.

