



NEWSLETTER — WINTER 2023/4

Dear Supporter

In 2023 Shines Uganda has been marking ten years of its work to relieve poverty in Masindi District, Uganda.

Shines UK joined the “family” in 2018, and with your support we have achieved so much! In 2019 we opened Shines School in the village of Miirya. During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, when schools were closed in Uganda for almost two years, we worked with local communities to reduce child marriage and early pregnancy, offering skills training for local girls, as well as sexual and reproductive health education for all youth.

This newsletter tells the story of our continuing work in 2023, including the amazing celebrations in October to mark the 10th anniversary.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our work at Shines. We couldn't do any of it without you!





2023 marks 10 years since Shines Children's Foundation, Uganda began its work in Masindi District.

To mark the anniversary, Shines held a major conference in October that was attended by numerous local dignitaries, including a representative of the Office of the President. The Arch-Deacon of Masindi laid the foundation stone of the building that will complete the construction of Shines School, and students at the school read poems and sang for the guests.



The day before the conference, Shines School hosted a football gala in which eight local schools competed, and hundreds of local people came along to watch.

The standard of football was very high, though most of the children played in bare feet.

October is rainy season in Uganda and when it rains, it really rains — it made for a slippery pitch!



Perhaps the most significant event of Shines Uganda's 10th Anniversary celebrations was a two-day Medical Camp hosted at Shines School.

In Uganda, medical care and medicines, even at government clinics and hospitals, must be paid for. Many of the people served by Shines simply do not have the funds to access the care and medication they need.

For several years, Shines has funded essential and life-saving care for orphans and vulnerable children in its communities. But children who suffer from chronic conditions, or who live with disabilities, are rarely able to receive proper treatment.

Initially inspired by the visit of two eminent London doctors, invited by Shines UK to volunteer in Masindi, Shines Uganda co-ordinated a huge multi-agency event attended by over 60 clinicians from local hospitals, clinics and charities.

In two days, over 1000 people were treated, and 777 free prescriptions were issued. We were able to refer several children with disabilities to physiotherapy and occupational therapy services, and one 10 year old boy who had lost his sight to cataracts received free surgery to restore his vision.

*It is wonderful to see and celebrate how far we have come in 10 years, but the work goes on. Every day, Shines makes a tangible difference in the lives of the people we serve.*

*Through education, through reproductive health and rights support, through health and sanitation schemes, through skills training programs, people in our communities are being supported to improve their own lives.*



*The women of Kasomoro village (above right) were trained in soap-making in a project partnership between Shines and Enabel, the Belgian overseas development agency. They hosted a lunch and danced to celebrate.*

*In Kirasa village, Shines has supported a group of parents and carers of children with disabilities (above left) to start a savings and mutual assistance group.*



*It has taken a few years to get there, but a generous donation has provided us with enough funds to start construction of the final buildings for Shines School—just in time for our 2019 “Primary Pioneers” to enter their final two years of primary education. The foundations are being laid now and the building will be completed in January 2024, ready for the new academic year to start in February.*

*As well as sufficient classrooms for the three Nursery classes and seven Primary classes, we will have a Hall, a Library, proper offices and resource rooms, and even an IT suite! Electricity has reached Miiryia and we will even be able to install wiring in the school—a huge advance on the LED solar lighting we have had to date.*

*Shines School is our largest and most expensive project. As most of the families in the community surrounding the school have no or very limited earnings, we are always grateful to those donors who take on the responsibility for the school fees of an individual child.*

*Successfully completing primary education and passing the “Primary Leaving Exam” is a key stepping stone to later opportunities. Secondary education is not yet compulsory in Uganda, but without basic literacy and numeracy skills gained during primary school, future earning and educational opportunities are extremely limited.*

*Denis Kiirya, Director of Shines Uganda, was invited to speak about child marriage in Uganda at a conference at Cambridge University.*

*His travel was funded by Girls Not Brides, and Shines UK’s trustees were delighted to host him in our homes.*

*Shines UK’s trustees donate an amount equivalent to their own travel costs whenever they travel to Uganda, ensuring that every penny you donate goes directly to our beneficiaries.*

Most of our work is focused in Masindi District in Western Uganda.

But in early 2023, the plight of a group of girls in Mbale District, far from Masindi, was brought to our attention.

Having become pregnant in their very early teens (or even younger) through rape or child marriage, and thrown out by their families for bringing shame or for lack of a dowry, these girls and their babies are scraping a living in the most desperate circumstances imaginable.

We have worked with a local partner to help the girls to access HIV testing and family planning, and we have raised funds for some of them to train in suitable skills such as hairdressing or dressmaking. With this help we hope they can break the cycle of poverty that blights the lives and chances of so many children.



Shines was invited by the Kikuube District Education Officer to visit a “parents’ school” in a community where there is no other school within travelling distance.

Just as in Mirya in 2018, before we built Shines School, families who desperately want education for their children have constructed makeshift classrooms themselves, and the teachers are volunteers. The DEO was hoping that Shines would be able to replicate its success here and open another Shines School, but for now we do not have the funding to make this possible.

Shines believes passionately that, once basic necessities such as shelter and clean water are available, it is through education and skills training that the inter-generational cycle of poverty can be broken.

Over the last few years, Shines Uganda—always supported by Shines UK—has become a significant NGO in Masindi District, Western Uganda.

Increasingly, Shines is invited to participate in government initiatives such as the Uganda AIDS Commission, and to partner with global organisations such as US Aid, Enabel, Girls Not Brides and Peace Corps. These partnerships vastly increase the impact Shines can have in the communities it serves.

This has only been possible because of the consistent support of Shines UK. In much the same way as many sponsors in the UK have committed to support the education of an individual child through our school fees sponsorship scheme, two of our donors have made a long-term commitment to sponsor the salary and running costs of Shines Uganda’s office HQ.

This ongoing, reliable support make it possible for the small Uganda team to focus on Shines’ projects and communities, without the ongoing worry about how to cover the foundation’s most basic costs.

It cannot be overstated how valuable such consistent support is, whether to the children at Shines School or to the wider work of Shines Children’s Foundation. To those of our donors who sponsor a child’s fees or a teacher’s salary, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

To sponsor a child for just £195 per year—which funds the school fees, uniform costs, shoes and lunch for a child at Shines School who would otherwise be unable to afford an education—please get in touch.

We also offer opportunities to sponsor individual schemes and activities within the communities we support, so if you have a particular interest in family planning education, micro-finance, disability rights or any of our other work, we would be delighted to discuss possibilities.

You can reach us at

[info@shinesuk.org](mailto:info@shinesuk.org)

on our website at: [Shinesuk.org](http://Shinesuk.org)

or via our Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/Shines-Childrens-Foundation-UK-Supporters-327308881431611/>