

Dear Supporter

Once again we want to extend our huge thanks to you for your commitment to Shines this year. Whether you are a sponsor of a child's school fees, a donor to a specific project, or a volunteer supporting education, health, entrepreneurship or IT initiatives in Masindi, everything we do is possible because of you.

2024 has started with a bang—the completion and official opening of the final buildings of Shines School. It is wonderful to see our young learners benefiting from such a superb building—and it's hard to believe that just 6 years ago there was nothing on this site but bushy undergrowth.

For all your support in helping us to get here: thank you!



NEWSLETTER — SUMMER 2024



Above: The new block of Shines School, containing the admin offices, staff room, library, IT suite and several classrooms

Below: Children line up for morning lessons outside their new classrooms



Above: Young learners enjoy the new library. Many UK donors have donated books to furnish the shelves, but it's going to take a lot more suitcases full to take advantage of this magnificent library.

On 2 July 2024, Shines School was officially opened by the Bishop of Masindi.

It is indicative of how far Shines has come, with the support of all our donors, that the opening ceremony was attended by many national and international dignitaries, including representatives of the US and Japanese embassies in Uganda, a representative of VSO (the UK-based volunteering charity), the head of the Ugandan NGO regulatory authority, and the national policy lead on primary education.

These events are important and solemn occasions in Uganda, with many speeches. But there is always plenty of singing and dancing, and excellent local food.



*Top: The Bishop of Masindi unveils the commemorative plaque and declares Shines School officially open
Middle row, L to R: Tents for shade at the opening ceremony; Celebration cake; Primary 3 class entertains the guests with a song
Bottom row, L to R: Primary 1 class prepares to perform a spelling quiz; The board of Shines Uganda joins in the dancing; A representative of the Japanese Embassy addresses the guests*



Breaking the cycle of poverty isn't just a question of schooling. Families also benefit when parents are trained in income-generating skills such as soap-making and mat-weaving.

Shines works with a group of women in the village of Kasomoro, who have been trained in the manufacture of soap, shampoo and moisturising skin jelly.

The community brought some of their products to the official opening of Shines School, to show-case the difference Shines has made in their lives.



In collaboration with Peace Corps and US AID, Shines also works with local youth, developing their understanding of finance and entrepreneurship, and encouraging them to start small businesses (below right).

One of the students from a recent enterprise camp has started a bee-keeping business, and is making honey and other bee products for the local market. Shines has been able to introduce this young man to local hoteliers, to whom he hopes to sell his products.



In Uganda, like most of Africa, people love to play and watch football—it seems everyone we meet is either an Arsenal supporter or a Manchester United supporter!

But gathering boys and young men for football coaching is a great way to get them to lend us their ears for other messages too.

Shines has always held football camps at which messages about nutrition, sexual health and reproductive rights are communicated by older men to younger ones. In a country where teenage pregnancy is endemic and where many girls' first sexual experiences are forced, this is vital work for the girls' benefit as well as for the boys.

Now that Shines School has its own football pitch, it is planning to launch Shines Football Academy (above left) to continue this work on a more regular basis.

And you never know: maybe one day one of our young members may even play for Arsenal himself!



We have been offered a grant which will enable us to secure advanced teacher training for the staff at Shines School (above).

Teaching in Uganda will become a graduate-only profession in the next few years. Those of our teachers who do not have Diplomas or Bachelor's degrees will, over coming years, be sponsored to upgrade their existing qualifications.

In addition, we will soon be partnering with another excellent Masindi charity, to secure continuing training which will build the skills and capacity of our school team.



We continue to support a group of girls in the village of Makudui, in Mbale District. All of these girls became pregnant in their very early teens (or even younger) through rape or child marriage, and were thrown out by their families.

We have been working with a local partner to help the girls to access HIV testing and family planning, and to start a small herd of goats which will enable them to earn a basic living from milk and meat. One of the girls has used a small enterprise grant to start a market stall selling Crocs-style shoes, which she decorates herself.

At the Shines School opening, the Ugandan national government's head of primary education offered to support an initiative to help some of the girls to return to school. We will be taking this forward in the coming months.



We have been incredibly fortunate to receive an offer from a donor of sufficient funds to run a medical camp every year for the next five years.

Shines' first medical camp took place in October 2023, when multiple local hospitals and other health agencies attended to offer free medical care to people who would otherwise be unable to afford it.

Two eminent volunteer doctors from the UK joined the camp—a consultant paediatrician and a consultant neurologist—and in total the camp treated over 1000 people, and issued almost 800 free prescriptions.

In late October 2024 we will be joined by another UK doctor, and we expect to treat even more patients than last year.

If you have relevant skills, volunteering is a great way to visit the beautiful country of Uganda while offering something to local people at the same time. We offer accommodation and meals for the duration of the camp, transport from Entebbe Airport to Masindi, and advice on travel in Uganda.

Shines is becoming an increasingly important NGO, both in Western Region and nationally throughout Uganda. More and more, international development organisations—Enabel, US AID, JICA, Girls Not Brides Global and many others—are asking to partner with Shines Uganda for their local service delivery. Shines is invited to participate in national governmental initiatives too, such as a recent conference on the impact on local people of the discovery of oil in Lake Albert, a national working group on the improvement and delivery of primary education, and the Uganda AIDS Commission.

This is a reflection of the excellent governance of Shines Uganda, and the consistent support it receives from Shines UK. At the opening of Shines School, the CEO of the national NGO regulatory authority drew guests' attention to the plentiful evidence that money given to Shines Uganda is spent effectively and directly on improving the lives and opportunities of its beneficiaries.

It makes us very proud to support Shines Uganda in the way we have now done for six years. Because of our reliable support, the growing Ugandan team, based in the office in Masindi, can focus on delivering Shines' projects and expanding its reach.

*In particular, the support for Shines School that is offered by so many donors in the UK, sponsoring the fees and nutrition of a named child, is invaluable. **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 sexual and reproductive rights education, micro-finance and entrepreneurship, disability rights or any of our other work, we would be delighted to discuss possibilities.

You can reach us at

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*on our website at: **Shinesuk.org***

or via our Facebook page at

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