

**JANUARY 2021**



# *Singing Gorilla Projects* **NEWSLETTER**

Happy New Year to all, we hope that everyone is safe and healthy. Singing Gorilla Projects are aiming to continue from the progress of 2020, by improving more lives and making differences to communities local to Nkuringo. An article by Chris Read.

## Before

As 2020 started we looked forward to the completion of the maternity and paediatric wards at the Nkuringo Green Hill Health Centre. Our 2020 business plan had a full set of infrastructure projects for constructions in schools. Luisa and I visited with a team from the UK in February to catch up with the project work. All was well. After returning to the UK, the news of the spread of Covid-19 was ominous. For a poor country like Uganda, the prospect of the virus was hugely concerning.



## During

Despite a population of 44 million, Uganda only had 55 ICU beds back in March, and patients outnumbered the nurses in ICU wards 8 to 1. However, Uganda did not experience the same level of infections and mortality from the disease as more developed countries did. Uganda went into lockdown – with reports of overbearing police enforcements meeting out physical violence, resulting in more casualties from police than COVID-19 in the first few months of the pandemic. The death toll to COVID-19 sits at 250 by the end of 2020. With a population of 44 million, this is an extraordinarily low headline figure.

In part, this is due to epidemics being common in this part of the world, such as Typhoid, Malaria and Ebola. People from different parts of the country do not mix due to low social mobility, lack of transport and social boundaries hemmed in by tribal adherence.



Uganda also has a very young population, with over 50% of the population under the age of 15. Lastly, the social structure of communities is built around clans, villages, and districts.

Political organization and community mobilization are delivered from these communities upwards. This delivers a very cohesive response to disease in which the people behave consistently

## The Visit

I visited Nkuringo in October to catch up with the community and project progress. With the Lockdown and the absence of tourists visiting the area there is very little work and revenue coming into the area. Most workers in the lodges and shops have returned to their small holdings to farm crops for sale.

The schools have been closed (except for those taking exams) since February, which will have negative social and educational effects in the future. Project work has continued, with the completion of work in 20 schools, from donating roofing materials to building bio-toilets and classrooms.

During 2020, SGP rolled out a new program of solar installations for homes of children doing their exams. As they have to spend more time helping with chores during the day, which include tending to their siblings and working in the field, this has enabled them to do their homework and revision more effectively in the evenings.

This will continue into 2021. If you wish to purchase a solar panel to help a child to study at night, [please can you contact Luisa Partridge.](#)

## The Future

In December, a health inspector visited the new maternity and paediatric ward to instruct SGP on what is needed to commence services. This includes a whole new cohort of medical staff to employ, alongside a shopping list of required equipment, including beds, trolleys, stethoscopes and aprons. Much of these materials will be funded in early 2021, with an aim to formally open the facility in spring.

We have completed the budgets for 2021 project work. This coming year, we will also be supporting a further 16 schools. Work will again include latrine and classroom construction as well as support for textbooks and roofing materials.



## Brandon's Story

Brandon Maliya Mungu is a boy aged 7 (we can't be sure) and is from Adjumani district.

As a very young child his parents separated and shortly after his mother abandoned him, leaving him with the maid in a rented house that they could not afford. As the maid's father did not want another mouth to feed, he questioned the boy on who his parents were. Brandon knew his father's name and that he was a soldier at the barracks and they managed to locate his father.

Brandon's father had accommodation in the Barracks. On his arrival he was taken to a unipot (a metallic hut), Brandon was shown where to get food and then abandoned. Before leaving, his father disconnected the electricity as he feared that he would be electrocuted, leaving him in the darkness, alone.

After time, Brandon found playmates, and when they went to school, Brandon asked how he could also go to school.



The teachers at the school complained about Brandon's hygiene and only once he had been taken to the headmistress did they realise that he lived alone, using left over soap from other homes to wash his clothes.

The school arranged to provide Brandon with food, soap and regularly checked on his welfare.

However, after two weeks the school broke off for two months holiday.

The headmistress, due to fears for his safety if he stayed alone, took him in and continues to care for Brandon, even though she now works for another school.

SGP now sponsors Brandon's studies and he is a much happier boy. Despite his difficult upbringing, he forgave his parents and promised to support them when he grows up. Unfortunately, his father passed away in July while Uganda was in lockdown. Brandon attended the funeral. His guardian told Brandon's relatives that even if he lives with them, SGP will continue to pay his school fees but they declined to take him up and instead returned with the guardian where he will stay for the foreseeable future.

