

Eyecare project - absolutely transformative

It is not often understood the major cause of visual impairment in the world is simply the lack of appropriate glasses – Vale for Africa has been supporting a self-funded team of Optometrists and GPs to work with Tororo health officials to tackle eyecare issues and provide training to local village health teams.

The project has grown each year. Last year's team saw 1,360 patients, referred about 150 patients for cataract surgery, prescribed 98 pairs of prescription glasses and 630 pairs of ready readers.

Barry-based eye specialist Ted Arbutnot, who leads the project, takes a different team of optometry students with him every year. The team goes out into rural areas where there is no medical care at all.

Ted said: 'We see people who have never seen optometrists before. We see people with undiscovered sight threatening disease, many at an

advanced stage which we just don't encounter in the UK. We also see lots of eye problems that are simply corrected with glasses.

'Ready readers, the simplest form of pre-made reading glasses can be absolutely transformative for working people in their 40s and 50s.



'We visit a different area each day setting up in school halls, defunct health centres and some active health centres. Last year we also provided dedicated training for six local hospital staff specifically for sight testing, courtesy of a senior lecturer from The City University London. Thanks also to Hub Cymru Africa for its support of the project.

'It is a wonderful experience for the optometry students and the qualified optometrists who see a new aspect of optometric life. We all see the benefits of the project.'

Water to School project – improves more than just health scores

A partnership approach between Vale for Africa and Cowbridge Rotary is seeing a number of primary schools in Tororo benefit from access to clean piped water.

The scheme has led to a reduction in water-borne diseases like typhoid and cholera, improved cleanliness, less absenteeism and better educational attainment. Some schools have started to provide school meals.

Traditionally, rural-based schools rely on girl pupils carrying a daily water supply from the nearest source – often several miles away. In the past year the *Water to Schools* project has seen four primary schools receive fresh piped water. Some of the schools that were initially lukewarm about the project – there are ongoing charges such as water bills – have turned out to be some of the most passionate advocates for the work to continue.



We maybe small – but we have big ambition!

Vale for Africa maybe a small charity but it has big ambitions when it comes to wanting to make a difference and to help shape the vision and impact of the Vale of Glamorgan across the globe.

The Vale-based charity links the communities of the Vale of Glamorgan with the Tororo District in Eastern Uganda which has a population of 517,080.

The link was set up collaboratively in 2008 by Assembly Member Jane Hutt, who spent part of her childhood in Uganda, together with Maureen Mapp of TOCIDA (Tororo Community Initiated Development Association).

The link followed a 2007 visit to Uganda by Jane in her role as Education Minister, while there she visited the village of Gwaragwara in the Tororo District where she met with members of TOCIDA and they challenged her to do something to help them.

On her return, Jane organised a public meeting for people interested in being involved. Several people who attended that meeting are still involved today. Vale for Africa works closely with TOCIDA, now called *Advancement for Community Empowerment in Tororo* (ACET) Ltd, to develop projects.

Key supporter

The late former First Minister Rhodri Morgan who launched *Wales for Africa* in 2006 was a big supporter of Vale For Africa.



Unique student scholarship scheme is important to us

For more than six years Vale for Africa has offered a student scholarship to enable a student from Tororo in Eastern Uganda to come to Wales for two years to study at the world renowned Atlantic College, Llantwit Major. The student is chosen after a selection process which takes place

student from our link community. We place great value on it.'

Last year's Vale for Africa Scholarship student, Jackline ran a project tackling teenage pregnancy in her home district of Tororo,

Her project *Helping Tororo Teens* provided re-usable sanitary pads, awareness raising t-shirts and breakfast and lunches for approximately 20 girls at rural schools.

Jackline, said that high poverty rates meant poorer families often could not afford sanitary pads, so, rather than risk the embarrassment of soiled dresses, girls often chose to stay home.

'This leads to a decline in school



Vale For Africa members with Jackline

in Uganda.

The first three students, Batholomew, Isaac and Jackline have gone on to study at Universities in America. The fourth student to be offered a scholarship, Patrick, is just settling down to his second term. The Vale for Africa scholarship helps fund flights, a laptop, a mobile phone, spending money and some warm clothes.

Vale for Africa Chair Gareth Kidnie said: 'We are unique among Wales Africa projects in being able to provide this kind of support for a

performance and eventually, they drop out of school – increasing the likelihood of them getting pregnant or married at an early age. From my own experience, a significant number of girls drop out of school.'

Vale for Africa member Sue Bowyer, who co-ordinates the scholarship scheme, said she was proud of Jackline. 'She has been a real joy to support. We are delighted she wants to make a difference in her own community with this project.'

Read an interview with new student Patrick on Atlantic College website

Projects in brief:



Renovation of two classroom blocks at Pomede Primary School – a government aided school in a remote area that mainly caters for children from

low income families – has been funded by V4A with a grant from The Waterloo Foundation and a

donation from Dunraven Windows.

Together with Cardiff & Vale College, V4A has helped fund a rural library – which now has more than 1,500 registered users!

Two Ugandan hospital directors spent time with public health officials, medical teams at University Hospital Cardiff and the Welsh Ambulance Service hosted by V4A. One doctor said there was almost as much equipment on one ambulance as his hospital!

How to support Vale for Africa

...

If you are interested in the work of Vale for Africa there are many ways you can get involved – you can donate your time or your money!

If you have a skill or talent that we could use, please get in touch. If you would like to organise a fundraiser or persuade your business to sign us up as a corporate partner, please get in touch.

The easiest way for anyone to support our work is to set up an electronic transfer payment either as a one-off or as a



Vale for Africa at the Senedd

standing order for whatever amount you feel is appropriate.

The details are:
account no: 31529684,
sort code 40-09-15,
account name Vale for Africa.

The same can be done from the website, valeforafrica.org.uk, via Virgin Giving which has the advantage of automatically dealing with Gift Aid for the charity.

We still do, of course, accept cash or cheque!

Thank you!