



Welcome to the twelfth newsletter from The Laura Case Trust. You are receiving this because you've donated to, fundraised for, or sponsored someone fundraising for the Trust. Whichever it is – a huge thank you!

This is our first newsletter for a while. Covid disrupted our rhythm as it did the rest of the world. Thanks to those who have stayed in touch and continued to donate, particularly while in person fundraising has been paused. Huge thanks particularly to those of you in the medical world (including a number of our trustees) for all you do. Given Laura's vocation, we have always appreciated our health care workers, but never more so than now. Our links with medics abroad also highlight just how lucky we are in the UK to have the sophisticated care the NHS provides.

Medical training

We have continued to sponsor **Moses Byumohagi** (pictured above) and **Reuben Muhindo** (pictured left) through their medical studies in Uganda. While overall deaths from Covid 19 have been recorded at a much lower level than in the UK (c.3500 end January), education at each tier has been severely disrupted. Universities in Uganda have been closed at various points, but both Moses and Reuben have managed to stay in education.

Reuben is starting his fourth year in April and is currently second in his cohort of 250 in terms of medical scores. Moses is now in his 5th and final year. During the Ugandan lockdown of June to August 2021, he went back to his former hospital where he used to work and delivered more than 200 babies by C-section in three months. He reflects: *'I have learnt a lot of skills which I hope will help the people of my community... the organisation has really supported me so much. I could not imagine that I could be able to operate on a mother and remove a live baby!'* Photo evidence of him doing just that is overleaf! Moses only has two more semesters to complete and will then qualify as a doctor. We are very proud of him and wish him all the best in his final few months of study. Both Reuben and Moses will return to more rural areas to practice once they have qualified.





Sponsorship of existing health care workers to train as doctors (who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford the training), who then return to rural areas to work represents excellent value for money, supports an individual to change their life, and go on to change others where the need is greatest. Dr Amon Bwambale, who we previously sponsored, is now Superintendent of his local hospital. As our sponsorship of our current doctors in training draws to an end, we are keen to find others for the Trust to sponsor. This Spring we're contacting supporters, grantees and partners to see if they can help us identify candidates wishing to progress their clinical studies and experience in medicine. We particularly want to meet people who see a future for themselves living and working in more remote areas of Uganda after they qualify. **If you know of anyone, then please do get in touch.**

PEAS



Secondary schools in Uganda have also have seen major disruption; it is the only country in Africa where schools have remained fully closed for almost 2 years. Our existing relationship with PEAS has highlighted how innovative partners have been in managing this disruption. Many PEAS schools are in rural areas and pupils have little tech access. They have adapted their teaching to provide remote support using SMS, radio and the telephone trees (where teachers are assigned a group of students to call regularly, providing personalised education support but also extending safeguarding beyond the school 'gate', particularly to girls and vulnerable students). Some of these innovations have been so positive in terms of education in low resource settings that they will be designed into the new standard educational model.

In 2020, PEAS was able to offer **10 A-level bursaries and 2 University bursaries** to students, funded by the Laura Case Trust. As in previous years, these bursaries are extremely well received. One of the current beneficiaries tells us about how different her life would be without our support – she says *'I would be a form four drop out. This makes me feel so emotional...I promise you will enjoy the fruits of my education....I extend my sincere thanks to Laura Case Trust through PEAS Uganda for the support and commitment.'* Whilst PEAS was unable to offer bursaries in 2021 due to the schools being closed, we still provided PEAS with the funds for them. Now that schools have reopened, PEAS plans to offer **23 additional A-level bursaries over the next 3 years with that money, alongside the 10 A-level and 2 University bursaries** that we have already committed to funding in 2022.

Children's Palliative Care

Our work with Professor Julia Downing and the Palliative Care Education and Research Consortium to improve awareness and the clinical management of children's palliative care in Uganda continues, but at a different pace due to Covid. Deliverables have necessarily moved to ensure urgent care and resourcing existing infrastructure is prioritised.

As the pandemic situation begins to stabilise, we look forward to the work gaining further traction. Indeed, the learning from Covid means that many of the courses will now be run online, enabling the Consortium to reach many more medics. As you may know, this subject is close to the Trustee's hearts. Laura's niece, Saskia, was diagnosed with Leukemia in 2016 and completed successful treatment in 2018, but she and her family came into contact with many children and families dealing with hugely difficult situations, amazingly supported by NHS palliative care teams and expertise. We want to help with similar support in Uganda.

New Projects

We are delighted to be sponsoring two new projects since we our last newsletter: two in Uganda and one – slightly unusually for the Trust – in the UK. Both brilliant and impactful.

Family Planning



We are delighted to be working with CHASE Africa to improve access to family planning in the rural Kasese area of Western Uganda (where Reuben will return to work when he has qualified). The project harks back to an idea we had in the early years of the Trust but never had the infrastructure to deliver.

In Uganda, **over 40% of pregnancies are unplanned**. One of the causes is a lack of information and accessible services, with 33% of women unsure where to access family planning. In rural areas, unplanned pregnancy leads to economic strain on household resources, less investment in each child's education and often poor nutrition for the family. Adolescent pregnancies are also a major concern, particularly in rural areas, where **27% of rural girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing**. This often puts an end to their education, and reduces their opportunities.

Chase Africa has been working in Western Uganda since 2019 delivering family planning advice and services to the local population. We are delighted to be contributing to expanding this work into Kasese, Rubirizi and Bunyangabu districts over the next three years alongside local partners. Annually, the Trust's funding will help provide advice on family planning to 48,000 community members, 11,000 family planning services to rural women and girls and 20,000 primary healthcare, screening and preventative treatments to women, men and children.

We hope that the learnings and blueprint can be shared with other partners operating in Uganda, particularly other rural areas. This includes the area of Bundibugyo where we already work, and where Dr Bwambale (mentioned above) plays a leading role.

Bowel Cancer UK



We are very excited to be funding two projects aimed at improving the early diagnosis and support for younger sufferers of bowel cancer. **Of the 43,000 people diagnosed each year, only 2,500 will be under 50, meaning the disease can be missed and early treatment becomes impossible**. However, number of those diagnosed under 50 are increasing. Inspired by the late diagnosis of our Chair, Melissa, during lockdown, we have partnered with Bowel Cancer UK to fund the development of an e-learning package to give doctors the knowledge and tools to spot this deadly disease earlier. Peer support is vital for creating communities for people with bowel cancers, especially in an age group where it is less common.

Building on Bowel Cancer UK's successful *Chat Together* model, the Trust will be funding a pilot group exclusively for younger patients this year. We hope its success will mean it will grow in reach to enable more younger people to find support as they deal with bowel cancer. We are proud to be supporting Bowel Cancer UK's flagship *Never Too Young* campaign to lead change for younger people with bowel cancer.

As an aside, Melissa had surgery and chemo in 2020 and her latest scans show she is cancer free. In the spirit of never missing the opportunity to raise awareness, the symptoms of bowel cancer are as follows – do get yourself checked out if you have any concerns:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy



Fundraising

2020 saw a **Micro London to Kent bike ride**, with thanks to Ben Connah and Sophie Gick, but 2021 saw the **Great East Anglian Bike Ride** back in the saddle, with a full complement of riders making their way from Cambridge to Norfolk. The rides raised **£6,100**. If you'd like to be involved in the 2022 version 'Greater Than Ever', it will take place on **Saturday 24 September**. Do email benjconnah@hotmail.co.uk to register your interest.

Thank you!

As always, we want to say a big, big thank you to all of our fundraisers and donors from the last 24 months who have given their time, raised money for or donated to the Trust - whether it be by sponsoring our fundraisers, one-off donations or through monthly direct debits. You continue to amaze us with your generosity and none of this would be possible without your support.

**If you would like to donate to the Trust, please visit:
www.justgiving.com/lauracasetrust.**