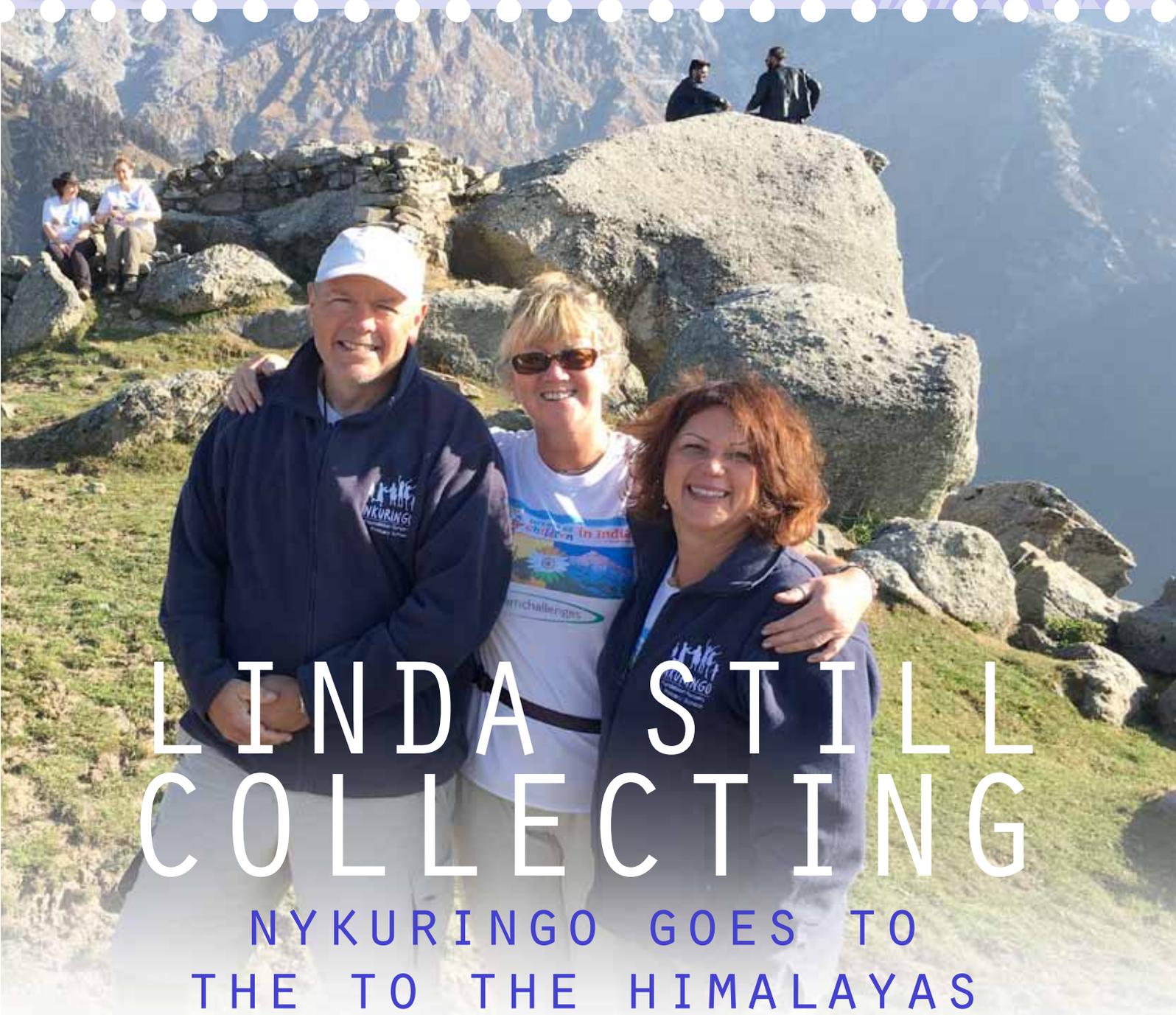


# NEWSletter



# LINDA STILL COLLECTING

## NYKURINGO GOES TO THE TO THE HIMALAYAS

**ABbove:** At Laka Got (3,550m) in the Himalayas from left to right Steve Knowlden, Linda Gwatkin and Jan Duchesne

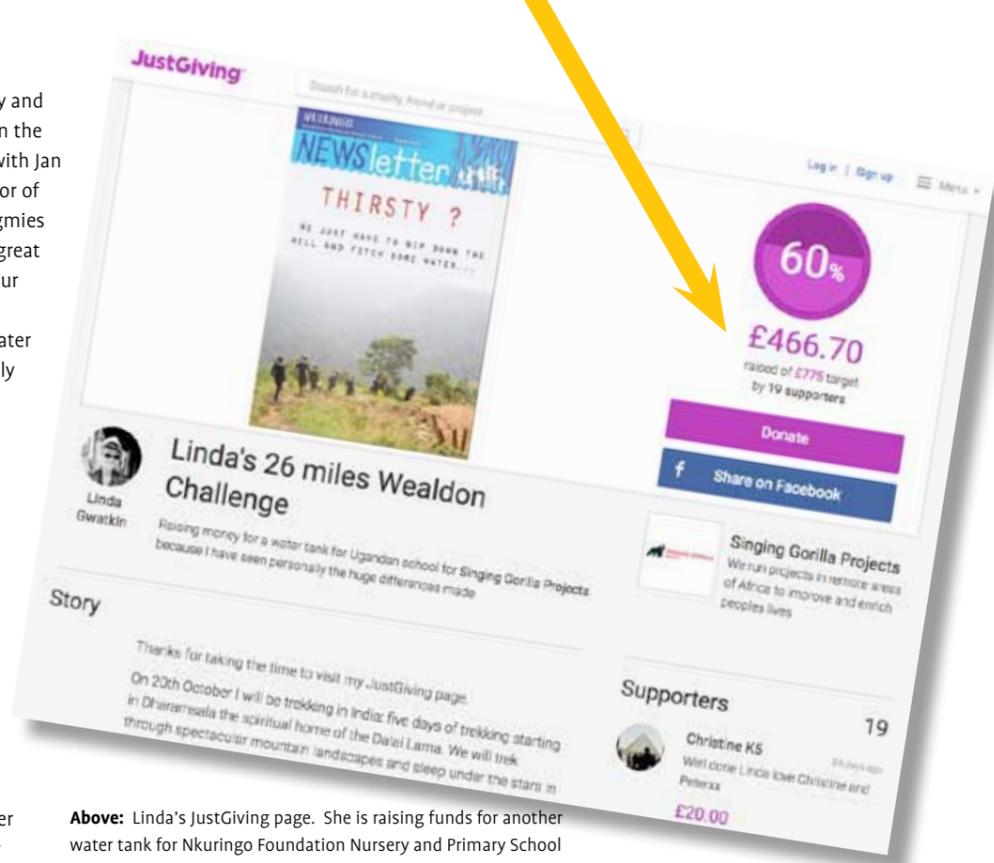
Jan and Steve have already, between them, carried the name of the Nkuringo Foundation, Nursery and Primary School to the Deserts of Jordan and the Mountains of Morocco. This time it was to India and the majestic Himalayas. Linda Gwatkin, a sponsor who was on that first trip to Nkuringo with Steve and Jan, decided that she would use this challenge (again with Dream Challenges) to raise money for another water tank for the school. It was not always easy – and mountains really do get a bit steep at times – but all three of us made it! Although Linda has already raised a significant amount of money on her Just Giving site she still needs a push to reach the magic amount needed for a water tank. Read her story inside – and if you can – please help Linda reach her goal!

LINDA KNOWS the Nkuringo Foundation Nursery and Primary School well. Having visited it when on the Dream Challenges Uganda trek in October 2014 with Jan and Steve, Linda had gone on to become a sponsor of Beatrice Tumuhimbise, one of the first Batwa Pygmies to attend the school. Since then she has been a great supporter providing clothing, shoes and aid for our various trips.

In the August newsletter we highlighted the water shortages in Nkuringo and how they affected daily life. We explained the need for more water tanks to make the school as independent as possible and stop the daily treks down the valley for water during the dry season. After that appeal St Dunstan's Church in Rotherfield East Sussex kindly funded a water tank for the school. As usual we thank Chris Read for organising the supply and installation of that tank. (See the article on Chris Read and his work later in this newsletter).

In August 2016 Jan and Steve organised a Wealden 26 mile marathon walk. Linda did this walk specifically to raise money to purchase an additional water tank for the school. Her JustGiving Page, via Singing Gorillas – the charity set up by Chris Read and which organises the water tanks and filters - is shown above.

The Dream Challenges trek to India in October this year was called the Trek for Children and people were invited to participate to raise money for their chosen charities. Steve and I confirmed we were going to raise awareness of Nkuringo and Linda kindly offered to come along and hopefully get closer to her goal of purchasing the tank (she is 60% of the way there).



**Above:** Linda's JustGiving page. She is raising funds for another water tank for Nkuringo Foundation Nursery and Primary School



**Above:** The yellow line denotes the route taken up to the summit and on to the glacier.

**Left:** Linda negotiating her way around an unexpected landslide.

**Below:** Leaving our final campsite ready to hit the summit

So from walking a marathon to climbing mountains Linda has worked tirelessly to achieve her aim. If anyone wants to help Linda please please do donate to her page – she deserves it and it would be wonderful to get this new tank installed and filled before the dry season next year.

Note that the feat of climbing the Himalayas is even more of a challenge to Linda who is scared of heights – but whose desire to help has helped her overcome her fears!

## TANKS & FILTERS



Water tanks are only part of the fight to ensure that the community of Nkuringo has clean available drinking water. The tanks stop the daily trek on foot downhill (8km round trip) to fill up cans with water during the dry season. However the water then needs to be boiled before it can be considered safe to drink. Chris Read has been providing water filters – both family size water filters for £30 and large community water filters for £230 – via his Singing Gorilla charity. These filters remove all need to boil the water saving trees and time. Several of the sponsors have already purchased personal water filters for the families of their sponsor child/children. Steve and Jan purchased a community water filter for the school (shown here). Little by little we are getting there. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated so far.

## ELSIE (WITH THE AID OF STEVE) DELIVERS

Since we started our pig project last year to provide meat to the children and staff at the school things have really taken off! Elsie, one of the original mums purchased by Jane Roberson, has really shone in the baby department. Since her first litter of 7 piglets in June 2015 Elsie has continued to produce babies as regular as clockwork. She gave birth to her latest litter of five piglets on 13th November. I think Elsie likes Steve the Boar! Eileen and Tilly you need to speed up!

Note that now the school have diversified and some of the piglets purchased are swapped for goats. Meat is not often on the menu in Nkuringo – many people only have meat on festive occasions. The meat project however has enabled the children to have meat reasonably regularly. The latest special occasion – Independence Day – is reported later in this newsletter.



## TEACHER PHIONA ALSO DELIVERS

It is definitely the time for babies at the school. Phiona – one of the teachers, also gave birth recently. Here she is seen coming back to work with a smile (and her 1½ month old baby on her back.

Teachers at the school often bring their babies to work. These babies seem quite happy to attend classes and gurgle away quite happily oblivious to the chattering and singing around them!

I wonder how this would work in English Primary Schools!!!!



# INDEPENDENCE DAY

9TH OCTOBER 1962



Independence Day is one of the major national holidays in Uganda. It's annually celebrated on October 9 on the anniversary of gaining of independence from Great Britain in 1962.

The first British appeared on the territory of Uganda in the 1860s, when the British explorers started search for the source of the Nile. In 1888 Uganda was placed under the charter of the British East Africa Company and became British protectorate in 1894.

The process of decolonization started after the end of World War II. Numerous political parties started emerging during the second half of the 1950s. Uganda was granted home rule on March 1, 1962. The first elections to the Uganda Legislative Council were held in April and on October 9 Uganda gained total independence from Great Britain.

This anniversary is annually observed across all cities of Uganda. Various events and activities are organized to unite the nation of Uganda. Festive events organized at the capital of Uganda are attended by President and heads of other African countries.

INDEPENDENCE DAY is a very important date in the calendar and Nkuringo is no exception when it comes to celebrating!

Independence Day is now also now one of the days in the year when the children can eat meat that is raised by the school. The school were given pigs by sponsors who have since kept meat on the plates of the children on such occasions. Now they have diversified and some of the piglets have been exchanged for goats. There is great excitement for many of the children on such days – for most these are the only days they will ever have the opportunity to eat something different!

The meal the children are enjoying here consists of goat's

meat and posho. Posho is one of the staple foods of the majority of Ugandans. It is similar to polenta in Italian cuisine. It is not sweet or savoury but instead takes on the flavour of whatever soup it is served with (usually pinto bean soup). Posho is made up of finely ground white corn flour mixed with boiling water until it becomes solid. It is not easy to cook as it must be "mingled" thoroughly and becomes stiff while mixing. This heavy food is prized for its "fill you up" ability and it doesn't have to be peeled, washed, sorted or soaked like some other things. It is used by most schools as their main staple food.

If you visit Uganda beans and posho are definitely on the menu!

Mc Kiiga provided the marching Brass Band to round off the celebrations.

**Below:** The main street in Nkuringo, the band plays music while the school children march proudly to their anthem

**Below Left, Top Right and Right:** Children at the school enjoying their celebration feast





Views around  
Nkuringo and the  
Nteko Ridge

# Stepping Up to Health



*The Nkuringo Green Hill Hospital is ready to start providing services.*

## The grand opening

The official opening has been set to Saturday 10th December. Local dignitaries have been invited with the grand opening being performed by the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for the Kisoro District. The RDC reports directly to the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. Singing Gorilla Projects is keen to get the government involved in the health projects its undertaking to help support the provision of resources, access to drugs and professionals. If anyone would like to accompany me, please drop me a line.

## Services offered

The Nkuringo Green Hill Hospital is what is termed in the Uganda Ministry of Health a Type II Health Clinic. This means we can offer GP services, some minor surgeries, and support antenatal and postnatal services. Whilst we will have access to midwifery services, we won't have a maternity ward. Much of the diagnosis is expected to revolve around respiratory, gynaecological, and child care. We will also see a share of malaria patients as well as HIV patients.

## The building

The service is ready to start with the building now as complete as it can ever be. Equipment has been shipped over from the UK, such as inspection beds, desks and furniture. The building has now been fitted with solar power, plumbing, lighting and a fridge. The centre has a reception area, a dispensing area, a laboratory, two treatment rooms and an office.

## New developments

Further developments for 2017 will be the construction of an admissions block to admit patients for overnight stays. It will have three wards for males, females and children respectively together with a separate latrine and shower block. The key area for funding in 2017 will be to first build the latrine and shower block followed by the wards.

The question of water and the water pipe project

The area suffers with no natural water supply close by to the village. All water either has to be gathered by hand from distant water sources or to be captured via water harvesting from the hospital roof. To this end, Singing Gorilla Projects are commissioning a study to pump water up the

400 metre or so from the river at the valley bottom. This is a fascinating project, for anyone who has been to the area, you will know the physical and social challenges in trying to achieve this. The plan is to use staging 3,000 litre water tanks as reservoirs up the hill with localised water pumps run from diesel generators at each staging tanks to push the water up the hill. I am interested in talking to anyone experienced with irrigation and engineering projects involving water pumping.

## The hospital staff

The service is to be staffed with a Clinical Medical Officer, a Comprehensive Medical Nurse, an assistant nurse, a porter and a security guard. The salaries are to be funded by Singing Gorilla Projects. With the help of the government we may be able to get some support for this cost.

## The organisation

There are three organisational entities or partners and a board of directors that run the service:

1. The Hospital Management Group are the partner responsible for the day to day running of the facility and will report to a board of directors to be made up of members of all parties.
2. The hospital has been built on land owned by the Catholic Church who have given us a long term lease on the land. They are the second partner.
3. Singing Gorilla Projects is the third partner responsible for providing funds. Singing Gorilla Projects has committed to fund the project for five years to a level of 100% tapering down to zero % after ten years.

## Volunteers

There will be opportunities for volunteers with medical back grounds to spend some time in Nkuringo, teaching the staff and helping the community. Singing Gorilla Projects is building a house in which volunteers can be housed, watered and fed. This will be ready by spring 2017.

*What do we need?*

We need expertise. I am interested in speaking to anyone who has:-

- Experience in health centre management.
- Clinical expertise in GP and minor surgery entities.
- Willingness to help.



Artist drawing of how the finish classroom will look

**Y**ou may have thought we had gone very quiet on reporting the progress on the building of the two new classrooms and dormitories for the school. So many of you have already supported this project and got us this far – what has been happening?

Well, unlike the UK where we really do get a move on with construction in the summer, in Nkuringo water rules every aspect of life. When you have to fetch water from down in the valley to mix cement you think twice about building during the dry season. Most of the construction work ground to a halt until the first rains started to fall and things were back on track.

You can see that the ground floor is now complete and they have put on the roof and are ready to start building the first floor where the very important dormitories will be. The two new classrooms will finally enable to school to provide the full range of education up until secondary school. Primary seven should take up residence in one of the new classrooms by the Spring of 2017. We have not forgotten that everyone who has donated

to the building of the new classrooms will have their name painted on the side of the building as a lasting reminder of the strong bond between our group of sponsors and friends and the community of Nkuringo as a whole. You have all made such a difference already to the lives of these people and we are very aware that knowing these people has enriched our own lives.

In the December newsletter I am sure we will see even more progress in the building. I will also bring an update on the number of named chairs, benches and desks that kind sponsors have provided for the pupils to use when the classrooms are ready – and let you know if there are any more needed.

In the meantime we send our best wishes to everyone working on the building – and you can see from the photos that includes children and their parents – all eager to lend a hand!



# SLOWLY SLOWLY THEY ARE GETTING THERE



Above: This is how the classroom was looking in April



# NEW CLASSROOM



Above: Everybody in the community helps - even mothers with new borns, they know the school will benefit their children

# SPONSORS FIRST AID TRIP TO NKURINGO



find 20 people willing to raise the money to pay for their own fares to get to Nkuringo would the community help look after us while we were there. In return each person would bring two 23kg bags of aid – as Jan and Steve had done in February. The community rallied round. Albertine Camp – which is on the border of Nkuringo – offered rooms for all the group free of charge for the whole of the stay. In return the group will just buy their food. The local communities – the Batwa Pygmies, the HIV Group, the Women’s Group – and of course, it goes without saying, the Nkuringo Foundation, Nursery and Primary School – all offered to welcome the group with open arms. We also wanted to ensure we learned more about life in Nkuringo. Asgario wrote “I will have to look into different

activities we can do while you are here. We can probably visit a coffee farmer, do a dug-out canoe on Lake Mutanda at a very minimal fee, visit Nombe pocket forest for bird watching and primate walk and visit Suma Waterfall in the community. I have two co guides with me who are more than happy to take the party to the different activities at no cost, so do not worry you will be in safe hands”.

We had a plan. Jan tentatively raised the idea on Facebook – and within three days we had 21 people who had already paid their deposit to join the trip. We managed to squeeze two more into the group – which is now bursting at the seams but gearing up for the adventure of a lifetime.

Things moved fast – flights were booked for 20th October 2017 – returning on 29th October 2017. We are flying via Rwanda. Asgario has already been to Kigali and found a nice clean cheap hotel for our first night after we land before we are taken by coach over the border into Uganda and then up up up to Nkuringo.

Our group of sponsors and friends includes 3 children – who all sponsor children their own age at the school; teachers who are looking forward to the experience of teaching in a Ugandan Primary; a representative of St Denys Church who so kindly donated a water tank to the school (and who is looking forward to saying a few words to the congregation in Nkuringo) and several trekkers who have been to Nkuringo before and are looking forward to going back and meeting their sponsor children face to face.

The group all have one thing in common – to bring our communities even closer together, to extend the hand of friendship across the seas – and hopefully be the first of many groups who will do this in the future.

If you are one of the group – thank you so much for your support. If you are not in this group but wish to support us – we will be letting you know in future newsletters what we need to fill our bags with – any help gratefully received. Exciting times!



**S**INCE WE first started to work with the Nkuringo Foundation Nursery and Primary School we have sought ways to get much needed clothes, shoes, books and other basics out to the community. Initially we relied on putting a few gifts for sponsor children into the rucksacks of friendly hikers going out with Dream Challenges. In February 2016 Jan and Steve went out to stay with Asgario, the director of the school. Dream Challenges (the company with whom they were trekking when they first came to Nkuringo) kindly allowed them to fly with their new trekking group to save money. When you fly to Uganda the standard luggage allowance is two 23kg bags per person. Two of the people in the Dream Challenges group, Emma and Jimi Stanford, also kindly took through a bag each which meant we were able to take six bags of aid. The joy those bags brought!

Later in the year Chris Read sent out a container of aid – primarily for the new medical centre he is setting up (see his pages in this newsletter). Some of our sponsors contributed beds, spectacles and other items for the medical centre. Chris also kindly took bags for our school – as well as the 1,500 bras we had collected for the women of the community.

Much of the aid got through but the taxes levied to get the container into Uganda were so high some of the contents of the container had to be sold to try and alleviate the bill. It was a big lesson. The total bill for the container, including taxes levied was £4,341 – a very high price to pay – and one that we will be fund raising to help offset the costs Chris incurred.

We got to thinking that really the only safe way to ensure aid gets to the people who need it is to take it ourselves. We spoke to Asgario, the director of the school and suggested that if we could



# SPONSORSHIP TIME



**A**S WE march towards the end of 2016 – a year in which you can see so much progress has been made – we have to start thinking about 2017. For all of you who sponsor children we need to ask you now if you can confirm whether you will be sponsoring your child or children next year. For some of you fees are not due until a few months into the new year – but the children you support need to have the certainty that they have a place guaranteed for them for the whole of the new scholastic year. We will be writing individually to all of you to ask for your continued support. If you feel you cannot afford to continue – we thank you for the help you have given us already and ask only that you let us know as soon as possible. We have committed that every child

who starts at the school under the sponsorship programme will stay at the school as long as they want or need to. They will be the first ones we will be looking to help before bringing anyone new into the school. Alternatively if you are supporting a child and feel you could support another – please do let us know. This is an anxious time for our children as they wait to hear whether or not they have funding for another year – we hope we can count on you! If any children are leaving school this year I will also let their sponsors know so that they can decide if they can give another child the opportunity of an education. Heartfelt thanks to you all from the children of Nkuringo

THIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER IS PRODUCED FOR THE SPONSORS WHO HELP SUPPORT THE NKURINGO FOUNDATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOL.

WRITTEN BY JANET DUCHESNE AND PRODUCED BY STEPHEN KNOWLDEN. ARTICLE CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOMED.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION EMAIL [JANET.DUCHESNE@SPEECHCENTRE.CO.UK](mailto:JANET.DUCHESNE@SPEECHCENTRE.CO.UK) OR GO TO NKURINGO WEBSITE [WWW.NKURINGO.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NKURINGO.ORG.UK)  
A NEW WEBSITE IS CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BUILT - HOPE TO BE WITH YOU SOON