



UK Registered Charity no. 1138863

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Newsletter No. 33

June 2020

- **Getting up to date**

Over the last two years Acton Udobo has had challenges to face. Inevitably with any purely voluntary organisation changes arise which mean that the rhythm of the entity is disrupted. The demands of daily life can sometimes make the voluntary giving of our time more difficult to sustain, and we must accept that our priorities can change. So, some shuffling of positions within the body of the Trustees has occurred, but happily the core of our organisation has not changed. Our Trustees are long-serving members, and through established friendships they have been able to bring new members into the fold. So, we apologise for being 'quiet' whilst we have re-organised ourselves, but are very happy to be back in touch with you all again now.

- **Changes of the Charity's Officers and Trustee**

Our long-serving Chairman David Latter had to resign his lead position due to his involvement with the ecumenical charity the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust (LWPT), although David happily remains as a valued Trustee.

John Sharman, our experienced Treasurer, also long-serving, likewise had to step aside in order to focus on other commitments, but again remains as a valued Trustee.

In addition our talented Secretary, Cath Hughes, was appointed to a full time post in the Diocese of Lichfield, which meant she had to reluctantly step away entirely from her work for Action Udobo, and it was the Hughes family who co-ordinated the compilation and issue of our Newsletters. The Trustees are immensely grateful for the skills and devotion of all of these very generous hearted people. The loss of their combined talents and commitment created an enormous resource gap in the leadership of the charity which inevitably had to curtail its activities. Fortunately, it was possible to appoint a new Trustee and Treasurer in the person of Caroline Howard (right), who also agreed to act as Secretary, and under the expert guidance of John Sharman Caroline has quickly mastered the intricacies of the charity's finances.



Also, Peter Lang, one of our long-serving Trustees, happily stepped up to take on the role of Acting Chairman. So thankfully Action Udobo has regained some momentum, and the Trustee group remains at seven. However, we would be more than happy to welcome anyone so motivated to join us as a Trustee. An interested mind, and a giving heart is all that is required - could this be you ?

If this might be, then please do not hesitate to contact us through our email address: actionudobo@gmail.com to make initial enquiries or make contact with our Acting Chairman Peter Lang. We hope to hear from you.

- **Support for Udobo School maintained**

Despite these operational difficulties, Action Udobo has been able to continue to support Udobo School throughout this period of transition at the same level and without interruption, thanks to the loyal support of its regular donors.

- **Communication with our supporters**

In these circumstances it has not been possible to issue newsletters since September 2018, so the Trustees decided to circulate directly, either by e-mail or post, the termly newsletter received from the Principal of Udobo School, which I hope you received. If for any reason you did not receive these, they are available on the website actionudobo.org.uk. As these have shown, the school continues to grow and develop, and its pupils achieve a successful start to their educational careers, as demonstrated by the **News from the School** section below.

- **AGM delayed by coronavirus outbreak**

The lockdown required by the coronavirus outbreak in the UK coincided with the planned Action Udobo 2020 AGM which had to be re-arranged as a virtual AGM a month later. Having agreed the accounts for 2019 and confirmed the annual report to the Charity Commission, the Trustees received a report from the treasurer which raised considerable concerns.

- **An impending income crisis**

A slow reduction in the number of regular and occasional donors has meant that annual income had declined over the years, and because of the coronavirus

lockdown no major fundraising was possible for the foreseeable future. Thanks to generous donations and major fundraising efforts in the past, the trustees have been able over the last two years to support the continuing needs of Udobo School by drawing on reserves built up in earlier years. These were sufficient to maintain the existing level of support to the school to the end of 2020, but without a substantial increase in annual income it is clear that the future level of financial support to the school will have to be reduced.

- **Mailshot fundraising campaign offers hope for the future**

The Trustees agreed to write to every contact on its database, some 180 in all, to explain the situation and appeal for more regular donors. This has achieved some success: to date, the number of regular donors has increased by a third and the charity's monthly income by Over £200 and our reserves have increased by over £2000. All of which we are delighted with, but the increase in regular donations is the most valuable asset to the future of our charity. However, this will allow the present level of support to the school to be maintained only until the end of 2021. We still stand some way short of being able to guarantee our present level of support to Udobo School into the long-term future and I would encourage you all to continue your efforts to recruit further new subscribers. Leaflets on the work of the charity, standing order forms and gift-aid forms are always available from our Treasurer: simply make a request via our e-mail address, including your name, address and contact details, and resources will be posted out to you.

Your support is of immense value to these vulnerable children, and their hardworking families. So on behalf of myself, the Trustees, and all of the staff and helpers at Udobo School we thank you once again, most sincerely, for being a part of Action Udobo.



Peter Lang

Acting Chairman

◆ News from Udobo School

During the last term of 2019 the school visited Ushaka Marine World as part of their theme on 'Sea Creatures' (see also front cover). Anne Snyders, the principal, wrote 'This was the most amazing day for our children. Most of them never go on outings like this and could not stop talking about the day, and parents came to thank us in person'.



The school assembled at Ushaka Marine World

The school completed its 2019 academic year in December with a concert and graduation, as reported in its 4th term newsletter. Here are three of the 2019 graduates



Anne Snyders, Udobo School Principal, reflects on 2019 Moments of Joy:

- Watching a little girl who had been quite an introvert suddenly blossom as she learned various dances. She made friends and became so confident when we found her 'strength'.
- A little girl who brought in her Udobo bag and uniform for me to 'give to a child who did not have money' as she was leaving for Grade 1 at a local school. She was so delighted to hand over the items.
- A little boy who drew me a picture every morning and discussed what he had drawn with me, so special.
- The realisation that this is such a special place – there is grace here, there is friendship and love, growth is measured in the development of children and we celebrate their achievements. Most of all this is a place where God is honoured and where we know we cannot do without Him.



Spring Celebration day at Udobo School

Difficulties faced by parents

as coronavirus lockdown was implemented in South Africa:

- Every day I am meeting with parents who have lost their jobs or had some mishap which prevents them from paying the very small amounts of money they owe for their child's fees at school.

- Just before the virus struck we had identified a few families who had nothing – so we were sending vegetables, maize meal and powdered milk to them – whatever we could spare of the donations we receive to keep these families going.
- Many families have what is called ‘piece jobs’ where they take on small jobs or sell things. One family sell spinach on the side of the road – they are an older couple who battled for years to have a child and their little girl is their princess. He was a driver but lost his job and now sells with his wife. We had to drop their fee to a small amount. We keep the parents who are able to pay on a very small fee to protect their dignity, but my heart is very sore when I drive by and see them selling their spinach in the rain.

Success Story of a Teacher

This young lady is one of our teachers who has worked her way up from being a volunteer while studying.Over the years the school has helped many people attain their dream of working with children. Our school assists local colleges and universities in training their new teachers – the students give us 18 months as volunteers, and we guide them as much as we can.



Heritage Day beadwork

Udobo School encourages children to develop their traditional craft skills.

**Principal Anne Snyders
with Orange Group 2019**



- **Late News: Udobo School re-opens**

We have just learned that after being closed since March, pending final Government instructions, it is hoped that the school will re-open in July and the staff are busily making ready for the 'new normal'.

We pray for all the inevitable obstacles to be overcome.



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To advance the education of disadvantaged children of pre-state school age attending the Udobo School, Montclair, Durban, South Africa.

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