



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

May 2023 Newsletter



Katumba children and parents at a school music, dance and drama event

Katumba Appeal

We are very grateful to UHST supporters for their generosity in so far donating over £21,000 towards our Katumba Secondary Education Appeal. Since we started, we have been able to fund:

Staff Toilets – completed. Previously staff had to share with children.

Girls' washrooms – nearing completion. Girls will be able to wash and change during menstruation and after sports.

School Hall – we have raised sufficient to complete the Hall and work will begin in a few weeks. The school will now be able to register as an examination centre and children will be able to take their final exams in school rather than having to travel to a distant exam centre. The building will also be used for music, dance, drama, debates and community meetings.

We will run the appeal a little longer in the hope that we can raise enough to build a dedicated secondary block with the first classroom, science lab and additional toilets. If we fail then, as a stopgap, the hall could be divided to provide one or even two secondary classrooms. We would then prioritise the construction of a science lab, as the first dedicated secondary building.

One way or another, we want to ensure that secondary education will be on offer in Katumba from February 2024 for children successfully completing their Primary Leaving Examinations.

You can follow our progress towards reaching our 2023 target of £35,000 on the front page of our website:

<https://ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org>.

Progress in other Humanist Schools

Isaac Newton Schools

Grading land to create a sports field is finished. Unfortunately, heavy rains have washed bare earth from the field into the open water source, which supplies water to the school and village. The local community is working together to restore the water supply. Our priority now is to plant trees around the playing field to stabilise the soil and provide shade for spectators. Fast growing, creeping grass will also be planted to provide a durable playing surface.

Building an open-sided pavilion where students can read and carry out group investigations is a priority as soon as we raise the necessary £7,600.

The high school has bought 10 new computers. This will enable all students to become competent in the use Microsoft Office and to use the school intranet as part of their learning.

Mustard Seed Schools

Additional boys' sleeping quarters have now been made available by converting 3 classrooms into dormitories. The school has also bought 10 additional laptop computers.

Kanungu School

Recently installed water tanks have relieved the water crisis at the school. School fee income is still low, so the £700 a month that we send is an essential lifeline for paying teachers and providing meals for students and staff. The school is having some success in defeating a boycott of the Humanist School organised by local churches. Local education officials who can see the quality of buildings and the decent standards of education and welfare are being very supportive of the school.

Kasese Humanist Schools

We have renewed support for the Kasese schools by providing £800 to buy books. We intend to provide more help in future, following recent improvements in governance and financial accountability.

Anti-Gay Campaign

As the international Humanist community have been among those who have openly challenged the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, some powerful people are trying to block the progress of Humanist schools, which are in danger of becoming collateral damage.

Local churches tried to organise a boycott of Kanungu Humanist Primary School arguing, incorrectly, that it was a breeding ground for homosexuals. Fortunately, local education officials' satisfaction with education and welfare standards in the school has helped to reassure parents.

When Isaac Newton School gained outstanding grades in sciences, an influential Christian in the examination board called for an enquiry. After the children had been given *viva voce* exams, it was clear that they really knew their science, and the results were upheld.

Mustard Seed School has had no problem re-registering its primary and secondary schools with the name Humanist, though the same process for Isaac Newton is being delayed. Kasese Humanist Schools were refused registration at the Regional Authority. Unless they dropped the word Humanist from the title. Fortunately, the Ministry granted approval at National level. The new Eagle View Humanist School is currently being asked to drop Humanist from its name.

The latest challenge is from the Registrar of Companies who wants the word Humanist to be dropped from the Organisation of Humanist Schools. This is a rather difficult one and may mean that the Organisation must continue as an informal and unrecognised body.

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill was passed by the Uganda parliament this week, but further challenges are being made in the courts, and Humanists in Uganda believe that, if the international furore were to subside, then the legislation would be quietly dropped.

The Humanist Schools need all the support we can give them at this difficult time.