



THE BRITISH & FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY

Maximising Educational Opportunity For All

BFSS Case Studies 2011



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ABOUT THE BRITISH & FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY

The British & Foreign School Society is an educational grant-giving charity formed in 1808 which supports educational activities in the UK and all over the world. It gives grants of around £500,000 per annum in total.

The Society's vision is to maximise educational opportunity for all. The Trustees give priority to applications from organisations and institutions operating in areas of deprivation or educational disadvantage and to activities which will increase the effectiveness of education or training and reduce the barriers to achievement.

Nearly all grants are project-based and are made through UK registered charities. The Trustees look for evidence that projects will give value for money and achieve positive and sustainable change. Full information about the Society's criteria for grant giving, along with application forms, can be found on the Society's website at www.bfss.org.uk.

The Society also gives a small number of grants to assist young people to volunteer for educational activities overseas under the auspices of not-for-profit link organisations. In addition a very small number of grants are made for the benefit of individuals in the final stages of an initial teacher training course.

The Society is a Membership organisation and new Members are welcome. Any donations in support of our grant giving would be gratefully received.

The Society has a President (Rt Hon David Lammy MP) and a Vice-President (Professor Richard Aldrich) and is governed by a Council. Council Members as at May 2012 were:

Mr Roger Howarth (Chair)
Mr Graham Kingsley (Vice-Chair)
Rev David Tennant (Vice-Chair)
Mr David Swain (Treasurer)
Ms Lynne Broadbent
Mr Vic Craggs OBE
Professor Steve Hodgkinson
Rev Prof Stephen Orchard
Ms Shubhi Rao
Mr Stephen Ross
Dr Jaz Saggi
Mr David Stephens
Dr Emily Tomlinson
Dr Ian Waitt
Mr Brian York
Mr David Zahn

Director: Mrs Imogen Wilde
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FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I come to the end of my first year as President of The British & Foreign School Society, I welcome this opportunity to look back at some of the projects that the Society has supported over the last year.

The case studies reflect very clearly the BFSS's focus on widening access to education and on giving children and young people opportunities which can transform their lives. In some cases BFSS funding has provided physical access to education, often in areas where communities lack even the most basic services. For example, in Sierra Leone, the BFSS's grant made it possible to build a permanent structure for a school which had been totally unusable during the annual rainy season. In other cases, for example in the remote villages of Northern Thailand, BFSS funding has provided children with basic educational resources such as exercise books and pencils which so many of us take for granted.

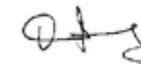
Support for teacher training is another way in which the BFSS is helping to improve access to education. In Pakistan, for example, the BFSS is working with The British Asian Trust to support the development of online teacher training, especially for rural teachers who cannot travel far from their villages. This is opening up possibilities for young women to be recruited as teachers. In Burma and on the Thai/Burma border BFSS grant is supporting the training of teachers with particular emphasis on Training the Trainers, thereby maximising the potential impact of the grant.

Vocational training is a theme of a number of the BFSS's grants. In the UK, the case studies show how BFSS funding is supporting skills training and raising of aspirations among disadvantaged young people, for example

through an innovative youth-led project in Birmingham focused on cycling and linked to national curriculum subjects. In Kyrgyzstan, the support which BFSS is giving for life skills and vocational training for homeless children and young people in government-run institutions is helping them to become increasingly independent.

Another theme is development of the use of ICT, where I am working with the BFSS to look strategically at how best to invest in infrastructure in developing countries. As the Computer Aid International case study in Ghana shows, improving ICT skills at an early age can have much wider, long term benefits, including higher retention of skilled workers to strengthen the regional economy.

Through these and other examples, BFSS is opening up and extending opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people all over the world. The case studies demonstrate how even a relatively small grant can make a real difference to the lives of often vulnerable children and young people. I am very pleased to be associated with the Society.



DAVID LAMMY MP





The wildlife mural being painted on the BFSS school by volunteers

AZAFADY

- Grant for the construction of one fully furnished two-classroom school building for Mahatalaky Middle School in the Anosy region of South East Madagascar
- One-year grant of £11,779 in 2011

Azafady aims to alleviate poverty for marginalised communities in the remote Anosy region of south east Madagascar where communities lack even the most basic services.

Azafady has been building primary schools in the region since 2006 and in Mahatalaky and labokoho, two rural communes within the Anosy region, there are now 26 primary schools. However, these all feed into just one severely under-resourced middle school which, until this project, did not have its own premises. The 300 middle school students had to be taught in shifts in two classrooms borrowed from a local primary school and even in the primary school headmaster's home.

This grant has enabled Azafady to build one fully furnished two-classroom building, which makes up part of a new complex of eight classrooms, two latrines and a safe drinking water well for the middle school. Constructed by Azafady and the local community together with the support of international volunteers, the BFSS-funded building was completed in December 2011 and the whole four-building complex was finished in March 2012.

Through this project and BFSS's grant, Azafady has been able to increase significantly the educational opportunities that can be accessed by some of the poorest children in Madagascar. The new school will provide a safe and comfortable learning environment for more than 8,000 children over the next decade. The local community are extremely excited about the new school and the headmistress says:

"All the teachers and students will be proud to work at the new middle school and it will be a great help in improving our capacity to teach effectively."



The Clean Brake Project - recording a cycling activity

BLUE RIVER SUPPORT SERVICES

- Grant to help Blue River Support Services to set up the youth-led Clean Brake project
- One-year grant of £12,000 in 2011

Blue River Support Services is a Birmingham based charity founded in 2010. It aims to support young people aged 14-19 who are not in education, employment or training and who are often socially excluded by helping them to improve their skills and gain accredited qualifications.

The grant from the BFSS is for the Clean Brake project, a youth-led project which provides a number of outdoor activities focused on cycling and linked to national curriculum subjects. It gives young people opportunities to set up social enterprises, gain accredited qualifications, improve their attitude to learning and become involved in the development of their community.

The young people taking part in the project are seeking to encourage 150 community residents in a tough inner city section

of Birmingham to take up cycling as an alternative to other forms of transport. The young people are also involved in setting up a social enterprise involving the refurbishment and maintenance of bicycles and the distribution of bicycles to the community.

The Clean Brake project also provides educational courses and accreditation in bike mechanics, conservation, citizenship, functional skills English and Maths and cycling proficiency. Participants gain skills in leadership, teamwork and project management through managing and participating in the Clean Brake project. These skills support the young people to improve their academic performance and their employability and help them to go on to employment or further education when they leave the project.



Children in a DIL school in a rural village in Pakistan

THE BRITISH ASIAN TRUST

- Grant to overcome barriers to education in Pakistan by improving the delivery of education. The grant is building the capacity of Developments in Literacy (DIL) to tackle Pakistan's most pressing educational needs. DIL is a charity partner of The British Asian Trust, founded in 2009 by HRH The Prince of Wales.

- One-year grant of £12,500 for 2011-12

More than half the children aged 5-15 in Pakistan are not in school. Developments in Literacy, a charity supporting over 150 primary and secondary schools with 15,000 students across the country, believes that no child in Pakistan - no matter how poor or underprivileged - should be denied access to quality education. DIL aims to enable all children in Pakistan to reach their full potential by improving the state of education in Pakistan's under-developed rural areas.

BFSS's grant will enable DIL to offer its training online, especially for rural teachers who cannot travel far from their villages.

It will benefit 1,500 students and 50 teachers in rural Pakistan.

DIL has been able to provide quality education to girls who otherwise do not have access to learning. In many villages where DIL schools are operating, there were previously no educated girls or women who could be recruited as teachers. Now girls are returning to their villages after completing their matriculation to work in those schools. Rural teachers will now be better equipped to engage and inspire their students.



Secondary school students using the new library to consolidate their learning

THE CHANGARAWE PROJECT

- Grant to help build an orphan welfare centre with a library which is attended by children after school every day during term time

- One-year grant of £16,500 in 2011

The Changarawe Project is a UK registered but locally run charity which aims to improve the welfare of orphans in Changarawe village in the Mvomero region of central Tanzania. Changarawe sits next to a large university and is on the main road to Malawi and Zambia. As a result of high levels of HIV infection, there is an entire generation of orphaned children, many of whom are cared for by elderly grandparents. The project sponsors 150 orphans through primary and secondary school by meeting the direct and indirect costs of their education. The children also receive basic medical care and some basic home supplies. Some support is also given to their elderly carers, with all orphans and their carers being treated to a social afternoon once a month.

The charity also runs a small nursery school for orphans. Until this year all activities were carried out on the nursery school site, which is completely unsuitable to meet the needs of 150 orphans. The BFSS grant allowed a new centre to be constructed. Work began in May 2011 and the new centre was opened in February 2012, when it hosted an induction day for all orphans and their carers.

The main purpose of the centre is to accommodate a library which students can use after school to consolidate their learning. A teacher and a librarian are present at all library sessions and the focus is on Mathematics and English. Teachers are hired to work with groups of students every afternoon on their numeracy and literacy.

This form of targeted educational provision is designed to lead to an improvement in O-level pass rates amongst orphans in Changarawe, which will enable more of them to proceed to A-level studies and university.



A classroom in the Ivor Leigh Memorial School's new building



A young customer learns the ropes in Kwahu Tafo Hat Trick Internet Cafe

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SUPPORT ORGANISATION

- Grant to construct a permanent building for the Ivor Leigh Memorial School in Kaningo, Sierra Leone
- One-year grant of £10,000 in 2011

Community Empowerment Support Organisation (CESO) is a UK based charity which promotes education as a means of eradicating poverty in Sierra Leone. CESO supports the Ivor Leigh Memorial School in Kaningo, Sierra Leone.

The civil war in Sierra Leone resulted in many families being displaced. Some fled to the Kaningo area where there was little infrastructure. Many of the children were orphaned and were taken in by other families. There were no facilities available to educate them and the government was unable to help.

The Ivor Leigh Memorial School (in memory of Ivor Leigh who fled to Kaningo during the war and founded the school in 2006) was initially set up in a temporary structure of

corrugated iron, woven panels and plastic sheeting. By 2008, there were over 300 pupils aged 3-13 being taught a full primary programme, with the teachers' salaries and all of the school equipment being funded by CESO. The building itself was very unstable and totally unusable during the annual rainy season. CESO approached BFSS for a grant towards building a permanent structure for the school.

CESO also secured the help of two volunteer architects from London Metropolitan University, who worked with the local community to design the new building and helped to oversee the construction.

The new school opened in September 2011 and the children are now being taught in a safe and secure environment. The building has already become the hub of the community, with various activities taking place after school hours. In future it will provide adult education classes too, particularly vocational training which will help the families to become more self-sufficient.

COMPUTER AID INTERNATIONAL

- Grant to refit a classroom in each of six primary schools in Kwahu-Tafo, Ghana, and convert each of the classrooms into computer labs, equipped by Computer Aid International
- One-year grant of £56,522 in 2011

Friends of Tafo, managed by the Kwahu-Tafo Progress Council, is a community organisation which aims to empower the people of this small Ghanaian town by strengthening the capacity for self-improvement through education, employment and infrastructure. In order to help children of primary school age to become computer literate, Friends of Tafo approached BFSS to fund computer labs for six primary schools in the area. The aim was to encourage the children to engage in further education and enhance their employment opportunities.

BFSS encouraged Friends of Tafo to approach Computer Aid International as a partner organisation to provide professionally refurbished, high specification PCs as well as training and support, thereby ensuring that the computers are used for their maximum

useful life. The project has coincided with the introduction of ICT into the Ghana school syllabus. It will mean that children are able to study ICT not just from books but by using computers as well and it will ensure that the requisite teaching skills are available to incorporate ICT into the syllabus as a whole.

This introduction of ICT education will also have many benefits for the wider community. Currently, the main kind of work available to the children when they leave school is agricultural. As evidenced by previous Computer Aid projects, improving ICT skills at an early age will lead to a higher retention of skilled workers to diversify and strengthen the regional economy.



Trainees demonstrating how to construct a compost pit at the two schools

FRESH START FOUNDATION

- Grant to provide horticultural skills and training for 60 young people in The Gambia
- One-year grant of £4,800 in 2011

Fresh Start Foundation was established in 2006 by Lamin and Rebecca Daffeh in order to support orphans and other vulnerable children in The Gambia. The charity received a grant from the BFSS in 2010 to provide educational materials for five recently renovated classrooms and to train a librarian for a new library at Kwinella Lower Basic School.

The 2011 grant enabled Fresh Start Foundation to give a group of young people aged 18 plus the opportunity to learn skills in farming, conservation and woodland management which they could take back to, and share with, their own rural communities. Through this educational training project they acquired knowledge of soil improvement strategies, significance of trees for the environment, planting trees, laying seedbeds and plants, designing and constructing a trough for livestock and designing and constructing bird water stations. The expertise

they acquired will enable them to help their communities to increase food production and achieve self sufficiency.

In addition, 200 school children based at two schools have had the opportunity to learn about a variety of subjects including plant requirements for healthy growth, human requirements for healthy growth, the food cycle and the components required for composting. The trainees were able to put their knowledge and skills into practice in the schools' gardens.



Teacher training in action on the Thai/Burma border

HOPE 4 THE WORLD

- Grant to support the training of teachers inside the Burma border (in their local schools) and teachers from 19 village schools (who gather on the border), the training to include Training the Trainers sessions
- Two-year grant (£8,000 over 2011 and 2012) subject to satisfactory report after the first year

Hope 4 the World has been training teachers from the internally displaced (IDP) Karen people of Burma on the Thai/Burma border since 2007 and the Shan People inside Burma since 2009. UK teachers deliver a programme of teacher training designed to develop the skills which will ensure the successful education of future generations when change and stability come to Burma. In 2012 a 10-day Train the Trainers module was introduced.

Teachers 4 Burma is the educational wing of the charity. Volunteer teachers travel for two weeks to the Thai/Burmese border regions and for four weeks inside Burma. The Karen teachers have to travel on foot or open tractor for two or three days, often

at personal risk, to reach the secure training centre. In the last five years over 200 trainees from over 20 schools have participated in these courses.

The Burmese government currently spends less than 1.5% of its budget on education. Teachers have little or no formal training. Some schools have as little as £100 (equivalent) for their annual budget. For the Karen and Shan teachers working within these constraints, the opportunity to acquire professional skills, receive simple teaching aids, meet others and improve their English is invaluable.

The BFSS grant enabled HOPE 4 the World to train 20 teachers from 13 schools on the Thai/Burma border and by the end of May 2012 a further 50 will have been trained inside Burma. Twenty of the teachers who were trained inside Burma in 2010 have been selected for the 10-day Train the Trainers module in May 2012. A second Train the Trainers course will be conducted later in the year for the Karen teachers who participated in the October 2011 training.



The new Centre at Hope Corner where the IT suite will be located

HOPE CORNER

- Grant to help equip an ICT Activity/Study Room in Hope Corner's new Community Centre in Runcorn.
- One-year grant of £12,185 in 2011

Hope Corner is a community church and a UK registered charity formed in 1994 to address the problems of poverty and social exclusion amongst young people and their families in Halton (Runcorn & Widnes). It runs a number of programmes including:

- the Progressive Social Inclusion (PSI) project, an award winning education project for very vulnerable young people aged 14-17;
- Xcel, a structured youth evening for 11s-19s; and
- Hope Kids, a club for children under 11s run by some of the young volunteers from Xcel.

About 75 children and young people access the activities. In order to enable the Centre to expand, a new centre has been built to

provide better facilities with room to expand the youth work.

The BFSS grant has enabled Hope Corner to purchase desktop and laptop computers as well as a server and computer projectors to help equip the new IT suite in the new building.



Children receiving their stationery

THE KAREN HILLTRIBES TRUST

- Grant to provide children in six primary schools in remote villages of North West Thailand with exercise books, rulers, pencils, rubbers, and colouring pencils
- One-year grant of £5,000 in 2011

Karen Hilltribes Trust is a UK charity, dedicated to helping the Karen people of Northern Thailand to build a better future for themselves. It aims to:

- improve health through the installation of clean water systems and supplies of mosquito nets;
- improve access to education through training, resources and transport; and
- facilitate income generation through agriculture and traditional crafts.

The charity was set up in 1999 by Penelope Worsley and works in over 400 Karen villages in the Mae Hong Son province, tucked away in mountainous forest close to the Burma border.

Traditionally the Karen people are very poor subsistence farmers struggling against the extreme climate in difficult conditions. Their greatest wish is to have the chance of education. Today they face a variety of problems including poverty, disease, cultural change and a lack of opportunity, which has a very serious impact on education. The children attend schools, some without electricity, drinking water, sanitation, suitable buildings or adequate learning materials.

BFSS grant has made it possible for six Karen village schools to have the material resources they need to see 615 students aged 5-13 through their primary education. The BFSS grant will maximise education opportunities for these very poor children by improving standards of teaching in literacy, numeracy and creative learning. It will give them the best chance to move on successfully to secondary education.



Older children engaged in an outside educational activity

MOROCCAN CHILDREN'S TRUST

- Grant to support the educational strand of the Moroccan Children's Trust's Street Child Project work, including funding for daily educational support classes and a new pre-school class
- Grant of £8,749 for academic year 2011/12
- Two-year grant (£17,281 over academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13), subject to satisfactory report after the first year

The Moroccan Children's Trust (MCT) is a UK registered charity working to achieve sustainable development for young people and their communities in Taroudannt, South Morocco.

In October 2010 MCT launched a Street Child Centre which provides a safe and welcoming environment for vulnerable street-connected children and their families. The team on the ground delivers a wide range of services, including: home visits; drop-in sessions; leisure and sport activities; support in accessing essential healthcare; and women's group meetings.

A key focus of the project is the provision of educational support classes targeted at children at risk of dropping out of school. Thanks to the grant from the BFSS, MCT is able to run classes three times a day for children working at a range of levels and with different learning needs, helping them to achieve academically and providing them with the encouragement and motivation needed to keep them in education.

The BFSS grant has also funded a new pre-school class for 3-5 year olds, many of whom previously spent their days alone at home or on the streets. Free and subsidised places at the MCT pre-school give these young children the best start possible and help to redress the balance between them and their classmates whose parents can afford to pay for places at private pre-schools.

As at March 2012, around 45 of Taroudannt's most disadvantaged children had benefited from educational work supported by the BFSS.



Children learning about dinosaurs

MUSTARD SEED PROJECT

- Grant to furnish and resource a school in an urban slum district of Mombasa, Kenya
- One-year grant of £11,899 in 2011

Mustard Seed Project Kenya (MSP) was founded in January 2009 by Rita and Geoff Fowler following a holiday in Kenya. It aims to raise the people of Mgongeni out of poverty through education, training, improved health care and better facilities.

MSP have dug a well, opened a computer training centre, trained 120 women and young people to start their own businesses, obtained mosquito nets for every family in the community, offered elementary adult education and given preventative medicine training to a group of women. They have also opened a school for needy children and paid for teacher training for two teachers. Nothing is free, except to the very poorest, as this promotes dependence rather than empowerment, but fees are at a level that people can afford.

The school opened in September 2009 with 17 children and two teachers. As a result of the long waiting list it moved to a new building in September 2010. From January 2011 there were 100 children in four classes of 25 (most of whom were sitting on mats) with inadequate resources. BFSS offered a grant to furnish and resource the school including a staffroom and a nursery. There is no pre-school provision in the community. Without toys and space to play these young children have little opportunity to develop skills or imagination.

The BFSS grant has turned the building into a high quality educational establishment including some computers. The well-equipped nursery opened in September 2011. The whole school is now well furnished and resourced and valued by children, parents and staff. (There is very low absenteeism.) The children, most of whom would not have been in school, are now receiving a standard of education otherwise available only to the very rich in Kenya.



Children with their satchels

NICARAGUA EDUCATION CULTURE AND ARTS TRUST

- Grant to provide educational bursaries for 100 children from deprived backgrounds in León, Nicaragua
- Grant of £10,000 in 2011
- Three-year grant (£30,000 over the years 2009 to 2011)

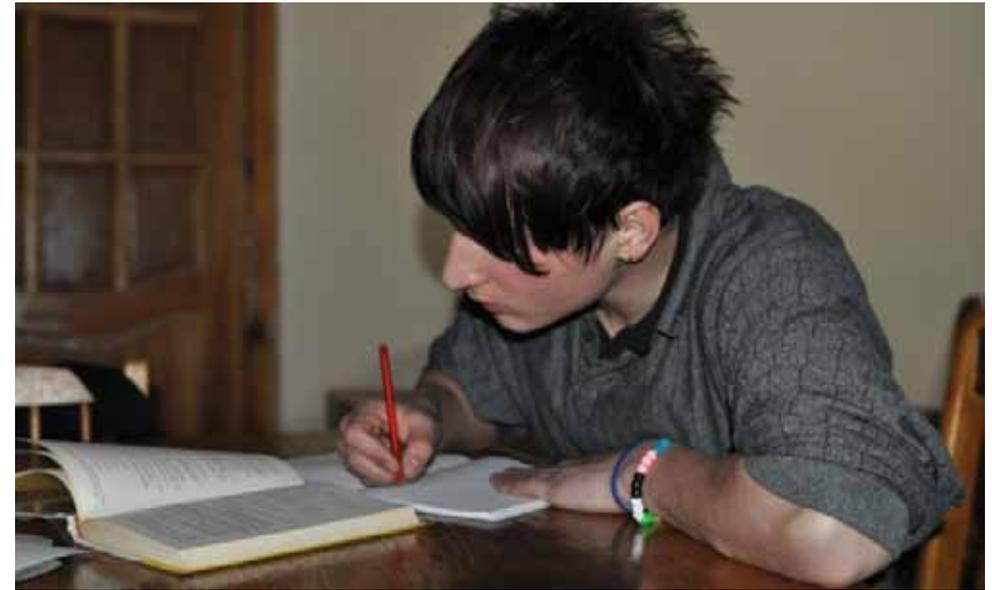
Nicaragua Education Culture and Arts Trust (NECAT) has been working since 2004 to support the education of primary school children from poor families in the city and region of León, Nicaragua. NECAT maintains and runs an education centre in the indigenous suburb of Sutiaba with many activities for young people including an after-school club, a drop-in library where children can do their homework in a secure environment and a mobile library which visits local schools.

The BFSS grant supported a project which involved the provision of school uniforms and educational materials for 100 school children aged 6-12 from the poorest families of five

neighbourhoods in and around the city. The children each received two sets of school uniforms and a 'mochila' (satchel) containing educational materials such as notebooks, pens, dictionary etc. The project also ran workshops for children and their families covering various issues related to the children's education.

A dedicated support worker proactively supported the children, visiting them at school and in the home as well as recording the progress of each child. In return the parents signed a pledge at the beginning of the year guaranteeing to keep their child at school for the duration of the project and promising to supply copies of school reports to NECAT.

NECAT has recently been awarded a further grant from BFSS for a one year extension of the project and for a longitudinal study examining the benefits for children in the project compared to the peer group as a whole.



Summer Camp - preparation for new home and studies

OASIS INTERNATIONAL

- Grant for Oasis International to provide informal education to homeless children living in government-run institutions in Kyrgyzstan and to prepare those leaving institutions to access further education
- Three-year grant of £6,000 per annum for 2011, 2012 and 2013, subject to satisfactory report at the end of each year

Oasis operates in 10 countries helping disadvantaged communities to become places of hope, health and opportunity. It works with those who have been excluded and marginalised to help re-integrate them into the wider community.

In Kyrgyzstan, Oasis is working with young people who have lived on the streets and have a history of family breakdown, abuse and neglect. It seeks to give them a chance of an independent and productive life and to protect them from returning to the streets where they are vulnerable to crime, prostitution, trafficking or the mafia.

Oasis works with the young people while they are in government institutions, such as street children's centres and a reform school, to give them life skills training, vocational orientation and character education. It works closely with those who leave at the age of 16 to help them plan and prepare for their future.

BFSS has helped Oasis run the informal education programme in the street children's centres for 55 young people and has contributed towards the education and care of 12 young people in Oasis's transitional homes. The young people are enjoying making rapid progress in their studies and seeing new possibilities ahead, thanks to this opportunity and support.

Oasis is helping these young people to become increasingly independent and to integrate back into a wider community.



Head girl Beatrice Jalloh starts Phase Two

WATERLOO SCHOOLS CHARITY

- Grant for Phase 2 of a Science, Technical and Vocational Training Department at the Peninsula Secondary School in Waterloo town in Sierra Leone

- One-year grant of £9,500 in 2011

Waterloo Schools Charity was founded by Laurie Read who, on retiring as a surgeon in 2005, travelled to Sierra Leone and re-visited the Peninsula Secondary School where he had been Principal and had taught Science 40 years earlier. Horrified by what he found, he established Waterloo Schools Charity to collaborate with the people of Waterloo in restoring and developing nursery, primary and secondary school education.

In 2006 Waterloo Schools Charity embarked on an ambitious project in cooperation with The Waterloo District Council, the town chiefs and elders and the Peninsula Old Students Association to build three laboratories and four workshops on the school site. Before this project there was no vocational or technical training in the community.

There were three phases to the project:

- Phase 1 to enable the School to teach Biology, Chemistry and Physics up to fifth form 'O'level for the first time, to give the students the chance to do practical work in their Home Economics and family health classes, and to set up a computer laboratory with 40 desk top computers all in a brand new building.

- Phase 2 to start a workshop for training in building skills such as block making, masonry, plastering and decorating.

- Phase 3 to add two further workshops and a classroom/library.

BFSS gave a grant of £10,000 in 2006 towards the costs of Science laboratories at the School and also new water supply. In 2009 the Society gave a grant of £7,000 towards the cost of equipping the Biology laboratory. In Phase 1 three rooms have been fully equipped thanks to donations from schools and colleges in England as well as BFSS grant. All three laboratories are in full use. Specialist teachers in Science, Computer Skills and Home Economics have been appointed so that boys and girls can enjoy these exciting and new subjects in their school.

Both Phases 2 and 3 are under construction and will be roofed by September when the new school year starts. The charity and the townspeople of Waterloo are confident they will be able to raise the necessary funds to equip each workshop with its tools and hope to have the whole department in use very soon.



Finding my second home in Cambodia

INTERNATIONAL LINK SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME (CAMBODIA)

- Grant for Joshua Hoskins under the BFSS International Link Scholarship Scheme

- Grant of £1,000 for a 6-month placement in Cambodia in 2010/11

Each year the BFSS allocates a small proportion of its funds to assist young people to volunteer for educational activities overseas under the auspices of not-for-profit link organisations. Joshua Hoskins, who spent six months on a placement in Cambodia in 2010/11, has sent the following report:

"The months I have spent volunteering in Cambodia have been some of the best of my life. Experiences I could once only have dreamed of have become everyday occurrences: I have taken afternoon tea at Raffles with the granddaughter of a Norodom princess; I have had the opportunity to witness the trials of senior members of the Khmer Rouge; I have driven through breathtakingly beautiful countryside on the back of a friend's motorbike to join an unforgettable New Year's party in a

Cambodian village; but most importantly of all, I have had the ineffable privilege to share in the everyday lives of Cambodian people from all walks of life and to forge some of the best friendships I have ever had.

Seeing the progress – both academic and social – made by the sweetest, cheekiest, most amazing kids I have ever met was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and really cemented my belief in the value of education. I can only hope that I had a fraction of the impact on the lives of these children as they have had on my own life.

There are some things in life which have little influence on our future, and some which have a colossal impact; the decision to apply for a BFSS grant definitely falls into the latter category and I am inexpressibly grateful for it."



Ben's class move up to the Pre-Intermediate book

INTERNATIONAL LINK SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME (PARAGUAY)

- Grant for Ben Quarshie under the BFSS International Link Scholarship Scheme
- Grant of £500 for a 6-month placement in Paraguay in 2011/12

This is Ben's report:

"The time I spent in Santa Maria de Fe, Paraguay, was a completely new experience for me and extremely rewarding. It was a great privilege to be able to travel to this under-visited part of Latin America and to receive such a warm welcome from the people there.

I was immersed in a culture that I knew very little about previously and I learnt a lot not only from living with people as they went about their daily lives but also from accounts of life under dictatorship and from family histories. It was at times hugely enjoyable, at other times fascinating and humbling, to hear people's stories, learn about the country's tumultuous history, discuss politics and television, eat 'asados' and dance to

the ubiquitous sound of polkas, cumbia and reggaeton.

The students in my English classes were incredibly warm, enthusiastic and great fun to be around. I was lucky enough to teach highly energetic children, wonderfully eccentric teenagers and young adults who became good friends. We had fun singing and playing games and they were surprisingly uncomplaining about being subjected to English grammar. It was fantastic to see them advance through the classes and for them to see their hard work reflected in their exam results. It was also an honour to be invited to their school leavers' ceremonies or to drink 'tereré' and eat lunch with their parents. There was never a lack of 'fiestas' or pool games in the evenings.

It was a fantastic experience to work for Santa Maria Education Fund and to share unforgettable experiences with the people of Santa Maria, and I am extremely grateful for the BFSS grant that helped me get there."

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