

The Barbara Project 'Enabling the disabled child in remote village locations in Busoga Uganda'

Please share with us this important and likely final update on The Barbara Project.

Penny and Katy

Dear family and friends,

The Barbara Project came about following our first trip to Uganda in 2009 when we both felt called to return to Uganda to use our respective medical skills. We were invited to develop a model of service working in partnership with the Ugandan NGO 'Family Life Education Program' (FLEP). Invaluable core training in 2010 with Church Mission Society gave us important preparation for this work.

We began our trip in 2011 with a great deal of enthusiasm and energy but we had much to learn. We experienced a steep learning curve that year! We were given a picture from the Lord of a rain drop falling into a pond - small but the ripples that spread out were huge. The Lord said to us 'you be the raindrop...do the bit you can do and I will make the work spread.

Looking back, after 14 trips to Uganda to work on the project we can see many ways in which that has happened.

- *We have seen over 600 disabled children with their families/carers.*
- *Over 200 wheelchairs have been issued with appropriate advice, training and follow up.*
- *Many pairs of crutches, modified shoes, and exercise programs have been issued.*
- *Workshops on disability awareness, prevention and treatment have been held in the villages where we hold clinics; also workshops on screening of the new born, the toddler and infant for disability have been held in order to speed up referrals to local hospitals.*

Over the years we have had some amazing experiences, and it has been a huge privilege and joy to have been able to visit and get to know a part of this wonderful country. We have often been taken well out of our comfort zones. There have been some painful, scary and challenging times too. We are both aware how the Lord has shaped us as individuals and as colleagues and friends through this work. Above all we have made some wonderful, delightful and special friends in Uganda and experienced with them joys and sorrows.

So now it is time for us to wind up the Barbara Project in its present form. We both celebrate 70 years of age over this year. We had hoped that the project could continue with Benson and Stephen running it without us, however the prolonged 18 month covid lockdown in Uganda has meant that Benson had to look elsewhere for paid work and Stephen is currently fulfilling his desire to upgrade his physiotherapy qualification to degree level.

F.L.E.P.

This work has only been possible because of the partnership with FLEP. Benson a FLEP project worker has been passionate about this work from the start, and we have funded his qualification as a Community Rehabilitation Worker – the only one in Busoga - which has proved invaluable in the clinics. His knowledge of the area – local villages, remote health centres, mud roads - and his

interpretation skills have been hugely valuable. Stephen (a Ugandan physiotherapist we have worked closely with) also has immense passion, enthusiasm and energy for this work. We have been able to enhance his paediatric knowledge and skills for which he has been incredibly appreciative, and we have learnt much from him. This project has been blessed with an extraordinary passionate Ugandan team.

We are delighted, however, that F.L.E.P. now includes improving the lives of disabled children as a key and vital part of its work and bids for funding, so we do believe that the work that has been started will continue. There is now considerable knowledge and experience in the villages of how these children can be enabled to have improved quality of life, attend school, and achieve employment if given the right treatment, advice and equipment. FLEP have been heavily involved in the covid vaccination program using their skills of working with villagers in remote village locations to allay the vaccination hesitancy. FLEP continue to run immunisation clinics for children, HIV and malaria testing plus treatment, also ante and post- natal care. They have been involved in dealing with the recent Ebola outbreak.

We continue to pray that the government will make more resources available to these children. Stephen our physiotherapist hopes to follow up many of the children we have seen - please pray for him as he finds the right way to do this and obtain Ugandan funding.

We now find ourselves drawn into different ministries. Katy is involved both in the parish doing some pastoral work, and also with Winchester Diocese Spiritual Direction Network. Penny is working with Hong Kong settlers in Southampton setting up and leading an Alpha course specifically for Cantonese speakers, also hosting 3 lovely Ukrainian refugees and working amongst other local Ukrainian refugees here.

We both continue to be involved in the work of Enable Busoga, which actively supports the work of FLEP our partnership NGO.

We are sad that our regular trips to Uganda have now come to an end but there will always be a part of us remaining there. We hope for an opportunity in the future to visit our lovely friends again.

This update comes to you from both of us with heartfelt gratitude for all the ways in which you have supported the Barbara Project over the years since its concept in 2010. We thank you for your interest and support in this work, your prayers, good wishes, and donations. We will be in contact with those of you who have a standing order supporting the Barbara Project work and as trustees we will continue to fund raise to support the ongoing work in Busoga.

Click here for link to the Enable Busoga website

With our love

Penny Allen and Katy Barnes

