



This issue's theme: The difference you make

What makes it possible?

Transforming', 'desperately needed', 'life-saving' are all phrases commonly used in the charitable world. Although valid, the words can become dulled, and the needs of vulnerable people indistinct, amidst ever-escalating descriptions of suffering. And it's hard not to feel helpless in the face of current global headlines: the misery of children in Syria, drought across East Africa, starvation in Yemen... Given the magnitude of need the world over, can we as individuals ever make a difference and genuinely be part of something which changes lives?

The answer to you as a supporter of Advantage Africa is a resounding yes, and we see so many examples of it across Kenya and Uganda. Take Alex and his grandmother for instance, whose story is told on page 2. Alex's life has been completely turned around

thanks to your support – no exaggeration. Or Beatrice (page 3) who was told last year she would die from skin cancer and her children become orphans. She is now cancer free and excitedly making plans for the future – no superlatives needed.

When I meet with the communities we support, I tell them what makes it possible for Advantage Africa to do what it does. I describe people of all ages who donate regularly, those who do sponsored events, organise cake sales and sell tombola tickets; some who send cheques with notes of encouragement which lift our hearts, or drop their first new fiver anonymously through Advantage Africa's letterbox; still others who encourage their workplace to donate a proportion of profits.

The communities' response is always the same – they



ask me to send their love and blessings to you, as well as gratitude for standing with them as they overcome the challenges they face. They often express surprise and delight that people thousands of miles away care about them and their families. I wish I could properly share the affection and appreciation they extend to you.

You are making a difference in Advantage Africa's transforming, desperately needed, life-saving work – never doubt it!

Jane Betts
Uganda Programme Manager



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A better life for Alex

Alex is seventeen but no bigger than a two-year old. When he stopped growing and displayed problems with speech and mobility, his mother left him with his paternal grandmother and never came back. His grandmother 'Jaja' has brought him up with love and care, but their life in rural Kironde, Uganda, has been very hard, with no regular income. Alex has felt isolated and lacked confidence to play with other children.

When we first met Alex in July 2016, he was listlessly crawling outside his home but by January 2017 the transformation in his life was extraordinary. With a beaming smile, he and his grandmother hug us like long-lost family. They now have a pig called Spau (named in honour of our partner the Single Parents' Association of Uganda) who has recently given birth to a large litter of healthy piglets. Alex and Jaja both have immaculately kept



Alex crawling outside his home last year.



Alex, pictured here with our project manager Paul Lwanga, now wears a big smile.

mattresses and bedding and mosquito nets to protect them from malaria. Perhaps best of all, through Advantage Africa's partnership with Motivation Uganda, Alex has a brand new wheelchair which can negotiate the rough terrain and be maintained locally. He can propel himself around the village and feel properly part of his community for the first time in his life.

Advantage Africa has supported 110 vulnerable families like Alex's in Kironde with access to safe water, income-generation, protection from malaria, HIV counselling, better rest through comfortable bedding and mobility aids to help disabled people become more independent. The difference you make is extraordinary.



His new bed and mosquito net protect Alex from disease.



Alex's mobility and confidence have been transformed by his new wheelchair. His grandmother is overjoyed by the change in his life and the prospect of an income to meet their basic needs.



Beatrice (left) with Jane Betts earlier this year.

Beatrice finds happiness

Beatrice has albinism and lives in eastern Uganda with her three children. Last year she was told her life was at risk due to an extensive tumour on her neck and she became desperate for help. Working with the Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism (SNUPA) and Hospice Jinja, Beatrice had surgery in late 2016. Post-operation biopsies have shown her to be completely cancer free and she is like a woman re-born! Advantage Africa is ensuring Beatrice

continues to keep safe from cancer with sunscreen, hats and regular skin checks. We are also planning a small-business enterprise with her, to help meet her family's basic needs. Quite simply, as Beatrice's elderly mother told us, 'She was suffering before, but now she's happy.'

We're so grateful to supporters like you who donate towards our cancer care fund for people with albinism.

Mbatha's bright future

In East Africa, suitable facilities for disabled children are few and far between. The majority of disabled boys and girls remain out of school. Advantage Africa is helping to change this situation with its long-term support for two special units within primary schools in Eastern Kenya. Mbatha, who has Down's syndrome, has benefitted from eight years of appropriate education at Advantage Africa's special unit in Mitaboni. In 2016, at the age of 19, she joined our 'school leavers' transition programme' which prepared her for starting her adult life in her home community. The school's vocational staff

worked with Mbatha's family to find a suitable activity for her at home and with Advantage Africa's help, purchased three goats for her to rear. A year after leaving school, Mbatha has fully settled into her home community. She participates in all aspects of local life including farming, shopping and going to church on Sundays. Mbatha's mother Catherine, says, 'We really appreciate all that has been done for my daughter, I now believe her future is bright'. Mbatha's goats have already multiplied in number to six, and one of the young goats has been returned to school to benefit another disabled school leaver.



Mbatha proudly shows off one of her goats with Samson Musau, Headteacher of Mitaboni Primary School.

Your support is helping more than one hundred children like Mbatha to access an appropriate education and look forward to a similarly bright future.

Could you make a difference to people like these?

£5 per month can protect a person with albinism from skin cancer.

£10 per month can provide regular home visits and physiotherapy for a disabled child like Alex

£100 can help a child like Mbatha start adult life confidently.

£500 will help a person with albinism like Beatrice to receive life-saving surgery.

Fundraising News

Kavumba update

In our last newsletter, we told you about the Ugandan community of Kavumba whose only source of water was a distant, polluted pond. Your kind-hearted response, including one supporter who 'match funded' donations to the project, and the charity Uganda Reflex, have since helped bring an accessible borehole to Kavumba. More than 350 families now have safe water for the first time. Thank you for your generous support!



This muddy pond was previously the only source of water for people in Kavumba.



The new borehole is providing safe water, even during the current drought.



Last year's team on the summit of Ingleborough, one of Yorkshire's famous 'Three Peaks'.

Could you hike the Yorkshire Three Peaks for Advantage Africa?

Would you like to join a team of up to ten people taking on the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge to raise funds for Advantage Africa's life-changing work in Kenya and Uganda? Then why not join us for an amazing weekend of hiking, scenery, friendship and fundraising? You can choose between 24th June or 23rd September for your challenge. For more details and a booking form, please visit www.advantageafrica.org/y3p.

Jon Snow supports Advantage Africa's albinism project

Advantage Africa will be featured on national radio in April. Jon Snow, the indomitable face of Channel 4 News, will



Jon Snow.

present a Radio 4 Appeal for Advantage Africa's work with people with albinism in Uganda. When asked to get involved, Jon, who knows Uganda well, responded 'I'd love to, what a good cause!'

Ten times more common in Africa than in the UK, albinism is a genetic condition which causes people to lack the protective skin pigment melanin. In Uganda, 98% of people with albinism die from skin cancer before they're 40. With sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats and knowledge of how to protect themselves, these deaths are entirely avoidable. Donations to the appeal will directly help children and adults with albinism in Uganda to stay safe from skin cancer.

Please listen to the Advantage Africa Appeal which will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Sunday 23rd April at 07:55 and 21:25 and again on Thursday 27th April at 15:25.

A BBC RADIO 4 APPEAL



Milestones is published by Advantage Africa, who support people affected by poverty, disability and HIV to improve their education, health and incomes. Our work helps people to help themselves and build a better future for their families and communities.

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