

This issue's theme: Our Annual Review

A year like no other

As 2020, a year like no other, draws to a close, I've been reflecting on how the people supported by Advantage Africa – those affected by HIV, disability and albinism – seem to suffer most during times of crisis. From the start of the pandemic, we saw how they were vulnerable not only to COVID-19 infection but also to the impact of restrictions on movement and the sudden loss of work to provide for their families. As borders were shut, people forced to stay at home, schools and other public institutions closed, prices rose and strict curfews imposed, these vulnerable families began to experience extreme fear and hunger. We even heard of children falling seriously ill after scavenging for leaves to survive.

Agnes Musembi, coordinator of KDPO told us: *'When lockdown happened we were very concerned that people with disabilities would be left out. How can you do social distancing when you need a carer and what about sanitising when you need your wheelchair pushing?'*



Despite terribly difficult circumstances Margaret has new hope.

4,034 vulnerable people across Kenya and Uganda supported with vital food and hygiene packages to help them survive the COVID-19 crisis.

Also the information about COVID-19 on the radio is not accessible to the deaf, and posters or leaflets don't help blind people.'

Your support enabled us to respond quickly and at scale. With our regular projects paused to comply with government restrictions, we set to work to ensure that the most vulnerable people, like those described by Agnes, could cope.

Our team in the UK and across East Africa worked tirelessly to provide accurate information about COVID-19 and distribute food and hygiene packages to 4,034 vulnerable people in extreme need.¹ Together, we did all we could to maintain vital services so that people with HIV could access antiretroviral drugs and life-saving operations for people with albinism could go ahead. After obtaining government permission, one of our volunteers even travelled hundreds of miles across Uganda by motorbike to deliver sunscreen to people with albinism so they could be protected from skin cancer.

Margaret is blind and lives in the rural village of Kironondo in eastern Uganda. On receiving her packages she told us 'I'm so happy to see that some people in the world still value my life!'



Volunteer Pat (right) delivers sunscreen and food to isolated families in need.

In this edition of *Milestones* we describe how your support helped thousands of vulnerable people to overcome the challenges of COVID-19, poverty and discrimination with highlights from our 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts.² When you've had a read, please pass it on to a family member or friend with an encouragement to join you in supporting 'a small charity making a big difference'. Thank you.

Andrew Betts
Director



Food is weighed for vulnerable families in Kibwezi, Kenya.

¹Since the end of our financial year on the 31st July 2020, this figure has risen to more than 5,000.

²To see the full Report and Accounts, please visit www.advantageafrica.org/annual-report

Impact and reach - Uganda

In 2019/20, Advantage Africa supported nine partner organisations in Kenya and Uganda to improve the lives of people affected by poverty and exclusion through over 20 community-based projects.

Improving the lives of people with albinism

Lacking the protective pigment melanin, people with the genetic condition of albinism have an average life expectancy of just 30 years without appropriate support. In close partnership with the Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism (SNUPA) we worked to prevent such needless deaths by holding 51 skin clinics, removing pre-cancerous lesions using cryotherapy and distributing wide-brimmed hats and nearly 5,000 bottles of 50 SPF sunscreen. We also funded life-saving surgery for 26 people with advanced skin cancer. Altogether, 1,000 people with albinism were protected.

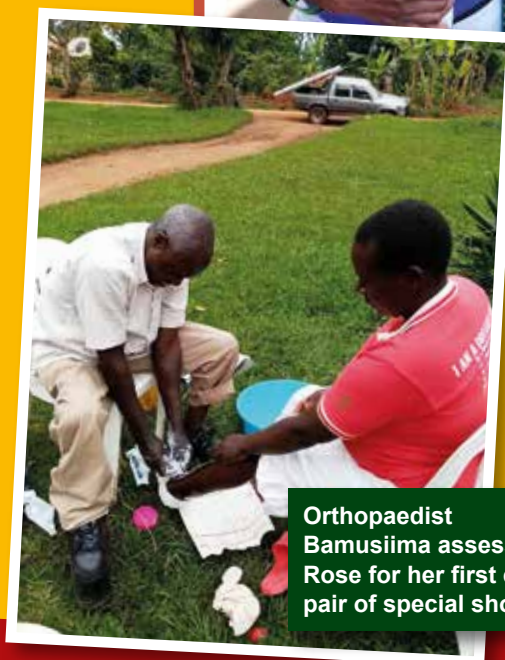
Our albinism project manager Peter Ogik says: *'The sun is our number one enemy. Sunscreen is part of us. We cannot live without it!'*



A man with albinism receives cryotherapy treatment.



Young children with albinism need sunscreen to ensure they don't develop skin cancer and can live long and healthy lives.



Orthopaedist Bamusiima assesses Rose for her first ever pair of special shoes.

Improved health for single parent families and people with disabilities

Improved health was also a goal of Advantage Africa's work among single parent families in Uganda. In the rural community of Serubona, achievements included 1,200 people protected from life-threatening malaria through training and insecticide treated mosquito nets, memory work (HIV) training of trainers for 20 families, and welfare kits including mattresses and bedding for 60 of the most vulnerable families. A further 60 people with disabilities were assessed for appliances such as wheelchairs and crutches to transform their mobility and independence.

51 skin clinics held for people with albinism.

1,000 people with albinism protected from skin cancer.

4,704 bottles of life-saving sunscreen provided by Ultrasun UK.

26 people with albinism had surgery for advanced skin cancer.

1,200 people protected from life-threatening malaria.

60 people with disabilities assessed for appliances.

20 single parent families trained to cope with the impact of HIV.

Using insecticide treated mosquito nets, Joan can now keep her family safe from life-threatening malaria.



Impact and reach - Kenya

Reducing the spread and impact of HIV

Reducing the impact and spread of HIV is a major theme of Advantage Africa's programme in Kenya, carried out in partnership with our partner Rescue Team for HIV & AIDS. This work, supported almost entirely by individuals like you, saw 1,113 people receive HIV counselling and testing in 2019/20. All those found positive were successfully linked to a provider of antiretroviral therapy. Rescue Team's wider health and education services in the Kibwezi community included support for 80 young mothers and quality education for 35 pupils in their early years school.



HIV testing.

Sourcing the correct size prostheses for children is difficult in Kenya but Faith is now back on her feet.



Our work to prevent gender-based violence enabled 60 women with disabilities to be trained to address this issue in their homes and communities and several hundred to experience the performances of Twaweza, a drama group that aims to foster greater respect between the sexes. A noticeable increase in the number of successful prosecutions against perpetrators resulted.

Members of a village disability group make ropes to earn an income.



Advantage Africa and our partner the Kenya Institute of Special Education trained 22 special needs teachers from all over the country in the effective transition of children with disabilities from school to adult life, with 95% rating the training very good or excellent. Teachers applied their new knowledge by helping their students to establish enterprises for the benefit of their families. We also assisted the special units at Mitaboni and Thinu Primary Schools to provide education and vocational training to 54 children with disabilities, and retain their dedicated staff during the COVID-19 closure.



12-year-old Muinde at home with his new wheelchair. Pictured with his mother (left) and aunt.

Empowering people with disabilities

In the same area, Advantage Africa's partnership with Kibwezi Disabled Persons' Organisation (KDPO) helped people with disabilities overcome discrimination and build a better future for their families. This year we secured, renovated and equipped a physiotherapy room with equipment (such as an infrared treatment lamp) that would usually only be found in Kenya's major cities, and ensured vital services were safely available even during the COVID-19 lockdown. 43 children with disabilities received or had their assistive devices repaired including supportive seating, standing frames prosthetic limbs and wheelchairs through KDPO's workshop. 80 home visits were made which enabled families, often in desperate need, to receive practical and emotional support. We also assisted 20 village disability groups to help their 500 members generate incomes by making crafts, clothes and soap, producing honey or growing trees.

1,113 people received HIV testing and counselling.

80 expectant and new mothers trained in pre and post-natal health.

43 children and adults with disabilities supplied with assistive devices.

500 people with disabilities supported through 20 local groups.

60 women with disabilities trained to prevent gender-based violence.

22 special needs teachers trained in effective transition.

54 children with disabilities learned academic and life skills.

Strengthening local organisations

When you support Advantage Africa, you help us build strong relationships with local partner organisations that care for and empower vulnerable people, often in remote locations, across Kenya and Uganda. Our UK team, and especially our Programme Managers Rob and Jane, know their East African counterparts as valued friends and work closely with them in a way that is unique and rather special.

Strengthening our partners' effectiveness in assisting vulnerable people to improve their lives is a core focus of our Strategic Plan. We do it by mentoring, sharing skills, providing training and information, supporting in-country fundraising and linking our partners to other useful organisations. Rob and Jane spend much of their time phoning, emailing and, increasingly WhatsApp-ing their partners with all sorts of support and guidance. All the time we are learning from each other as we implement life-changing projects together and gain inspiration from the many stories of changed lives.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the physical and mental well-being of local staff and the vulnerable people in their care has been our priority. In addition to emergency funds, we've provided our partners with constant phone support and reliable information on COVID-19 as well as sharing much-needed encouragement during tough times.

Burgwin, seen here training others, is building up his knowledge and skills in HIV testing and management.



MWDG provide emergency food to Melanie (right). She is a desperately poor mother and amputee who cares for her bed-bound husband and two small boys.

Training

This year we also supported our partners to undertake formal training in financial management (in Uganda) and in advanced wheelchair assessment and fitting training (in Kenya). With donations from people like you we funded Burgwin, Coordinator of Rescue Team in eastern Kenya to start a two-year diploma in HIV testing and management.

Building new partnerships

Following a period of mutual assessment and getting to know each other, we were delighted to welcome the Migori Women with Disabilities Group (MWDG) from south-east Kenya into the Advantage Africa family. The group is led by Sheila and Rodah, two passionate and dynamic women with disabilities, who coordinate a network of over 200 women with disabilities from eight smaller groups throughout the region. Rodah was ecstatic on hearing the news that Advantage Africa's Trustees had approved the partnership. She told us 'We are so excited and thankful, may God bless you for partnering with our organisation'. Since then we've had significant impact in Migori, providing food packages, hygiene kits and urgent medical care to 230 vulnerable people with disabilities and their families who've been most disadvantaged by the COVID-19 lockdown.



Coordinators of our new partner MWDG, Rodah (left) and Sheila (right).

Sustainability

Sustainability is Advantage Africa's watchword, as we prioritise building confidence, self-reliance and resilience among the vulnerable people we support. Any new plan to work with a community group in Uganda or Kenya is developed alongside an exit strategy to guide us towards the day when Advantage Africa has done itself out of a job.

The importance of sustainability means that nearly all our projects and partners involve establishing small enterprises. With your help over the past financial year we've supported 930 people in 220 families in Kenya and Uganda to improve their livelihoods through enterprises such as poultry and goat rearing. What's more, these families are reaching nearly as many people again as they share their skills and pass on a proportion of their newborn stock to others in need.

In Serubona, Uganda, 70 teenagers have learnt how to make good quality, washable sanitary pads for personal use as well as for sale in local markets. Lack of affordable, appropriate sanitary protection is an enormous problem in Uganda which has the highest school dropout rate for adolescent girls in East Africa. This much-needed initiative means these young girls feel more confident about staying in education, can help others to do the same and also earn a small income towards buying their school books. It's a win-win-win!

Nancy can now care for her orphaned grandchildren.



930 vulnerable people benefitted from new household enterprises to meet their basic needs.

47 vulnerable people supported to recover from crises through our Severe Hardship Funds.



People from the Muuo Disability Group in Kenya receive their water tanks to help with goat rearing.



Teenagers learning how to make good quality washable pads.

In these projects, we encourage participants to form peer support groups so they can share challenges and successes as their enterprises progress. These trying times have underlined for us all how important it is to maintain social connections with others in similar circumstances. For vulnerable people who have previously felt isolated and anxious, these groups do wonders for their mental health and confidence, helping them to forge strong friendships and know they're not alone.

Sometimes the challenges vulnerable people face threaten their immediate survival. This year, your support of our Severe Hardship Fund has helped 47 people and their families facing desperate circumstances to get back on their feet, rebuild their lives and look forward to a more stable future. Nancy is one of these people. She adopted her three orphaned grandchildren, two-year old triplets, when her daughter died unexpectedly, despite her own frail health and lack of income. The family was destitute and in despair. Through the Severe Hardship Fund, we quickly supported the family with mosquito nets, mattresses, blankets and nutritious food including rice, beans and maize flour. Most importantly, we helped them to become self-reliant by assisting Nancy to start rearing pigs and the family now has a robust pregnant sow to care for.

Financial Summary

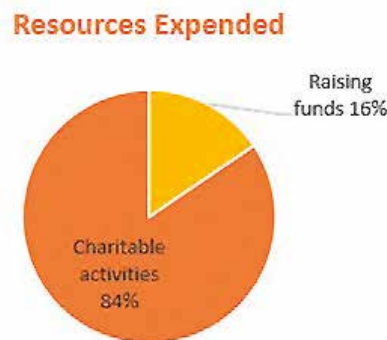
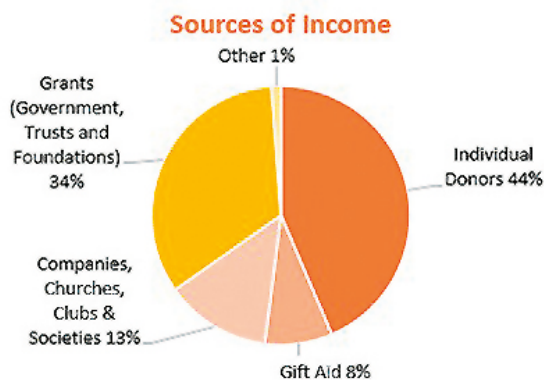
1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020

Income	£
Donations from individuals and Gift Aid	146,838
Grants from institutions and charitable trusts	94,843
Donations from companies, churches, etc	37,405
Consultancy on gender-based violence	2,678
Trading activities	191
Bank interest	442
Total	282,397

Expenditure	£
Charitable activities - East Africa programme	226,132
Charitable activities - Governance	4,750
Fundraising	42,380
Total	273,262



Peter and Edmond from SNUPA prepare to unload a life-saving consignment of sunscreen.



Our sincere thanks go out to every single person who supported us in the year, including donors to our COVID-19 Appeal and 126 people who make a regular monthly donation - without whom the life-changing work described in this Review would simply not be possible. Regular donations help us plan ahead and respond to emergencies. This has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic where we've seen a dramatic increase in hunger and need in our partner communities. The challenge of increasing demand and falling income is facing many charities right now and we cannot appreciate you enough for sticking with us and the vulnerable people we serve.

We're also grateful to the many organisations who provided grants and donations, usually for specific projects. These include the Guernsey Overseas Aid & Development Commission, the British and Foreign School Society, Let Yourself Trust, Noel Buxton Trust, Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust and Ultrasun (UK) Ltd. The latter not only support our ground-breaking skin clinics for people with albinism in Uganda but also provide a supply of medical grade SPF 50 sunscreen that is saving hundreds of lives by preventing skin cancer.

£10 can provide a support visit to a family affected by poverty, disability or HIV.

£30 can provide training, treated mosquito nets and fixings to protect a family of five from malaria.

£60 can help a family facing extreme hardship to start a small enterprise to meet their basic needs.

£500 can provide skin cancer surgery to save the life of a person with albinism.

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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Staff: Andrew Betts, Rob Aley, Carole Holloway, Jane Betts

Trustees: Christopher Chapman, Rebecca Sherriff, Pratima Dattani, George Mwaura, Mandy Smith and David Barnett

Patrons: Martyn Joseph and Jon Snow

Address: Advantage Africa, 9 High Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire, MK46 4EB. **Tel:** 01234 711005

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- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

