

Can your school share in our future?



We hope your school will become a Friend of Ibba Girls School

This friendship can evolve over time, and become one not just of support for our charity, but also one that can build mutual learning and understanding of the lives of girls in different countries.

Our school operates in a country dealing with a civil war, with food shortages and uncertainty; a country where most girls

never get educated beyond the age of ten. Yet we have never lost a single day of schooling since we opened, and are fully committed to the school's future.

In times of difficulty, we need friends we can rely upon; friends we can share our experience with. We hope to build such a friendship with your school.

About Ibba Girls School

Ibba Girls School is a residential school for girls aged 10 to 18+ in South Sudan. It opened in March 2014 to its first intake of 40 girls and has now grown to over 130 pupils. Its ambition is to grow further by taking an additional 40 girls each year until it reaches its capacity of 360 students.

It is the result of extraordinary commitment by a village community in South Sudan to build a school to give girls the chance to make a better life. This stemmed from the vision of the first woman ever in the village to have been educated past the age of 10.

A small group of people in the UK formed the charity Friends of Ibba Girls School, dedicated solely to supporting the local community build and run the school. This charity is led by unpaid volunteers and relies wholly on voluntary donations.

The school has become a beacon of hope and best practice for education. It is a secure residential community where girls are safe to learn, with "both the pen and hoe", both in and out of the classroom. It is a life-changing project for the girls involved who now have the promise of a brighter future that otherwise they would have no chance of achieving.



Creating a friendship

Any support that your school can offer will be hugely appreciated, hopefully on an ongoing basis.

Whilst on the ground resources in Ibbaschool are limited, we will keep you updated and can link through email and skype communications. We already post a regular stream of photos, videos and news stories on our website and social media. Our aspiration is for pupils and teachers in your school and ours to engage with each other as much as is practical and possible.

We would love the opportunity to share ideas with you as to how we can create this friendship and involve you in supporting the school. Here are some first thoughts:

Joint projects

Could we think of a shared project that is done by pupils in Ibbaschool and at your school?

For example, ask pupils: "What does being a friend mean to you?" Share each others' answers and perhaps make a book from our combined answers?

Dedicate a day

Can you dedicate a day to Ibbaschool? Perhaps hold a mufti day asking children to bring a pound and wear something bright to exemplify the idea of helping make a brighter future for the girls.

Involve the children in other related activities during the day. For example, our school motto is "Sharing the light of wisdom" and our emblem shows two hands reaching up to a star. Could pupils do an art project making and decorating their own stars? Or bake gingerbread stars? Maybe these could be sold at Christmas time to raise funds.

One school in the UK helped raise money to help with the construction of the school by having a 'brick-making' day.

We in turn could dedicate that day to you by our girls acknowledging it in the school, and sending you photos or a video clip.

Class discussions

The situation and experience of the girls at Ibbaschool touch on so many areas, from history, human and physical geography, personal and health education, and so on. There is much that children can learn about the realities of life in South Sudan that will broaden their appreciation of the wider world and their own place within it.

We can provide vivid direct and personal examples for them to learn about.

Sponsored activities

Are there sponsored events and activities that your pupils could do to support the education of the Ibbaschool students?

The girls go without most of the things that children elsewhere take for granted - TV, mobile phones, transport etc. Could your teachers and pupils be sponsored to go without something for a day, and in turn help sponsor the education of a girl in Ibbaschool?

Fundraising events

Ibbaschool girls are mad keen on football and play it regularly. Could you hold a charity fun football match to raise funds?

Could your school hold a book sale? Ask teachers, parents and local businesses to donate books for the sale. This would not only be a great way to encourage your pupils to read but to also raise money for books our students need.

The girls are involved in growing crops in the school's kitchen garden. Could you encourage pupils, parents and teachers to hold a cake sale?

Share the experience

Working within your school's policy on use of social media, ask pupils and teachers to take photos doing these activities and post them on social media to help spread awareness of the charity using the hashtag **#friendofibba**

Some questions and answers

Why a residential school?

Founder Bridget Nagomoro knows only too well the difficulties for a South Sudanese girl to continue her education beyond the age of 10, due to economic and cultural pressures from family and friends. Getting to and from school can also be long, hard and hazardous. Keeping the girls safe and nurtured in a residential environment ensures they can focus on their studies safely and without distractions.

How does the conflict in South Sudan affect the school?

The school's catchment area of Amadi, Gbudwe and Maridi states (i.e. the former Western Equatoria State) is a very fertile area in the south west of South Sudan – 400 miles from disputed oil-producing areas at the northern borders of the country. The Zande people who form the majority in former WES are committed to sustainable development based on agriculture and forestry. The State government and church leaders are actively committed to peacemaking, and see education as part of this process.

Mercifully, Ibba County has been free of any conflict so far. However, security is the highest priority in the school and we have detailed, regularly rehearsed contingency plans in place to protect students and staff should any emergency arise.



Does the local community support the School?

Absolutely. In addition to the 73 acres of land donated to the school by Bridget Nagomoro and another community leader, the school is overseen by a group of South Sudan Trustees and a Board of Governors in Ibba who work closely with the UK Trustees. State and local government is fully behind the school, as are all the local churches. There is huge enthusiasm for the school – as seen when 600 people came to celebrate the opening in June 2014. What they lack is money: that's where FIGS comes in.



Why are the costs so high?

The school's catchment area, the former Western Equatoria State, is the size of Scotland. Access to Ibba is time-consuming, difficult and sometimes dangerous. In the rainy season the mud roads are often impassable. Travel to school on a boda boda (motorcycle taxi) can take several days. Although local labour and resources are used wherever possible, any materials that have to be brought in become very expensive when the costs of diesel and logistics are factored in. For example, a bag of cement costs \$10 when bought in Kampala in neighbouring Uganda, but by the time it arrives in Ibba it has cost at least \$100.

Being a land-locked country, costs of goods have always been high, but now the school has to cope with the added effects of hyper-inflation and shortages of food and other items.

Why does the school currently have only 130 pupils?

The UK-registered charity Friends of Ibba Girls School raised funds to open the school in 2014, and took the decision to start small and build up steadily over 9 years, adding a new year group in Primary 4 annually until the school reaches its full capacity of 360 pupils. So in the school's fourth year of operating, there are now 4 classes of up to 40 girl students each, spanning Primary 4 to 7. Although 160 girls have places at the school, not all of them have been able to get there. For some this is because the journey from their home village is now too dangerous to make. For others, their families cannot afford the school contribution of SSP500 a year (about £4) and the travel to and from the school each term.



How are girls selected for the school?

The school serves the needs not only of Ibba County (allocated 22 places per year) but the whole of Amadi, Gbudwe and Maridi states (i.e. the former Western Equatoria State), with the other 9 Counties allocated 2 places each per year. There is no shortage of girls who want to come to the school! But to ensure fair access for all, whatever their background, the school's Senior Management Team and classroom teachers undertake an annual recruitment exercise,

publicised in advance, where they travel the catchment area to talk about Ibba Girls Boarding School and interview potential students. School staff also work with local primary schools to identify girls who have the potential to benefit from the school, who are then invited to apply. The school's policy of "excellence not elitism" means that girls are selected for aptitude and attitude, as well as evidence of parental support, without regard to any student's ability to pay.

Where will the girls go after they finish the School?

When the girls complete their education in Senior 4 grade, they will be equipped and qualified (subject to finding funding) to apply to go on to higher education at university or college – or to further professional or vocational training as teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, or leadership roles in government, the churches or the wider community.



Are the teachers local?

The school is committed to recruiting and developing teachers from South Sudan or East Africa. FIGS and IGBS are working jointly together in the development of the school over the next 10 to 20 years, aiming to blend the best of African and of Western approaches to education. This involves volunteer teachers working shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the African staff to offer mentoring and capacity building.

The school's Headteacher is Richard Aluma, who is South Sudanese, and the Director of Studies is Vicky Dratia, who is Ugandan. Both are highly qualified, experienced, and dedicated. One of the teachers, Yoane Kumbonyaki, escaped the civil war on foot and did his schooling outside South Sudan, but returned to teacher training in Yambio, in order to help his new country forge its way in the world. For more details, do visit our School Staff page on our website.

Is the school free to attend?

IGBS aims to provide access to girls with the thirst and potential to learn, whatever their background, status or finances. FIGS aims to raise UK sponsorship for all students, for the duration of their time at the school. In addition, all families are asked to make a very small contribution to the costs of their daughter's schooling, in cash or kind. In the current context, though, some families simply cannot afford the contributions requested, and we want to raise funds for small bursaries to be offered at the headteacher's discretion. It is our hope that through fundraising, food growing and income generating projects at the school, no student will be prevented from coming to IGBS because of a lack of family income.

Why do Ibba Girls School students wear their hair shaved so short?

In South Sudanese culture shaved hair is a symbol of dedication to education and learning, rather than adornment for courtship and early marriage. Short hair is seen as hygienic and less time consuming than ornate braids.

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