

FOUNDER'S MESSAGE 2018

Candlelit Christmas Concert 29th November 2018



This time last year I reported that Famine Relief had already warned that Darfur would be in crisis in 2018. That the failure of the rains meant drought was a certainty and they were calling for help. None came for the villages of Darfur. Not from its own government, nor from the international community, nor from the big aid agencies. But what could we do? I founded Kids for Kids because I saw a little boy struggling across the deserts of Darfur with a heavy jerry can filled with water, for his family. How could we make a difference? Well, we could not help everyone, but I'm incredibly proud that we provided emergency aid to over 6,000 families this year. And we didn't stop there. Providing emergency food for humans came first, but what about the animals they rely on? And what about next year? Families had had no alternative but to eat the seed they had saved for planting? Where would next year's crop come from? It seemed to me that we had to look beyond the immediate desperate need of hungry children, and make sure they had the prospect of food in the future too. So Kids for Kids – started because of one little 9 year old – provided a sack of flour to see families through the hungry months, supplementary food for their animals, *and* seeds to provide each family with next year's harvest too. One family at a time and we ended up helping over 6,000 – and they in their turn are helping their neighbours.

A message I have always tried to convey, especially to children, is that we should not, indeed must not, despair when we see news of terrible disasters. But what can we, as individuals do to make a difference? It would have been easy to look at Darfur – which is the size of France - and walk away. Surely the problem was too big to even begin to make a difference? But you would be wrong. There are now 92 Kids for Kids villages where that chance encounter in the desert, with one little boy, has inspired us – together – to provide sustainable help – a package of integrated sustainable projects – which have transformed the lives long term of 500,000 people. Yes half a million people. It's hard to believe.

Our motto is 'One goat at a time', and I want you to take that motto away with you tonight. 'One goat, at a time'. We are showing that no one is too young to help. I am going to tell you the stories of people whose lives – and the lives of their families – we, with our simple projects, have transformed. We are helping them to help themselves in ways *they* say will work best. Each of us has the power to transform the life of a child. Indeed, you could choose to transform the life of many children. And I will show you how!

Ibrahim was the name of that little 9 year old boy. Life for children is fragile in Darfur. Yet, thanks to our simple help his life has changed. A goat loan of 5 nanny goats gave his family milk. The income they provided for his mother meant she could buy medicines when they were sick. She could pay for school fees - 125 Sudanese Pounds for a whole year – that £2 sterling - less than a cup of coffee – but it is out of the question when a family's income for a whole year is less than £25. And everything, including water, has to be paid for.

Could *you* gift a goat this Christmas? A mosquito net prevented Ibrahim from contracting malaria – still the biggest killer in Darfur. He didn't get a fatal chest infection, the second biggest killer for both young and old, because we also provide blankets against the cold at night. Mosquito nets and blankets are terrific presents! And farm tools, including donkey ploughs, so you can cultivate more land. By giving such basic things, you will change lives. We really do provide what we say, and *you* get a beautiful personalised Gift Certificate. There – Christmas solved!

Ibrahim didn't succumb to any of those dangers, nor did he die in the violence that swirled around his village for so many years. Darfur is still a dangerous place. No. He started school, because he no longer had to walk for water, when we installed a hand pump in his village. He finished his education, and he is now back home – home where he wants to be, with his family.

1500 children started school in our kindergartens this September. One was Ibrahim's first born son. *You* could contribute to our water or education fund, or make a massive long term difference by becoming a Children's

Champion, and support your favourite project for three years. We take so much for granted here; the turning of a tap if we are thirsty, snuggling up under a blanket at night, when we are cold, a glass of milk simple things to us, but that mean so much to the families who live in Darfur.

So what difference are we making to people's lives? Here's what they say:

Suad lives in Um Jum Jum, one of five villages we adopted this year. Like so many other women, she is illiterate, and desperately poor. Yet, because she is bright, she was chosen to be Deputy Leader of the Animal Loan Committee which runs our projects. She is determined to improve herself, and her village. She says she cannot wait for her two friends to return from Khartoum, where we are training them to become village midwives. Suad said "We have never had any health care in our village. Women have suffered very much over the years and many lives were lost. Now we need not fear having our babies." Suad's ambition for herself, is to be able to write her name. When she received her goats, she signed with a thumb print.

Miriam is one of the second generation of beneficiaries of our goat loan in the village of Hillat Hamid, which we adopted in 2013. Because they ran our projects so well, we awarded them one of the nine Kindergartens we have been able to fund to date. Miriam is really proud that Hillat Hamid had been chosen. They have never received help from anyone before. She says "People are moving to our village, because of the Kindergarten, and our young men are able to stay with us, because life is so much better for us, since Kids for Kids adopted us."

The people of Geleidat too are welcoming new families to their village. **Fatima**, who has three children under five, said that having blankets and mosquito nets at last, has really helped mothers to protect their children from malaria. "Not one child died this year" she said "and fewer children are coughing from chest infections. When we received our goats, as part of the goat loan, it enabled us to stay in the village, and now the health of the children is so much better, as they are drinking goat's milk." Children died from avoidable illnesses every year before we adopted Geleidat.

Goat loans, owning a donkey, hiring out the donkey plough, and selling milk and yoghurt, all provide an income for women who have never been able to make decisions, ever, for their families. These are the poorest families in the village, elected democratically by the whole community. Now they have a voice. They can prioritise. Once they have passed on five offspring to another family at the end of the two year goat loan, the flock is theirs. Most sell male goats to pay for school fees. Some buy a donkey cart for their husbands – a real status symbol and a means to transform the family's income. Some need urgent medical care. **Amira** bought kitchen utensils to enable her daughter to get married.

When officials from the State Government inspected **Majoub A**, which we adopted in 2006, they were amazed to see such a thriving village. Because Majoub A has been running our projects successfully for 12 years, and are continuing to pass on goats to new families every two years, we have given them a kindergarten and a health unit. I wish you could see their community forest. The children taught their parents the value of trees. You can see the difference trees make in Darfur, which is at the forefront of global warming, with desert creep a reality.

People have been doing so well in Majoub A that they are now having to start paying tax! And do you know, they welcome it. There are fruit trees at the school and every hut has a tree growing outside. Over 400 families have already benefitted from our original goat loan, and the whole village can now drink milk.

It is humbling to hear how the gift of a goat has a major impact when you have so little. **Halima's** children's health has improved so much when they started to drink milk, that she, who was one of the poorest in the village, now *gives* milk to the children at their Kindergarten. She says "It has been worrying to know our children are hungry. Now they are all better, and people are coming home."

Halima sets *us* an example. Please think, what you can do this Christmas, to change the lives of children the rest of the world has indeed forgotten. Give a goat, a mosquito net, a tree, and we will provide a personalised Gift Certificate for you. Remember "one goat at a time", and together we can change the world.

To order on line go to: <https://www.kidsforkids.org.uk/shop/> or write send a cheque made out to Kids for Kids, P O BOX 456 Dorking RH4 2WS with the details for the Certificate. For those last minute presents we can email right up to 24th December!