

# RUTH FIRST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Charity No. 1019975

*Trustees:* Barbara Ewin (Treasurer), Cheryl McEwan (Secretary), Lotte Shankland, John Tierney, Michael Thompson (Chairman)

*Patrons:* Sir Thomas Allen (Chancellor of the University of Durham), Bill Bryson (former Chancellor of the University of Durham), Prof. Christopher Higgins (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durham), Gillian Slovo (writer, daughter of Ruth First)

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

### The aims of the Trust are:

- To enable southern African students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Durham.
- To educate and inform students and staff at the University, as well as residents of the area, about educational and development issues in southern Africa.
- To raise funds to support these activities.

Southern Africa is defined for this purpose as comprising the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This report gives details of activities undertaken by the Trust in the year ending 31 July 2012 in pursuit of these aims.

### The Ruth First Scholarship in 2011-12

The Ruth First Scholar this year was Pearson Nkhoma, who is from Malawi. He took an MA in Social Work Studies in the School of Applied Social Sciences. His dissertation investigated factors contributing to child prostitution and sex trafficking in southern Africa. He was a member of St Chad's College, which supports the Scholarship by providing subsidized accommodation. He was elected as the Taught Postgraduate Representative on the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health. He played an active part in the work of the Trust and raised the record-breaking sum of £1163 from the sponsored walk.

Pearson returned home to Malawi in September, but only briefly. He has been awarded a prestigious Durham Doctoral Fellowship for a PhD project on child prostitution in southern Africa, building on the work he did for his MA dissertation. He will continue to be a member of St Chad's College and to contribute to the activities of the Trust. Pearson's Ruth First webpage is at: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/nkhoma.htm>.

### The Ruth First Scholarship in 2012-13

More than 70 applications were received from all over southern Africa. After consultation with all the members of the Executive Committee (including Bongani Ndimba in Cape Town), the Scholarship was initially awarded to an applicant from South Africa. When she later withdrew in order to take up a scholarship at SOAS, the Scholarship was offered to our Ms Agnes Wizi from Malawi. Agnes will take an MA in Social Work Studies in the School of Applied Social Sciences. She arrived in Durham at the end of September 2012 and moved into St Chad's College accommodation at Trinity Hall. Further details about Agnes can be found on the Trust's website: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/thisyear.htm>.

## Past Ruth First Scholars

The 2007-08 Scholar, Peter Okeno Ong'are, is close to completing his PhD at Durham on the role of music in processes of reconciliation and healing after conflict in Rwanda. He has continued to lead the African vocal and drumming group Ngoma Vuma Uropa, which performed at our Banquets in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, and at various other events around the University and the City.

Simplicio Bhebhe (2009-10) has continued to do brave and important work in the defence of human rights in Zimbabwe. As a member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, he has been involved in a number of legal challenges to abuses of authority by the Zimbabwean government and police.

Two former Scholars have recently been appointed to senior positions in the South African civil service. Portia Makhanya (1998-99) is Chief Director of the Eastern Cape Department of Water Affairs, and Jack Monedi (1999-2000) is Chief Director: Permits in the Department of Home Affairs. Information about all former Ruth First Scholars can be found on the RFET website: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/former.htm>.

## Events

The annual banquet organized jointly with the Durham Palestine Educational Trust was held in February 2012. Delicious food was prepared by various volunteers from both Trusts, local businesses donated prizes for a raffle, and the auction of skills and services was deployed again with great success. Music was coordinated and led by Peter Okeno Ong'are, featuring Ahmad Alsalhi playing the *oud* (Arabic lute) during the meal and African songs and drumming by Ngoma Vuma Uropa. The event was a great success, raising about £2000 for the Trust.

Peter also coordinated the visit to Durham of the St Stephen's Cathedral Green Choir from Nairobi in October 2011. They gave concerts and workshops in local schools, churches and the University, raising funds for the RFET. The centrepiece of their visit was a Celebrate Africa Day held in the Music Department, combining a concert by the Nairobi choir and Ngoma Vuma Uropa with talks, a poetry reading by Sandi Russell and Denise Kinsinger, and a film showing. Diana Collecott spoke about Ruth First and Richard Britnell about the early days of the Scholarship. An academic panel discussion featured fascinating presentations by Mark Booth, Gina Porter and Justin Willis on their research in Africa.

The jazz singer Sandi Russell (with the Paul Edis Duo, Peter Ong'are and Ngoma Vuma Uropa) gave a benefit concert at St Chad's College in June 2012. The concert was well attended and rapturously received, raising about £800 for the Trust.

Mike Thompson, Pearson Nkhoma and Sarah Banks took part in a very wet sponsored walk around Allendale in June 2012 organized by the DPET and raised over £1500.

Bill Bryson, Chris Higgins and Gillian Slovo continue to be supportive Patrons of the Trust. The new Chancellor of the University, Sir Thomas Allen, has agreed to become a Patron.

## Finance

The accounts for 2011-12 will be tabled at the AGM by the Treasurer. The Trust continued to cover part of the cost of Peter Ong'are's accommodation, which led to a continuing deficit (though this was offset to some extent by income generated by Peter and Ngoma Vuma Uropa). It was decided that no further financial support could be offered to Peter after the 2011-12 academic year. A mailing to all University staff in October 2011 provided a useful increase in income from regular donations. New sources of income will be sought in 2012-13.

Annual grants are received from Durham County Council (£2000 per year) and the Durham Mineworkers' Association (£500 per year). We are very grateful to both bodies for this continuing support, and to Dave Hopper for giving Pearson and Mike a very interesting tour of the Miners' Hall in November 2011. We are also grateful to Councillors Grenville Holland and Mac Williams for their advice and timely interventions; to the University of Durham for its commitment to awarding tuition fee scholarships to Ruth First Scholars; to the Departments that provide teaching and supervision; to the members of Ngoma Vuma Uropa for their contributions to fundraising events; to the Durham Palestine Educational Trust for its collaboration in fundraising; and to St Chad's College for its valuable commitment to supporting Ruth First Scholars and integrating them into the college community. The allowance paid to the Scholar and the payments to St Chad's for accommodation are administered through a Gift Agreement with the University.

31 October 2012

*Mike Thompson*

Chairman of the Board of Trustees