

RUTH FIRST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

UK Charity No. 1019975

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

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

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ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

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 2015 in pursuit of these aims.

The Ruth First Scholarship in 2014-15

The Ruth First Scholar this year was Dave Namusanya, who is from Malawi. He took an MA in Community and Youth Work. He was a member of St Chad's College, which supports the Scholarship by providing subsidized accommodation. In June, he gave the Ruth First Scholar Seminar at St Aidan's College together with Pearson Nkhoma (2011-12 Scholar). Dave has returned home to Malawi. He is planning to apply for PhD study, and is volunteering with a youth organisation, Youth Achievers for Development, with responsibility for communications and fundraising. Dave's Ruth First webpage is at: community.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/namusanya.htm

The Ruth First Scholarship in 2015-16

There were 114 applications (the largest ever number), 61 men and 53 women. The largest numbers of applications were from Zimbabwe (38) and Malawi (27). The most popular subject area was Business, Finance, Management and Economics (41), followed by Social Work, Community/Youth Work, Sociology (24). After consultation with all the members of the Executive Committee, the Scholarship was initially offered to an applicant from Malawi, who turned it down. A second selection meeting decided to award the Scholarship to Tendai Makamure from Zimbabwe, who accepted immediately. Tendai is taking an MSc in Public Policy and Global Health. She arrived in Durham at the end of September 2015 and moved into St Chad's College accommodation at Trinity Hall (travelling down to Queen's Campus in Stockton for lectures). Further details about Tendai can be found on the Trust's website: community.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/thisyear.htm

Past Ruth First Scholars

The 2013-14 Scholar, Barbara Mutedzi, is working as a consultant researcher and data analyst with UNICEF on a multi-country study on the drivers of violence in Zimbabwe. She has also become a certified life coach and is using her life experiences as a volunteer mentor for young people.

Agnes Wizi (2012-13) is a Lecturer in Social Work at the Catholic University of Malawi. She has been doing social work-related consultancies with academics from the University of Malawi, and has set up a mentorship programme for young people.

Pearson Nkhoma (2011-12) is finishing his PhD in social work studies at Durham, investigating the problem of child prostitution in southern Africa.

Tinashe Ruswa (2010-11) is an IT solutions architect for Barclays Bank in South Africa, and is still working on open-access online learning systems.

Peter Okeno Ong'are (2007-08) completed his PhD at Durham on the role of music in processes of reconciliation and healing after conflict in Rwanda and has now returned to Kenya. The student African singing and drumming group aims to continue without Peter, and some of its members are still supporting a school near Nairobi.

Information about all former Ruth First Scholars can be found on the RFET website: community.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/former.htm

Events

St Chad's College MCR was active in fundraising for the Trust, making a collection at a dinner in July and running a photography competition linked to sales of photos. They raised £450.

In September, Jane Wistow took part in the Great North Run to raise over £200 and Sonny and Paul Shepherd hosted a salsa dancing evening in Lanchester in collaboration with the Durham VSO support group, raising £85.

The South African High Commissioner, Obed Mlaba, visited Durham in November. Mike Thompson, Dave Namusanya, Grenville and Olive Holland and Mark Booth represented the RFET at a dinner organized by the University for the High Commissioner and his team.

The annual banquet organized jointly with the Durham Palestine Educational Trust could not take place in February as usual, because of restoration work in the Town Hall. Instead, a Ruth First Musical Celebration was held in May, coordinated by Peter Okeno Ong'are. Ngoma Vuma Uropa performed African songs, and other students performed rock, blues, Chinese opera and Thai pop music. The event raised over £470 for the Trust.

The first Ruth First Scholar Seminar took place at St Aidan's College in June, focusing on the theme of emerging forms of activism in Malawi. Pearson Nkhoma spoke on 'Activism and policy change: a case of the new marriage law in Malawi' and Dave Namusanya on '21st-century activism: new and social media as a tool for political activism in Malawi'.

Also in June, Mike Thompson, Helen Charnley, Pearson Nkhoma and Dave Namusanya took part in an enjoyable sponsored walk around Barnard Castle organized by the DPET. Over £1600 was raised.

We were delighted that the University accepted the Trust's nomination of Ahmed Bawa (V-C of Durban University of Technology) for an honorary degree. Ahmed came to Durham with his family for the award of the degree at a Congregation ceremony on 22 June, at which Patrick Dorey delivered an eloquent tribute. Ahmed and Sir Thomas Allen attended Peter Ong'are's farewell party in the Music School after Peter had received his PhD on 23 June.

Finance

The accounts for 2014-15 will be tabled at the AGM by the Treasurer. Costs have increased, including our share of the Scholar's accommodation and the need to help with the expense of applying for a visa (now around £450). However, the County Council generously agreed to make up for the fact that a previous year's grant had ended up not being paid as a result of delays in processing. We therefore managed to end the 2014-15 year with a modest surplus of just under £1700, which allows us to maintain a reasonable reserve.

The Trust has a Virgin Money Giving page for collecting online donations and sponsorship:

uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1009191

Annual grants are received from Durham County Council (£2000 per year), the Durham Mineworkers' Association (£600 per year plus a contribution to books for the Scholar) and QStudent, the owners of Ruth First House on Claypath (£2600 per year). We are very grateful to all three organizations for their continuing support.

We are also grateful to Councillors Grenville Holland and Mac Williams for their wise advice; to Durham University for its commitment to awarding tuition fee scholarships to Ruth First Scholars; to the Departments that provide teaching and supervision; to Peter Ong'are and the members of Ngoma Vuma Uropa for their contributions to fundraising events; to the Durham Palestine Educational Trust for its collaboration in fundraising events; to St Aidan's College for hosting the RF Scholar Seminar and providing lunch; and to St Chad's College and its MCR for their valuable commitment to supporting Ruth First Scholars and integrating them into the College community.

Bill Bryson, Chris Higgins, Sir Thomas Allen and Gillian Slovo continue to be supportive Patrons of the Trust.

18 November 2015

Mike Thompson

Chairman of the Board of Trustees