



**Teso Development Trust
Partnership News no 76
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Letter from the Chair

The early part of 2026 has been busy for TDT, securing fresh inputs of funding from UK Trusts, starting 7 well projects, a new beds project at Ngora Hospital, as well as giving fresh funding to continue classroom building at Aminit High School, development projects in needy villages, and for the Kumi Compassionate Fund.

We are also delighted to welcome on board new supporting churches including Cromer Church and the Riverside Christian Fellowship in Stourbridge. Our committee members have also been out and about, meeting supporting churches and making links with new churches. St Saviour's church in Bournemouth received an en masse visit from the TDT committee in February as we held a committee meeting there on a Saturday and, on the Sunday had the joy of joining the congregation in worship at a Teso themed morning service.

If any of our supporting churches would like to meet a Committee Member or have a talk at a service or mission meeting, we would be delighted to explore what is possible. If you are an individual supporter and would like to interest your local church in supporting TDT, our Administrator Carmel can help you with materials and other support.

At a time when traditional sources of funding and support through government for larger charities are being cut back, smaller organisations like TDT with low overheads and direct links into the areas of greatest need can make a case that we provide a highly efficient line of support to the neediest.

One piece of sad news is the death of Jean Wheatley Price who, together with her late husband John, were stalwart supporters of the Iteso people and of TDT. After working as missionaries for 14 years in Teso, Jean and John kept their links, particularly with the Diocese of Soroti. They provided great support and encouragement to the work of TDT over many decades and will be much missed.

Andrew Third, April 2026

Odiding Project Update

This project, set to conclude at the end of 2026, has significantly improved food security and strengthened climate resilience for 391 farmers (254 women and 137 men) across the communities of Odimai, Osilon, and Odiding in North Teso.



As a result of the project crop yields have increased, leading to greater availability and diversity of food at household level. Families are now consuming more balanced diets, and most report consistently eating three meals a day—an important indicator of improved food security. Surplus production can be sold at local markets, generating additional income for households. This income enables families to vary their diets further by purchasing protein-rich foods such as meat and fish which were previously unaffordable and to meet other essential needs such as school fees and medical bills.



Business and basic financial training has strengthened participants' ability to manage farming as a profitable enterprise. Farmers are now making informed decisions based on cost-benefit analysis, exploring value addition opportunities, and allocating resources more efficiently. Many households have gone on to specialise in specific income-generating activities aligned with their skills and interests and local market demand.



VSLA groups have been instrumental in providing more financial security for households. Group members now have a place to save money as well as take small loans to cover household expenses. By the end of 2025, 44 participants had established small-scale businesses, including trading in agricultural produce, operating small retail shops, and livestock enterprises. These ventures are contributing to more stable and diversified household incomes. Beyond economic outcomes, the project has strengthened social cohesion and resilience. VSLA groups have become important platforms for mutual support and conflict resolution. Reduced financial stress at household level has contributed to a noticeable decline in domestic tensions and reported reductions in domestic violence. Increased ability to pay school fees has a particularly positive impact on girls' education, helping to keep them in school, as they are usually the first to be pulled out when household funds are low.



Overall, the project has delivered measurable improvements in food security, income generation, financial resilience, and community wellbeing, laying a strong foundation for sustained impact beyond the project's completion.

Photos show the community conducting a VSLA group meeting and with the livestock reared and crops grown as part of the project. On this page are examples of the small scale businesses in which some community members have engaged.

Relief Update

The distribution of relief items at the end of last year, including emergency posho flour, mosquito nets, and tarpaulins, to 600 households in areas severely affected by heavy rains was very well received and most communities are now recovering steadily. Although TDT has limited resources, our partners work closely with local leaders to ensure that support reaches the most vulnerable members of each community, enabling funds to be used as effectively as possible. The communities expressed deep gratitude for the assistance, and many are now in a stronger position. However, we are increasingly aware of the growing impacts of climate change, which are making extreme weather events more frequent. Below are some of the individuals who benefited from this support (photos shown from top to bottom):



Leah, from Osilion in North Teso, has lost three of her six children to malaria a tragedy that placed her family under severe strain. Previously, she spent between 50,000 and 150,000 UGX a month (£10–£30) on medical expenses. Since receiving mosquito nets, these costs have reduced dramatically.



Joseph Opolot, from Okerai A, is 103 years old and lives alone, as he has no family, so he depends on the kindness of neighbours. The support from TDT has enabled him to eat two meals a day.



Veronica, from Odimai Village, is 17 years old and lives with her younger brother after losing both parents at the age of 13. She is so grateful for the support, which has helped protect them from malaria and ensured they can eat two meals a day.

Water



The photo above shows participants taking part in training on the various parts of the well, how to look after them properly and if needed how to make minor repairs. The session was conducted by the District Water Engineer for Serere at the well in Pingire secondary school.

Since January, TDT has invested over £15,000 to expand access to clean water in Kumi, Soroti and Amuria districts, working in partnership with the PAG development teams. This funding has enabled the construction of six shallow wells, each costing approximately £1,450 and one borehole (£6500) providing safe water access to an estimated 4460 people (690 households) in total.

Access to clean water has immediate and wide-reaching benefits. as households spend less time collecting water, whilst also improving hygiene and lowering the risk of waterborne disease. But reliable water access also strengthens livelihoods by supporting small-scale agriculture and household food production.

In areas where shallow wells are not viable due to low water tables, particularly in northern regions, boreholes remain essential despite their higher cost of approximately £6,500 each. Over the past three years, TDT has funded the construction of three boreholes in North

Teso, Akodokodoi and Orapak and most recently Odimai, directly supporting communities involved in the Odiding project. These water points have provided a sustainable and reliable source of clean water in some of the most water-stressed locations.

Community ownership is central to ensuring long-term sustainability. Each water source is managed by a trained committee responsible for maintenance and oversight. More recently, this has been strengthened through integration with VSLA groups, where the water source is treated as a member. Communities contribute small, regular payments into the group, creating a dedicated maintenance fund and ensuring timely repairs and reinforcing collective responsibility for its upkeep.

TDT continues to prioritise water access as a foundational component of its livelihoods work as easy access to clean water makes a vital difference to a community's success with vegetable gardens, livestock rearing and through the freeing up of time even small scale businesses. We are therefore actively seeking additional funding through trusts and donors. Ongoing support from partners, including The Drinking Fountain Association, Wilmslow Wells for Africa, The Peter Stebbings Memorial Trust and individual donors, remains critical to continuing this work.

Photos shows
Adamasiko Borehole
at Adamasiko
Secondary School
(top right) kindly built
with funds from a TDT
supporter. Like many
institutions in the
region, students and
staff often had to walk
long distances to fetch
water, which
contributed to
absenteeism, poor
academic



performance, and increased exposure to waterborne diseases. Shown here is the community at Akumoi well being shown how to to raise up the level of soil and stones around the well to increase the drainage of rain water and run water away from the well so it doesn't sit on the ground surrounding it.



The Scars of the Past

Aside from sporadic raiding from Karamajong cattle thieves, Teso has enjoyed a decade of peace from insurgency and violence. This has allowed a return to abandoned lands, particularly in North Teso. However, one doesn't have to dig too far to find the scars on people's lives that persist from the years of violence. On our last visit the TDT team stopped off at Orapak, a community in Amuria which had recently received a borehole. We met two victims of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) who were children when the LRA raided in 2003. They told us their stories.

James was 10 when the LRA reached his village on 20th June 2003.

'When we heard the gun shots, I ran into the fields with another boy who was around 18 years old. But the soldiers were ahead of us, so we were taken. They roped us around the waist so we couldn't escape, and I was made to carry a very



heavy box of bullets. It was hard, but if you said you were tired, the soldiers would beat you to death. The beatings continued as we moved to Soroti and then on to Kaberamaido. It was there that they took all the girls from the Secondary School – I saw what happened. We were constantly moving around the North of Uganda, even as far as Padera in South Sudan but we returned to near Soroti when I heard a government gun ship overhead and we were told by the LRA to hide in the bush. The army was looking for the rebels and shooting into the fields. I managed to wave to one of the gunmen, so he didn't shoot me. Instead, I saw a chance to slip away in the undergrowth.'

James was quite near his village when he escaped, but like hundreds of others, found refuge in one of the many refugee camps in Amuria. Two years later in 2006 he returned to his village to find that his father had been killed and the fabric of the community decimated. James has not been educated, and although he tries to earn a living from the land to support a wife and two children, the beatings he suffered at the hands of the LRA have seriously weakened him.



Grace was 9 when she was abducted by the LRA on 15th June 2003.

'I am one of 10 children and when we heard of the LRA approaching we were taken to stay with an Aunty in a nearby village for safety. It was a Monday and I was busy grinding cassava when we were told some visitors

had reached our village. In reality, it was LRA soldiers and at 8pm we heard gun shots. The soldiers attacked our homes. I escaped to Obalanga and for two weeks I tried to hide. They were killing people and taking the children. I was eventually captured with four others from my village. For over a year we were moved from place to place. We were roped together round our waists and made to carry bags of

sugar and salt which the LRA had raided from the shops. Eventually we reached Gulu where we stayed for over 18 months. It was bad. Children were treated very badly, particularly the girls. Each day we were sent to gather firewood, and then four of us realised we could trick the soldiers into believing we would return at night. For several days we did return, then one day we ran away. It took us a week to reach Lira and from there we made it to the Soroti Barracks and safety.'

Of the four children abducted from Grace's family, only three returned to their village. Her sister has not been heard of since. Their father had been killed by the LRA, and once back in her village, Grace suffered bullying at school because of what she had been through. Like many others, she has not received any counselling and says many of the young adults now react aggressively as a direct result.

A shoulder wound inflicted by a soldier's bayonet makes it painful for her to work long hours in the field, and she has four of her own children to support after her husband left them. Grace is a beautiful young woman and, despite all she has suffered, is hopeful about her future.

TDT's work in North Teso helps communities to grow stronger through providing water, training to establish savings and loans groups, developing community agriculture and disaster resistance programmes. These help people like James and Grace to reintegrate into a hopeful community which can see prospects for the future.

How TESO has changed

Several of TDT's supporters have had the opportunity to live and work in TESO so we decided to catch up with one of them—Tim Britton, who worked with the Diocesan Training College (now St Peter's Theological College) in the 1980s and has been back twice in more recent years to teach. We wanted to hear his perspective on how Teso has changed over the past 50 years. All photos have been kindly provided by him. Here are some of the key differences he's noticed:



Communication and Services

Like in England, nearly everyone in Uganda now owns a mobile phone. This is evident from the many solar chargers found in homes and shops, where people can pay a small fee to charge their phones. Back in 1983, power cuts were frequent, and the government eventually abandoned efforts to provide consistent electricity. Most of the telegraph poles had been eaten by white ants, and the wires were eventually removed altogether. At the time, the water supply in Ngora ceased



to operate; there was only one borehole in Ngora, located at the hospital, and most people depended on rainwater collection and other surface water sources. Over time, UNICEF stepped in, and the number of boreholes slowly increased.



In the 1980s, the mail service began to fail. The designated collection point for mail in Ngora failed first, so people had to travel to Soroti for mail. When that failed too, those who could had to travel across the border into Kenya to pick up their mail. This lack of reliable mail and telephones meant that if you wanted to visit someone, you simply had to show up at their home and hope it was a welcome surprise.

Transportation also looked different. There were a few lorries, taxis and private cars, but for most people bicycles, rather than motorbikes, were the preferred mode of transport. In President Idi Amin's time grasses had been left to grow long at the sides of main roads, hiding routes to the villages in order to avoid detection by soldiers or other unwelcome visitors.

Changes in Housing and Economy

Today, there are many more brick homes, and towns like Kumi and Soroti have grown significantly compared to the 1980s. Agriculture has evolved too, cotton used to be a common sight alongside the continuing staples of cassava, maize, sweet potatoes, millet, sorghum and groundnuts. Cattle were always considered a sign of wealth. Despite having more clothes and money and a car to drive, with the ability to shop in Kenya and other luxuries that might be valued by an English family, Tim's family wasn't considered wealthy by locals because they didn't own any cows! Overall education levels have risen too. Back in the 1980s, some students at the college (which then was based in Ngora) often had only completed

up to Primary 3. In those days there were only 30 or so students at the College, compared to around 150 now.



Conflict

Sadly conflict is something that has come and gone in Teso over

the years. In 1988, the region was under rebel control and deeply affected by violence. Locals wanted to defend themselves against cattle raids from the now armed Karamajong, but there was insufficient back up from the national army so an armed rebellion against the government started. It has however contributed to a deep sense of faith in the people. In those days, you wouldn't drink your tea without first saying a prayer. The instability of life had instilled in people a deep value for each new day. It wasn't uncommon for prayers to begin with "Thank you for keeping us alive until now."

Charities and churches

In the 1980s there were very few charities operating in Teso outside Soroti - a local charity, Vision TERUDO (Teso Rural Development Organisation) being a notable exception. There were very few expatriates in the area, though a team from Jersey came over to build a new ward in Ngora hospital. Before the civil war Ngora hospital had a landing strip and small teams of doctors could fly in to do operations.

Church life was at a low ebb at first, but a Church of Uganda conference in Soroti in 1983 and the rapid spread of Pentecostal Assemblies of God made a significant difference. A course of lay training called 'Go Forward' started in Teso until the civil war made it difficult to continue, but it was then taken over by the Church of Uganda province and spread all over the country.

Ngora Freda Carr

Ngora Freda Carr Hospital continues to faithfully provide vital medical care to the community, despite facing significant challenges. These include the withdrawal of USAID

support, which previously funded many HIV programmes and has led to considerable uncertainty and reduced morale among staff.

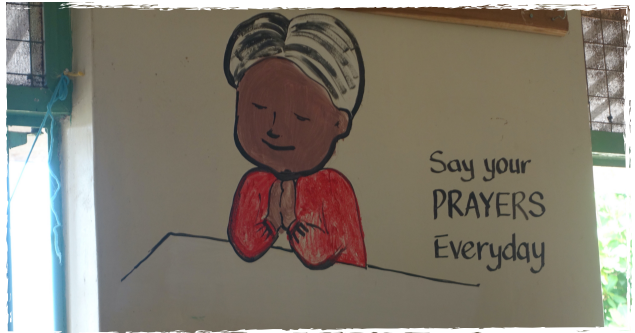


More recently, TDT provided just over £2,000 to replace the hospital's blood bank fridge, which had been prone to frequent breakdowns. Dr Jackson reported that in the six months since the new fridge was installed, blood transfusions at NFCH have supported the treatment of 650 patients. This included saving the life of a student who had been shot during an incident involving another student and a policewoman. NFCH receives blood from the regional blood bank twice a week, with each delivery containing around 10–20 units. A single unit of blood costs approximately £11. However, following several power outages over Christmas and the New Year, the hospital is now considering whether investing in a solar backup system for the fridge would be worthwhile.

Reliable backup power would also benefit the laboratory and operating theatre, both of which are significantly affected by outages. Currently, the hospital has a limited number of solar batteries reserved for emergency use. These are mainly used to power critical medical equipment such as oxygen concentrators, where sudden shutdowns could be life-threatening. Expanding this capacity is estimated to cost between £6,000 and £6,500.

Another key priority for NFCH is improving patient comfort and the quality of care. Many of the hospital beds are in poor condition and urgently need replacing. TDT has already contributed by funding the purchase of three new beds for the emergency ward, at a cost of £152 each.

Prayer Points



We give thanks for:

- Our faithful supporter churches and donors.
- The lives of those from the UK who have lived and served in Teso and the encouragement they have given by their example.
- Our partner Churches and the good working relationships that we have with them.
- Our partners in Uganda as they continue to work to build up and support lives in communities they work in.

We pray for

- Those who continue to suffer from the effects of climate change and flooding. There is hunger, homes and crops damaged or destroyed, schools closed and impassable roads.
- The successful completion of the project in Odiding and the wells and boreholes which will change the lives of so many.
- New sources of income to be found in order that TDT can continue to work into the future.
- Opportunities to engage with new supporting churches and individuals.
- The success of current applications for funding to grant making bodies.
- The TDT Chair, Andrew and Management Committee. May God grant wisdom, energy and inspiration as we consider new ways of working in a challenging world.



Teso Development Trust

partnering with communities in Teso, Uganda

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For more information about our projects or how you can partner with us please contact

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You can also give securely online at www.justgiving.com/tesodevelopment

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