



# VEGAN COMPASSION GROUP

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER NO. 3

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Handing over the tools, Kissojo School, Uganda

In an ideal world the Vegan Compassion Group would concentrate its limited budget solely on programmes that go beyond emergency crisis management. In addition to helping individuals and communities here and now, the aim is to create foundations that allow for a progressive future.

One example is feeding hungry school children, thereby improving their chance of educational achievement and eventual career opportunities. Another is to initiate sustainable models of fruit and vegetable production, thus enriching diet and environment in regions where life is particularly difficult. In 2022 - in our small-scale way - we've put these principles into action in Ethiopia, Nepal and Gaza. We've also seen a previous programme we began in Uganda manage to move on successfully without us.

But alas, the world we inhabit is far from ideal. In the previous two years it was the impact of

Covid that compelled us to divert some of our funds towards simple emergency food aid. This year it has been the horrors of war. In Ethiopia we supported our partners with their heroic efforts to help displaced victims of the country's deadly civil conflict. More recently, in Ukraine, we have been able to support an inspiring project by the vegan community of Lviv (in the west of the country) to feed those fleeing from areas badly hit by Putin's wicked invasion.

That we've been able to donate more funds to our programmes than in previous years is thanks entirely to the generosity of our small band of loyal and enthusiastic supporters. Our grateful thanks for your faith in what we do and the message of non-violence we promote and represent.

You can read more about our work over the past year in the following pages.

Mark Gold, Trustee  
December 2022

# PLANTING OLIVE TREES IN GAZA

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In April 2022 we joined forces with fellow vegan organisation Plant the Land Gaza, sponsoring the purchase and planting of 100 olive trees (and potato seeds for local farmers) on public land in one of the world's most deprived economic regions.

According to Anas Anas from the Plant The Land Team, 'these trees will live on average anywhere from 100-150 years, providing food for generations to come'. He added that 'this project will help poor families and farmers, as the poor families will get olives and olive oil. It will also improve the farmers' income...'

His colleague Laura Schiefer sent us an inspiring message of vegan solidarity, writing that the olive trees 'are also sacred to the Palestinian people as a symbol of peace, abundance, and of the rootedness they have with that land. So we plan to make this planting a celebration of planting the seeds of peace, solidarity, indigenous land reclamation, and kindness to all living beings - all of which are messages the world needs right now more than ever.'

*'we plan to make this planting a celebration of planting the seeds of peace, solidarity, indigenous land reclamation and kindness to all living beings'*

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*'We are so grateful to Vegan Compassion Group for making this possible!'*

Anas Anas, Plant the Land, Gaza

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Preparing the ground for the new sapling



Planting olive trees

# SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME CONTINUES IN ETHIOPIA

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As in previous years, our biggest commitment financially has been our support for a school-feeding programme at Jihur Primary School in a rural district of the Amhara region of Ethiopia. In the school year of 2021-22 we continued to provide 10kg monthly take home food parcels for 124 children from the most economically challenged backgrounds, containing barley, maize, teff, chickpeas, wheat, and sorghum.

The contents are carefully balanced to ensure a beneficial nutritional mix that includes carbohydrates/starch (energy), protein, fibre and a wide range of vitamins and minerals including the B vitamins folate, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, iron, vitamin E, zinc, magnesium, and phosphorus.

The quantities are calculated to allow parcels to be shared with other members of the students' families. In countries such as Ethiopia, where the prevalence of malnutrition and stunting is high, feeding whole families is important, regardless of whether they are in school.

All the food is produced and purchased within Ethiopia, thus guaranteeing smallholder farmers a stable, structured and predictable market that ultimately benefits the local economy.

Ethiopian organization International Fund For Africa (IFA) is our partner in this enterprise.

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*'IFA's strong partnership with The Vegan Compassion Group is built on a shared vision of promoting compassion for all... The return on the investment and support made by The Vegan Compassion Group will continue to impact the lives of many.'*

Dr Tsedaye Bezabeh, Programme Director, International Fund for Africa

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Awaiting food parcel distribution



Students from Jihur, 2022

# PILOT POLYTUNNEL PROJECT IN NEPAL

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We began working with Grassroots Movement In Nepal (GMIN) in 2019, originally providing vegan school meals in the Dang district of the country. This ended only when the government introduced state provision of meals for all schoolchildren.

When Covid hit the country hard a year later, we answered a request to help GMIN run free 'pop up' vegan free meal distribution for those in need. Following the worst of the pandemic, we switched to providing monthly food parcels for ten struggling families.

When our commitment came up for review this spring, we emphasised a preference to move away from providing emergency aid by trying to find a way to offer longer-term benefits and a degree of self-sufficiency for the families.



One of the five initial householders

As a result, we agreed to fund a one-year pilot scheme to construct sturdy poly-tunnels for an initial five families. Cold winters and excess rainfall in the monsoon season limit the growing season in the Dang district of Nepal, so by protecting crops from the weather it becomes possible to gather two harvests every year rather than one. As well as providing extra food for their own tables, the recipient families should be able to grow enough vegetables to sell some of their harvest at market.

Getting the scheme up and running proved a little more difficult than anticipated, mainly because of problems with water supply, but the first two poly-tunnels were erected and planted in early summer. Putali Choudhary and Yekendra Choudhary - unrelated families who previously received the monthly food parcels - have enjoyed successful first crops, timing their tomato and vegetable harvests to sell produce at the Diwali celebrations at the end of October.

A GMIN representative visited recently and reports that the monsoon seasons are changing in Dang province, with spells of particularly torrential rain almost certainly a result of climate change.

The three other poly-tunnels are scheduled for construction at the end of November and the initiative will be reviewed in April 2023.



The polytunnel has protected vegetables from the worst of the climate changes

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*'Most likely the vegetables would not have survived the rain without the tunnels'*

Lobsang Sangbo, Grassroots Movement in Nepal

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# UGANDAN SCHOOL VEGETABLE GARDENS

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In spring 2021 we sponsored the setting up and development of two organic vegetable gardens - both surrounded by fruit trees to provide shade and food - at two remote rural schools in the under-resourced Mubende region of Uganda. The main aim was to teach skills that would ultimately enable students at Kanyagoga and Kisojjo primary schools to take their new knowledge, skills and seeds home to their families and improve a very meagre standard diet - almost exclusively maize and beans. The programme was co-ordinated by Godfrey Kisaye, a Ugandan employee of Devon Development Education in the UK.

Progress was rapid for a while. Tools were purchased, suitable land was identified and dug, and seeds and trees were planted.



Choosing the school garden site in Spring 2021



The flourishing school garden in September 2022

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*'...the evidence of impact on the ground was there... the input, funded by you, delivered by Godfrey, has caused this change'*

Sue Errington, Devon Development Education

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Then Covid hit Uganda hard and the government enforced a strict lockdown that lasted many months. During this period the garden at Kanyagoga School was badly damaged and abandoned. Thanks to the two teachers who live on site, the Kisojjo School plot survived.

For various reasons - principally Godfrey's unavailability - it proved impossible for us to continue our own involvement when school life did eventually resume. For several months we didn't even receive updates.

In October, however, we received a report from Sue Errington of Devon Development Education. Returning to the UK after visiting both schools on a visit to Uganda, she reports the good news that at Kisojjo the gardens are 'very good', while the revived Kanyagoga school garden is also looking 'very good'.

In a perfect world we would have liked a little more time for Godfrey Kisaye's to pass on his knowledge of organic methods before leaving the schools to themselves, but it is nevertheless encouraging to have created an opportunity for these two communities to enjoy an improved diet.



Pupils mulching banana plants, Kisojjo



Pineapple harvest - Autumn 2022

# HELP FOR CHILD VICTIMS OF ETHIOPIA'S CIVIL WAR

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Our Ethiopian partners International Fund for Africa (IFA) have been assisting humanitarian efforts in a shelter camp for internally displaced people located in Enwari and Merhabete in the Amhara region. We learnt that they were struggling to find the extra resources needed and that this newly constructed emergency facility had been generally forgotten by aid donors because it lay in such a remote rural area.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters we were able to provide additional funding that enabled IFA to supply specially formulated ready to eat flour mix for 250 under two-year olds at the camp, distributed at a critical time of scarcity.

*'We want to thank the initiative taken by The Vegan Compassion Group to support IFA's work among displaced persons. The quick response to such humanitarian emergencies, especially the support for vulnerable young children, is appreciated by the beneficiaries, the district officials - as well as by IFA.'*

Dr Tsedaye Bezabeh, Programme Director,  
International Fund for Africa



Ethiopian child refugees at the camp



Above and below: at the refugee camp, Ethiopia



*There are recent signs of hope in Ethiopia. A peace agreement was signed by the warring Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation front on November 2nd after two years of civil war that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced. But the agreement is fragile.*

# SUPPORTING REFUGEES AND OTHERS IN UKRAINE

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The desire runs deep amongst many of us to make some contribution – however small and seemingly insignificant – to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Our charity's opportunity arose when we learnt about the work of the Lviv Vegan Kitchen – a restaurant that has effectively been turned from a business into a free food hub, every day feeding 300-500 of those fleeing West from the warzone in the East, plus some of those in need locally. More than the food itself, the initiative offers a slice of normality in these terrible times, allowing visitors time to sit down and enjoy a regular café experience.

In September, we were able to meet the restaurant's full food costs for two days.

When we offered a second donation in October, we were asked if we would provide food parcels for some of those defending their country in the military and others living in refugee shelters closer to the frontline.\* We sent enough to cover the cost of roughly 60-70 large food parcels.

We followed this up in November with funds for in excess of 300 further meals for refugees at the café in Lviv.



*\*We realise that supplying food to the military might be unacceptable to some pacifists, however worthy the cause. We take the view of the great nineteenth century humanitarian Henry Salt, who wrote: 'it is iniquitous to inflict suffering, directly or indirectly, on any sentient being, except where self-defence or absolute necessity can be justly pleaded'. Ukraine's forces are clearly fighting a war of self-defence.*

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*'Thanks, you helped us a lot'*

Marta Khomiak, LVIV Vegan Kitchen

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The vegan cafe in full swing

# VEGAN COMPASSION GROUP AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

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- The Vegan Compassion Group was registered as a charity (Charity Commission number 327281) in 2019, though it had supported one or two projects as The Living Without Cruelty Trust prior to this, including our school-feeding programme in Ethiopia.
- Whilst we wouldn't want to overstate what is our very tiny contribution to tackling the world's misery, we have tried to form a distinct and effective identity. Our aim is to demonstrate compassion in action by applying our vegan principles to small-scale humanitarian projects. Donations are made for specific schemes, so that we know and can assess exactly how our funds have been used. As we are so small, we are able to eliminate expenses (apart from bank transfer costs). To date, all our limited computer design and other artwork needs have been volunteered and our trustees take no expenses.
- We take every care possible to build strong and durable relationships with effective partners on the ground who we trust and admire. Most are fellow vegan organisations that share our vision. Where this is not the case, we work only with charities where we feel confident that they understand and respect our position.
- Above all, of course, our identity derives from our promotion of veganism, both for practical and ethical reasons. Far more people can be fed far more cheaply on plant-based foods. Livestock production is wasteful and a major contributor to greenhouse gas pollution. Evidence suggests that well-balanced vegan diets have health advantages. But most importantly, we see veganism as a rejection of violence and cruelty and a vindication of kindness and compassion, whether it is to humans or to other animals.
- Although our work has so far largely been directed towards helping people in need, in previous years we have also sent funds to help non-human animal causes (feeding starving street dogs in Nepal during the Covid crisis and financing a rehabilitation aviary for injured wild birds at a UK wildlife sanctuary) and would like to do more in the future.
- The balance we seek is between quietly emphasising our core values without sounding pious and excluding those who, while they may feel sympathetic to our work, do not embrace the complete vision. Our goal is to be exclusively vegan without becoming exclusive to vegans.





## CAN YOU HELP?

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Please pass on this report and/or news of our work to anybody who you think might be interested, including non-vegans. If everybody sends it to just one or two sympathetic people, it will help enormously.

Please consider a donation if and when you can afford it in these difficult times. Donations can be made via our website at [www.vegancompassiongroup.co.uk](http://www.vegancompassiongroup.co.uk)

### Special thanks:

Special thanks to Ruby and Vita Sleight for designing this report and to Ned Buyukmihci for continuing to update our website. Ned also helps to run a valuable online website - Action for Primates - that encourages compassion and respect for primates worldwide: <https://actionforprimates.org>

Finally, sincere thanks again to everybody who has supported our work whether through donations, sponsored events, by spreading the word or simply by sending us kind comments.

Annual report compiled by Mark Gold  
Designed by Ruby and Vita Sleight

### Website:

[www.vegancompassiongroup.co.uk](http://www.vegancompassiongroup.co.uk)

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