

Comic Relief gets serious

Emma Freud says saving this clinic in Uganda will help fight poverty and disease across Africa

Dev
Monday-Friday 4.00pm Radio 1



EVERY DAY, AS we're putting the plans in place for this year's Red Nose Day comedy marathon, the people I meet share their favourite moments from the past 30 years – from Dawn French snogging Hugh Grant live on TV, Ali G's audacious interview with the Beckhams, the epic James Corden "Smithy" sketches, Ricky Gervais pretending to report from a project in Africa but actually filming it at the BBC in Shepherd's Bush – and so much more...

As director of Red Nose Day, I can tell you that after all the fun and comedy comes spending the money, the Grant Making – which is a very, VERY serious business. I'd like to assure you that no comedian has EVER been involved in the decisions about where the money is spent. We are guided by a team of extraordinarily clever experts who underpin the incredibly robust and thoughtful strategy Comic Relief has developed. I'm really proud of the seven-hour TV show we produce on the night of Red Nose Day – but I'm even more proud of the wise and powerful way that we spend the money you raise.

Healthcare is a massive priority for us – we know that the link between health and poverty is powerful and inextricable. To make a real difference, the health of people living in extreme poverty has to be



'Dorothy delivers babies by the light of a mobile phone'



COMFORT AND CARE
Above, the Iyolwa Clinic, Uganda. Midwife Dorothy (in pink) with daughter Noelina and colleague Anastasia

improved, not just because it's a basic human right – but because improving health is key to economic development.

We've seen first-hand how fragile and overstretched health services in parts of Africa can be. Things are bad enough normally, but then something like Ebola comes along and wreaks havoc on medical facilities that simply can't cope with the demand.

With your money – and, seriously, thank you for every penny – we've already played a small part to help tackle the Ebola crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and we've helped to cut malaria and vaccine-preventable deaths in many countries across Africa, but so much more is needed.

That's why, at the end of last year, the First Most Fabulous Founding Father of Comic Relief, Lenny Henry, travelled to Uganda to visit a health project we fund through the Malaria

Consortium. They are fighting malaria across Uganda... they've bought nets, drugs, testing kits, and trained people in how to tackle this preventable killer disease. The amazing news is that as a result of the work being done, the number of malaria cases in Uganda has halved. Actually halved!

BUT WHILE OUR team was there, the needs of a local health centre called the Iyolwa Clinic, which is servicing around 18,000 people, was brought to our attention – and it shocked us all. This hospital has no running water, a ceiling on the verge of collapse and seriously inadequate equipment. It has insects and rodents living in the roof and the electricity supply has failed – meaning that one of the staff members, midwife Dorothy, has to deliver babies at night by the light from a mobile phone.

With the local community and your help we



FOUNDING FATHER
Lenny Henry visited a health project in Uganda funded by Comic Relief

will try to turn it into a fully functioning health centre that can truly serve the community. It's impossible to show you all of the healthcare issues facing people in communities across Africa – but what we CAN do is tell the story of what's happening in this building.

Over the course of the Red Nose Day campaign we are going to renovate the clinic and supply training for the local medical staff. The clinic will act as a symbol to show just some of the impact the public's support can make. We hope that by casting a light here, and telling the story of these local people, we can encourage the UK public to raise money to help tackle the wider issues that it represents. It's not what Comic Relief would normally do, but this isn't a hand-out – it's a partnership between the staff, the local people, the wider community, and you because of the cash you've raised for Comic Relief.

Last year, my ten-year-old son Spike duct-taped himself to our front door for the evening to raise money for Comic Relief... I'm hoping he'll find something equally lucrative this year. Between now and Red Nose Day we would also love it if you felt inclined to do some duct-taping, or baking, or dancing, or dressing up to raise money for Red Nose Day. And I can promise you that however lightly the money is raised, the business of spending it will be taken very seriously indeed by everyone at Comic Relief. And it will be done brilliantly.

Greg James from Radio 1 and Yasmin Evans from 1Xtra will be live from Iyolwa Clinic all this week for Operation Health for Comic Relief. For more information or to make a donation visit www.rednoseday.com

Don't miss...
Judith Kerr discusses her novel
When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit in
Bookclub (Sunday 4pm R4).

PICK OF THE WEEK

BY JANE ANDERSON

A Modern Magna Carta
Monday 8.00pm Radio 4



The Magna Carta was sealed 800 years ago, primarily to restrain the powers of the king. Lawyer and human rights champion Helena Kennedy QC (below) considers how best to update it for the modern world.

She begins by questioning which "powers" most need to be reined in by effective laws and it is not, as one might expect, terrorists and extremists but the giant global corporations whose activities slip beneath the radar of national state laws – ours included.

The revenue and assets of Walmart, the US retail giant, are greater than those of the whole of Belgium or Nigeria, for example. And, after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, when five brave US lawyers decided to challenge other American banks about the improper sale of mortgages, hundreds of defence barristers were drafted in to take them on. The banks lost the case in a 21st-century David and Goliath battle but, as Kennedy points out, rule of law is the only way to restrain such power.

And what of the internet? Tim Berners-Lee tells Helena that his original vision was to empower people to explore and communicate. What he now fears is that very freedom being blocked and government agencies spying upon us all. If he were to write a new Magna Carta it would ensure the absolute protection of personal data unless one agreed to share it.

These are not crazy conspiracy freaks talking, which is what makes it such a challenging listen. The world is changing so rapidly and our legal systems cannot keep up. The time is ripe for a new Magna Carta. Would Helena Kennedy please write it?

AMBRIDGE DIARY

The Archers this week...

You have to feel sympathy for Phoebe: her mum is so fingernails-down-a-blackboard irritating that you'd even forgive matricide. And Jennifer is looking on incredulous – Kate certainly isn't handling the family tensions in a way she condones.

Over at Brookfield, David is feeling the pressure of the move after yet another trip out to Prudhoe. Shula gets short shrift after she asks a perfectly reasonable question. Who hasn't had their patience tested by Shula?

And as we get closer to the Valentine's Day dance at the Bull, Joe and Bert compete for the favour of partnering Carol. Both attend a practice session at the Bull and there is clearly no love lost between them. **DAVID BROWN**