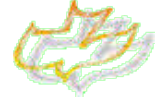




# Hope and Kindness Newsletter



April 2008

*Bringing a message of Hope and Kindness to Kenya  
Registered Charity No. 1108996*

## New School - Solid Foundations



Despite the bleak news that came from Kenya in January and February we are thrilled to be bringing really fantastic news about our most recent progress in Kosele. For the last four years we have written about our plans to build a "proper" school and now, as you can see from the pictures, we are well on the way to realising our dream.

Thanks to the hard work of our fund raisers and the continuing support of our sponsors, we are proud to bring you this newsletter which celebrates the completion of the first phase of our school building. The picture on the right shows the four classrooms and staff room that have been built. They will allow us to offer places to 130 children in total, effectively doubling the size of our existing school.

As Lillian's story (see back page)

shows, a good education really is an essential necessity for life - without the life giving opportunities it provides, most children in rural communities like Kosele will continue to be victims of disease and poverty. Without a decent education they really do face a life without hope.

It is our hope that as we continue to offer places to more children we

will be able to give them a solid foundation to build on for their futures **and** for Kenya's. It is a cliché to say that "children are the future" but, like most clichés, it is the truth. On behalf of the children and their families we would like to thank everybody who has played a part in bringing our dream to life- especially our God who constantly restores and renews our faith - Asante sana.



# Why we need to build a school



Why did we need to build a school? The election of the new Kenyan government of 2003 brought good news to the children of Kenya as it sought to honour one of its major pledges by immediately making Primary education free. At the time it led to a serious crisis because, quite literally overnight, more than one million new children turned up to claim this basic human right. I remember the news stories about schools having to run two shifts with one set of children being taught in the morning whilst another set would be taught by the same teachers during the afternoon hours.

Thanks to money from donor countries like the UK the Kenyan government was eventually able to make some investment in its schools and things appeared to be 'sorted.' However, over the last five years I have listened to some of the women who work with us complain about the experiences of their own children who are learning in the local rural schools. Most of their children now find themselves learning in classes of more than 70 pupils where the only way to ensure your child learns is to pay a small 'fee' which buys your child a position at the front of the class and makes sure that their work gets marked!

During my recent visit we decided

to take our older children to spend a morning at one of these local schools. Our children were very excited about this visit. The previous night it had rained a lot so the adventure began with trying to find a route where we wouldn't slide and fall in the mud. Forty five minutes and forty five pairs of muddy feet later we arrived at the school to find no teachers but a few 'big' girls with 'sticks' whipping up the younger children to the area where they were supposed to meet for

assembly. Finally a teacher did appear just in time to 'welcome the visitors' and to lead the assembly. By the end of the morning eight teachers had appeared for a school of more than 600 children. At least one of these teachers was a teacher who had recently qualified but who had not yet been 'absorbed' into the governments payroll (this usually takes at least 3 years after qualifying.) She was paid by the local community – depending on whatever they could afford to raise – the previous month it had been just Ksh 2,000 (£16, significantly less than \$2 a day for a qualified teacher whose family would have paid for her primary, secondary and college education!).

As I currently teach Key stage 1 (5-7 year olds) in the UK I was keen to see what was happening in these classes. The first classroom I entered was for the STD 1, (six and seven year olds.) In a room no more than 20' square I counted at least one hundred and ten children. Their teacher had written a few addition sums on the small piece of black board that had not yet crumbled off the wall and then proceeded to mark the children's books that she could reach. I tried to help her but was greatly frustrated because of my lack of Luo (the local language) to do





## Thank You Elim UK

Our thanks go out to the Elim Church Missions Department based in Cheltenham for bringing a smile to the faces of the children and “grown ups” in the picture below.

Kenya got off to a disastrous start in 2008 because of the post-election violence that followed the Presidential election in December. Thankfully, since the beginning of March, the immediate political problems and tribal tensions have subsided. However, the day to day problems caused by the unrest continue to affect a large number of the population.

The unrest could not have come at a worse time. January is a key month for harvesting in many parts of Kenya and most farmers would have hoped to start planting new crops in February. The impact on the price of staple foods has been disastrous. Foods like maize, rice and beans have gone up from between 20% and 50%. The price of fuel and transport have also rocketed - further adding to the hike in food costs.

With even more mouths to feed now that we have added to our school the consequences for Hope and Kindness could have been dire. Thanks to a very generous donation of £2,000 in total, from our friends in the Elim church we were able to buy enough supplies to feed the children and provide help to local community members. Asante sana ‘church’.

*Terry Mott*

anything to assist those children who clearly hadn't got it - this appeared to be a part of the job that their teacher had given up on! Observing and speaking to the other teachers it was very clear that these conditions and limitations meant teacher morale was **very** low – and this in a school that is apparently performing better than most in the district school league tables. Without doubt **some** education is better than **no** education but the experience for most of these children was not changing their lives or helping them to believe that they would or could make a difference to anyone else.

On a more positive note, one of the most rewarding jobs I had to do on this visit involved starting our new pre-primary class (equivalent to the Reception class in the UK.) Last year the lack of accommodation had made it impossible to start this class even though some of the staff had children of this age and the youngest member of our family, Collins Odhiambo junior (our eldest boy is

also called Collins Odhiambo -now senior,) also needed proper day time care. As the eldest children moved over into the first two new classrooms we were able to begin by using the room they had left.

On the first day, little Collins and five of the staff's children were officially introduced to their new teacher Madame Rose (wife of our manager George and as far as Collins was concerned, his mum!) In Kenya it is possible to do an ‘in-service’ training course to become a pre-primary teacher with full-time three week courses being run during the school holidays. Rose has already completed half of her training and will be fully qualified by the end of the year. More importantly, she is an absolute natural, full of enthusiasm and fun... quite prepared to ‘be’ an elephant playing on a spider's web or a monkey jumping on the bed....and the children love her! By the end of my visit the class had grown to six boys and six girls.

Hopefully, by the time you receive this letter they will all have moved into one of the fully finished classrooms where we hope to be able to accommodate up to thirty pre-primary children. A few of the children will only just be four so will not be ready to start formal school until January 2010. However, letting them join the school now means we can give them the best chance of having the very best start (long term malnutrition means much more than simply stunted growth seen from the outside.) Good nutrition and a caring teacher means these children really will know what it means to be loved by the Father.

*Judi Mott*



# “Has she brought my uniform?”



However, during this visit, I had the unusual experience of meeting three very special dads, Samuel, Lucas and Joseph. I would love to tell you about all of them but this picture of Samuel and his story perfectly illustrates all three.

Just before dusk I found Samuel sitting at our gate hoping to talk to me ... He had come to ask if his children, John and Sheryl, could have a chance of a place in the school. A year ago there were no ARV drugs in our area and their 28 year old mother who was HIV+, became sick with malaria and died.

Samuel is now receiving free ARV drugs but is clearly very unwell, probably suffering from TB. He had no money to be tested for this and was finding it increasingly difficult to work on his land and to feed his children. I felt his case qualified but said we would still have to make a home visit to confirm this information. I said that John could probably join the school in about 3 weeks time when the last two classrooms were completed. Then I discovered that they lived less than ten minutes walk away so....we went to 'see'. As we approached his home

the children came running up and a very tiny 4 year old, with a huge grin on his face was shouting (in Luo) 'Has she brought my school uniform?' Even in this brief visit I could not help but be moved by the real love and affection that existed between these children and their father. Needless to say, the next day both children joined the school - John got his uniform and we will do everything we can to ensure that Samuel gets tested and treated for the suspected TB and John and Sheryl get to **keep** their dad.

Most people will tell you that in Africa it is the women who hold families, communities and countries together - that often they alone shoulder the responsibility and the burden of making sure that the children are fed and cared for.



## Grandma Rispa

For the last two years Grandma Rispa has been the sole carer of Delphine, Wycliffe, Catherine and Kevin ( who was out looking after the goats.) In that time her own health has deteriorated and I can hardly imagine how this family has survived. Because she can barely clothe the children and can feed them only one meal a day the children have not been going to school. We have the classrooms, the teachers but as yet **no** sponsors for her grandchildren ..... But, at last, I am able to tell them to come and join us anyway!

## Mother and Baby - not doing well

Some of you may remember one of our first stories about our elderly neighbours Bernard and Suzanne



who have seen all nine of their sons die, most as a direct consequence of the scourge of HIV.

For the last year Suzanne had been very concerned about her granddaughter Lillian who was living almost three hours drive away and had recently been widowed. It appeared that the deceased man's family would/could not provide for her and her child. Last month Suzanne finally persuaded them to let her come back to live with her.

The day before we took this picture we discovered that both of them were HIV positive and the 16 month old baby (Stacey) weighing just 5 kg was also very anaemic as a result of suffering from malaria. Kenya is full of Lillians and Staceys. In Kenya women continue to suffer because of "tradition" and male dominance. **Poorly educated**, often unaware of their rights and powerless to exercise them anyway, young women like Lillian face a bleak future.

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