

Growing Up



Purity, Collins and Vera - admiring their first maize crop

As we write this newsletter we are aware of the growing crisis in the Horn of Africa as ten million people face starvation. The tragedy that is unfolding in the parched regions of Eastern Africa reminds us all of the thin line between life and death and the awful power of nature. Aid experts are talking about Northern Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda suffering from the worst drought in 60 years. Once again the pictures and news reports from the region draw the world's attention to the dreadful human consequences of being poor in such an unforgiving environment. Later on in this newsletter Judi writes about the realities of the current food and climate crisis in our part of Kenya following her last visit to Kosele in April.

Our front page headline is a statement of fact and intent. Our children in Kenya are growing up. In order to do our best for their future we are doing some

growing up as well! The picture above shows a healthy crop of maize which we are growing on a piece of land that we have recently acquired. It has been tended by our children under the supervision of Duncan Oruko and Mary Aduda, (our manager).

Like the rest of Kenya our district has, yet again, suffered from poor and extremely unpredictable rains. The rain came, people planted and then it stopped - for over a month. Our crop flourished because, at critical points in the growing season, we were able to use our borehole for irrigation. This together with the children's hard work meant all our plants survived. Our neighbours were not so lucky apart from the very few who had money to buy and plant new seeds when the rains finally returned. Becoming self sufficient in some basic foods is essential for the long term sustainability and future of the school (currently feeding 170 children.)

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Growing Up - Setting up an Agricultural College

In November the oldest children in our school will be taking their KCPE, (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education), exam. This exam is taken by all of the Year 8 pupils in Kenya. It's an important exam for them because it determines which, (if any), High School they will be able to attend. Our youngsters are currently working very hard in preparation for the exam week - starting their studies at 6.00 a.m. in the morning and extending the school day until 9 at night.

Thanks to our friends Tony and Jean in Bromsgrove we now have a High School fund of £4,500 to help us pay next years High School fees. They have both worked incredibly hard, putting in hundreds of hours into sorting, testing and pricing up the goods that have been donated and then braving the elements out in Redditch market to run a charity stall for this specific need.

Unfortunately a High School education on its own does not guarantee employment in Kenya any more than it does in the UK. Therefore, we are planning to send only the highest achievers from our Year 8 class on to High School and we will be setting a B+ grade in the KCPE as the bar for enrolment for High School. This may seem harsh but it reflects the reality of the Kenyan Education system. We want to be able to send our high achievers on to University. If they can score a B+ in their High School exams they will be able to qualify for a government loan to support them through University. By setting a B+ as the qualifying grade for High School we are hoping that all of our High School candidates will have the drive and ability to make it to University.

For those not going to High School it is essential that we have a plan that will also empower them to look forward to a much more hopeful and exciting future. In January 2012 we will be starting a brand new Agricultural College for them. We are hoping to register as an exam centre for Cambridge International GCSE exams and will be working hard to deliver a highly relevant and practical curriculum for our youngsters.

The tragedy currently unfolding in the Horn of Africa has many causes - some natural, many more man made. Climate change has created new challenges that the world will have to rise to. Population growth is pushing a food crisis that will not be easily solved.

Our children in Kenya need to be equipped to face the future with hope and confidence. We are planning to start an Agricultural College that will equip them with the skills and knowledge that they will need to overcome the daunting problems of poverty and food insecurity that have plagued their community for so many years. We intend to establish a comprehensive



Practical work will be at the heart of our training programme

rural training programme that will teach the children new farming skills and environmental management skills. We want to encourage them to become entrepreneurs and leaders in the local community. It is an ambitious plan and, yet again, it will stretch both our faith and our resources. We will have to buy more land, build more classrooms and employ more specialist teachers. It is a bold and exciting step.

Terry will be leaving his job at Stratford High School on July 22nd and setting out on the next steps of the Hope and Kindness journey. He will be spending August, October and November in Kenya in preparation for a longer period in Kosele, from January 2012. During this time he will be overseeing the establishment and management of the Agricultural College. Your prayers for Judi, (who will be staying at home to take care of our family and, together with our trustees, lead the UK end of Hope and Kindness), would be greatly appreciated.

The Paisley Connection

Our thanks again to Ian and Hilda McMillan who have taken a huge leap of faith with us and set up home in Kosele, initially until February 2012. Ian and Hilda wrote a moving article in our last newsletter and have since then stepped up to the challenge they set by giving up the comfort of life at home in Paisley to work with the church and wider community in Kosele.

Ian and Hilda have received great support from their church in Paisley and we wish to thank the church and their pastor, Tom Paton, and his wife Jennifer for investing so much of their time in equipping Ian and Hilda for the challenging work that they have ahead of them. We are looking forward to a long and fruitful partnership with Ian and Hilda and know that they are greatly loved by our friends and neighbours in Kenya.

“Forgive me - but what would you do?”



To anyone who reads this thinking some of the words sound 'familiar' I confess that my confidence to share this message came after listening to a speech given by the rock star and campaigner 'Bono.' Our lives could not be more different but he made me smile when he described how unpopular he had become as a 'rock star ... with a cause' More than once I have felt like everyone's worst 'pain in the neck' first and foremost for confessing to being a 'Church going born again' Christian and then having to tell them that, worst than that, I'm a 'Christian with a cause!' I have tried to share my own experience but the words written in quote marks are Bono's ... I just couldn't think of a better way to phrase them!

“Forgive me” those are the first words I said to Mary, the grandmother of the two children in this picture. I have always had a strong aversion to taking photographs of people living the reality of absolute poverty in the C21st - images that should now belong in the history books of the C19th. Without doubt it takes a very skilled photographer (which I am not) to

capture these images without further robbing the subject of any dignity they may still cling on to. But, as we all know, sometimes words fail you and you want the whole world to see what you are *seeing* - just to reassure you that you're not being unreasonable and also to tell you *what* they would do if they stood in your shoes!

At the beginning of this year we realised that food prices, here and in Kenya, were yet again beginning to soar. In March we asked Mary, our manager, to send us the most recent costs of running the Children's Home (for 37 children) the School (educating and feeding 170 pupils) and maintaining the food assistance we give to almost 30 sick and very elderly neighbours that live in the local community. Just like the food crisis of 2008, we had the nasty shock of discovering that our monthly expenditure was approximately £1,000 in excess of our £3,500 income from sponsorship. So, just before my April visit, we had a trustees meeting where we all agreed that it would not be *sensible* to add any more children to the school or to add to the number of people in the community receiving regular food assistance. However, on April 16th, a quiet Saturday morning with our visitors and Mary away in Kisii (going to the bank and shopping) and our children out of the compound visiting our neighbours, I was called to the gate to meet a grandmother with grandchildren. Following the conversation we had shared at our trustees meeting and knowing the likely scenario I would meet I really did not want to go. But I also knew very well that this grandmother, given a choice, would not have brought herself to *beg* at our gate if she wasn't already desperate. Delegation or *hiding in the office* was not an option. Just as I feared, it was plain to see that these children were in trouble. First of all they did not, possibly *could not*, even smile ... as most visitors to any country in Africa will tell you, even the poorest children have an incredible capacity to find something to smile about even as they stand in their rags with nothing more than a stick or a plastic bag and string ball to play with. But these children did not smile, the face on the little girl reminded me of images of 'the little match girl' from my childhood story books. The boys pinched face, blank expression and *bits* of shoe struggling to stay attached to his feet reminded me of similar images drawn in books that tell the story of the boys that Dr Barnardo found sleeping on the streets of Victorian London. But this is not the C19th, this is the C21st. Men have landed on the moon, men and women

Rising to the challenge - Thank you Cisco

In the last twelve months, thanks to our friend and fellow trustee John Appleton, we have had the privilege of working with some amazing people - not least the two teams of volunteers from Cisco, (the global ICT company), who visited Kosele in November 2010 and April 2011.

Both Cisco teams worked their socks off to make sure that our children in Kosele and members of the local community got the most from the time they spent with them. The teams spent time encouraging the children with their school work, working with our teachers, staff and managers and helping to build houses for members of the community.

Thanks to their very successful fund raising we have been able to buy laptops to use in our school and train children and staff how to use them. The teams rose to 'apprentice' style challenges and built a water filter and 'roof harvesting' system to help us collect, store and recycle even more rain water.



Hope and Kindness grows stronger through team work. We would like to add a huge "THANK YOU" to the Cisco teams for encouraging us, supporting us and believing in what we are doing.

"Forgive me but what would you do?"

regularly travel into space, new technologies have connected lives all over the planet in a way we could never have imagined and old and new constitutions, just like the ancient scriptures from some major world faiths, tell us that 'All men (and sometimes women) are created equal,' that 'where you live should not determine whether you live or die.'

I have often been accused of being over emotional - I admit it, I cry very easily! But that's a part of me and who I am that doesn't seem able to change. My heart tells me that this picture is both 'absurd and unacceptable.' Many of us enjoy the benefits of living in a globalised world, but that world now makes Africa our *neighbour* ... it's right down the road. If these hungry children were standing at your gate you'd get them some food, if their baby brother was dying because they couldn't get medicine that you had in your cabinet, you'd get them the medicine 'not just because it's the *right* thing to do but because you *could!*'

I know I can't fix every problem in the world but, when I've stopped crying, I have to look for a way to do something to change the things I can. On my own, even with Terry, it would have been pretty pathetic but thanks to all of you who have chosen to come alongside us it's beginning to look like 'something.' For the children in this picture, Beatrice 3yrs and George 5yrs, *going to school* and *eating everyday* will be life 'transforming.'

To every one of *you* who has chosen to support us in the work of Hope and Kindness, every one of *us* would like to say a huge "THANK YOU." Your choice to *give* to others at a time when it would be so tempting to just focus on our own problems show that

you really do 'believe that the value of a child's life, far away in Africa, really does have equal value to the life of your own children here in the UK.' To those of you who share our Christian faith thank you for recognising that the words 'Love Thy Neighbour' were given as a 'command' and not simply a 'suggestion.'

There are now almost 170 children in the school. Recent visitors to Kosele and new friends in Paisley have brought us new sponsors. We still have a gap between expenditure and income but, with your help, we will continue to reap the 'joy' that comes from participating in changing the world for the poorest of the poor – as Bono so perfectly put it after describing the changed 'world view' of the first astronauts who travelled to the moon – together 'we can help to put *humanity back on this earth.*'

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