

## Africa is the place to be

Forget the headlines about gloom, doom, poverty, starvation and corruption. Africa is emerging as a strong new continent on the world stage. In a book called *The Fastest Billion*, written by experienced investors in Africa, we learn that “*the best performing nations of Sub-Saharan Africa today are poised for their own period of growth, driven not just by the continents’ rich and still largely untapped natural resources, but also its growing domestic strengths, its agricultural potential and its unique dynamism.*” The world is beginning to realise that Africa is climbing out of poverty and is shaping up to challenge the rest of the world.

This is very good news for our young people. It means that there really is a hope for a good future for all of them. In the twelve years that we have been working in Kenya we have been drawing ever closer to the time when our oldest students will be setting off on their journey into the adult worlds of higher education and employment. When they were very much smaller that day seemed a long way off. Now it is coming up fast. Next November our first Secondary School students will be taking the KCSE exams, (the Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education.) These

exams will determine whether they are able to obtain government funding to attend university and the kind of employment they can look forward to. Knowing major investors are taking Kenya and other African countries seriously is a great encouragement.

Preparing our young people to take their place in the Africa of the future is still very challenging. Fortunately we have been able to meet the challenges head on. Exciting things have been happening in both of our schools.



## New Computer Room Installed

For most of April I was holed up in my office slaving away over a hot laptop creating a new E-Learning system for our Secondary School Students. The system is called the Learning Zone, or LZ for short.

It is basically a web site that will run on our school computer system without having to be connected to the Internet. So far LZ 1.0 has got 46 pages which are grouped according to subjects. The system gives the students access to the Khan Academy maths and science videos, text books, study guides, video files, audio files and past exam papers. These are all, of course, available on the Internet. Our problem is that our Internet access is very slow and unreliable as well as being very expensive. Put fairly simply the LZ gives students access to a wide range of resources without the hassle or huge expense of trying to stay on line.

Our version of the system will run on 10 laptops which we have just bought and set up in a dedicated classroom to be run as a computer lab. We have also had to install a brand new solar power, system to run the lab. I will now start training a team of our teachers to add content to the system and to make sure the computer room is maintained properly. We will also start work on a Primary School version of the LZ.

The new computer room will make it possible for our young people to develop a much wider awareness of the world beyond Kosele. It is hard to imagine, but the reality for most children born in Kosele is that they have never seen the ocean or visited a city or even seen any of the ‘big five’ wild animals that tourists pay so much money to encounter in the safari parks. We know computers can’t take the place of *real life* experiences but they will play an important part in opening up the world to our students. **Terry Mott**



# Letter from Uni - Farming is Cool!

Dear Readers

With due pleasure and respect, I take this opportunity to write you this article about the Agribusiness sector, being that it is my area of specialisation. I enjoy everything about it. I eat it, I speak it, I write it and even dream it. Let me take this moment to introduce myself to you. I am Collins Ndalo, born and brought up on the outskirts of Kisumu town along the shore of Lake Victoria. Currently I am a first year student at the Great Lakes University of Kisumu pursuing a diploma course in Agribusiness Management. In Kenya Agribusiness is one of the strong pillars towards realizing the country's vision for 2030. Agribusiness is fundamental to development.

As a young boy who had tasted the city life I had always wanted to study law and become a renowned lawyer. I had never dreamt of going anywhere near anything associated with agriculture. In Kenya and in the rest of Africa, agriculture was considered a punishment or a low income activity and as a result I ended up adopting the same negative attitude towards it. Later on I came to realise that things are never how we expect them to be.

After finishing High School I went back to the countryside (Kosele). It is in Kosele where I underwent a period of self-reflection and I began to realise that agriculture was 'cool'. I resolved to get my hands dirty and join the 'cool crowd'. I have never had any regrets since joining that crowd.

Agriculture, nutrition and health are inter-related in many important ways. Agriculture produces the food that provides the calories and micro-nutrients essential for a healthy and productive life. In turn the health condition of farm workers and labourers profoundly affects agricultural productivity. A large majority of people here suffer from hunger and lack the micro-nutrients in their diet. Under nutrition is the underlying cause of one in three deaths among pre-school children. Poor diets during pregnancy, breast feeding and early childhood have serious, long-term effects on adult health and well-being.

Modernising agriculture provides jobs and livelihoods for many people. It is the key challenge that will continue to face most African countries for the coming decades. With the vast majority of farms being small-scale they will need additional help making the move to modernisation. It may seem glaringly obvious to say that most African countries are dominated by agriculture, yet until recently the importance of agriculture in these countries' economic and social lives was to some extent unapparent. Today agriculture is returning to centre stage and much is being asked of it to ensure food security and to provide jobs for a rapidly growing population and create a good standard of living.

According to *New African* (one of the best-selling Pan African magazines) investment in agriculture can make a significant difference in the lives of smallholder farmers – raising incomes, reducing poverty and improving food security. More than two thirds of African citizens depend on agriculture for their incomes. Agriculture accounts for 33% of the continent's GDP. Growth in agriculture is 11 times more effective at reducing poverty than growth in any other sector. The magazine concludes by saying "the potential in Africa is as vast as the landscape."

Barely a fraction of the available farming land in Africa has been put under cultivation. I strongly agree with the magazine. If only we could improve our farming systems, which are characterised by backwardness, and put in more effort to develop the intensity of farming we would be in a better position. Agriculture is everyone's business. I am determined to make agriculture pay in my life. In the time that I have been given I hope to see great changes for the better in African agriculture.



***Collins is the oldest of the Kosele 'children' and the first to attend University. His views on farming are proof of a major shift in the thinking of young people in Kenya, who are waking up to the fantastic opportunities that exist in the agriculture sector.***

# Good News from the farm

Over the last couple of years we have been working very hard to get the most out of our farm. As Collins indicated on the previous page, farmers in Kenya face a great number of challenges. It has sometimes felt like everything has been working against us - the climate, the bugs, the soil. We have experienced a very steep learning curve as we have tried to grow more of our own food and also make some income.

Our greenhouse has been the biggest challenge on the farm. It feels like we have dealt with just about every blight known to the tomato farmer and, so far, have found it very difficult to harvest a full crop. Collins and the farming team worked very hard over the Easter holiday to prepare for another go at tomatoes and we are hoping and praying for better results this time.

This year we are happy to report that the rainy season has, for the first time in many years, lived up to its name. The rain has appeared on time in the right quantity and our crops of kale, maize and bananas are doing well. According to Duncan, our General

Manager, our maize and bananas are the talk of the community. We are hoping for a bumper harvest in August and right now we are self sufficient in kale.

In the last six weeks both of our nanny goats have given birth. One had twin girls which our ECD class named 'Michelle and Chelsea!' The other goat just gave birth to her second, currently unnamed, billy ...  
Billy ..... ?



## Could you be a volunteer?

Over the years we have welcomed many visitors to Kosele and would love to welcome many more. We have enjoyed visits from large groups of young people, teams of adults, smaller groups and individuals. They have helped us in many ways, from working with the teachers in the classrooms to building houses and doing general repairs and maintenance. Just about everybody who has spent time in Kosele has told us what a rewarding and, in some cases, deeply moving experience it was.

Twelve years ago there were just 12 children living in the Home and 37 pupils being taught in three very small rooms in one of the houses. Today the school has grown into a Primary school for almost 200 children and the first three forms of a High school for 50 young people. In church, we regularly work with 80 or more children and young people. Needless to say, we would really appreciate some help!

If you have ever thought "I would really like to do something to make a difference in somebody's life but don't know where to start" you might want to think about coming out to Kosele. We have opportunities for youth workers, teachers, carers, practical people, computer people and 'people' people. In fact we are happy to welcome anybody who has a heart for using the skills and talents they have been given to make the world a better place.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering with us, send an email to [terry@hopeandkindness.org](mailto:terry@hopeandkindness.org) or, for more information, look on our website ([www.hopeandkindness.org](http://www.hopeandkindness.org))

Some of you will know that for a long time now we have desperately wanted to replace our 30+ year old Land Rover. Everything that *could* break off or fall off has now *broken off* or *fallen off*. These days you are more likely to find someone under the bonnet fixing it than someone behind the wheel driving it ... and we haven't been able to use it for long journeys for almost three years. So, thank you so much to all of you who have made specific donations during that time to help us with this purchase. This month the right vehicle, a 2004 Toyota twin cab HiLux pick-up, with the right price, finally became available ... with the added bonus of 'go faster Holy Spirit flames' along the sides! It really is an answer to prayer and, with three different sets of visitors due over the next two months, it arrived at just the right time!



# Putting their best foot forward



## Floaters!

As many of our past visitors to Kosele will tell you, it's difficult not to be shocked at the state of the footwear worn by the children coming to our school. It's not unusual for them to turn up in bare feet or to shuffle into school on worn out, broken *slippers* (flip flops) or the latest cheap plastic footwear called *floaters*. Many of them have a 30 or 40 minute walk to reach our school and the paths are very rough and rocky - at this time of year they can also be very muddy and slippery. Last month, thanks to the EXTREMELY generous children and friends we have at Feckenham First School and our equally generous and very kind friends in Welford-on-Avon, we have for the first time ever,

## Slippers (flip-flops)

## 'cut off' wellies!

I been able to put *all* our children in proper school shoes and socks! Feeling truly smart on the outside plays such an important part in helping them believe that they really can be smart people on the inside too; that they really are children with the chance of a *good* future ahead of them. Purchasing the right size for every girl and boy, at a price we could afford, from a city almost 2 hours away was something of a logistical nightmare - but bless our social worker Millie for making that part of it happen! AND AGAIN ... bless our friends in Feckenham and Welford ...ASANTE SANA! (Thank you so much!)

