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Dear

As I write this newsletter in mid 2008 the political nightmare that occurred immediately after the Presidential and General elections in December 2007 appears to have calmed and there is a feeling amongst some that peace has broken out again. Has it? At what cost? We will see, no doubt. My hope is that at least some of the national wealth will find its way down to the *wananchi* (common man). Rising inflation, a huge increase in the cost of fuel and food and a failed rainy season are just some of the non-tribal problems that face the country. Kenya needs all the help it can get to ensure its citizens have a fair chance in life.

Notwithstanding the recent problems the work of the Kariandusi School Trust has expanded. During the last year two schools capable of holding in excess of 600 children each have been completed. They are beautiful schools. All we need now is for the standard of education within them to match their quality! Our sister charity, the Langalanga Scholarship Fund (LLSF) (see www.langalanga.org.uk) provides the litmus paper that indicates success or failure within our twenty schools from which we take our scholars. I will report on this more fully next year when our portfolio of completed schools has increased. KST has now completed four schools, one is under construction and two more will be started when Alison and I visit Kenya in September this year. Already we have early plans for the total restoration of two further schools but the names are being kept secret until funds are assured.

Each school we build includes a large, well-furnished library. Alison and Anne Smyth (a trustee of LLSF) expend considerable time and effort collecting and packing books for onward transmission to our newly completed schools. More on this overleaf. Each new school has a roomy staffroom and each teacher has an allocated workspace and lockable cupboard. In addition, we build at least one 75 cu.m rainwater tank and a drinking water distribution point. Properly managed the water should be sufficient to see the children through one complete drought.

All this sounds as though we are on top of the job, but this year a shock was awaiting us! While we were in Kenya in January, TV news items showed 300,00-500,000 refugees fleeing for their lives from Western Kenya. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is, apparently, the inelegant but approved international expression for those unfortunate people. They were being forced to return to their original tribal area. We work on the edge of that area. Some think the schools we build are oversized, even allowing for natural expansion. What no-one foresaw was the sudden, uncontrollable arrival of thousands of IDP children. What we did about it is described overleaf.



To everyone who has helped with our work in Kenya I send my very grateful thanks. More importantly, I send the thanks of thousands of children of the present and future generations who will benefit from your generosity.

*Plenty of drinking water at
Langalanga Primary School*

Newsletter 2008

1. TWO MORE SCHOOLS COMPLETED

This year two more schools have been completed. Perhaps the star of the show is Simba Primary School, built for 540 children but capable of squeezing in many more. The design allows for the construction of a further four classrooms with folding internal doors that will allow the whole school to assemble in poor weather on special occasions. The black-cotton soil on which it is built necessitated special foundation work. It will be interesting to see if it works in the long term. A wonderful hand-over ceremony, attended by the brand new MP, was a memorable occasion.

Murindati Primary School is located in a dreadfully dry area. The headteacher, Mr Muya, tells me that in the eight years that he has been there he has never seen any crops mature sufficiently before they shrivelled in the sun.

A hugely generous anonymous corporate donor paid for most of the new construction.

The new library at Simba with lots of new books



The magnificent new Simba Primary School (left) and (below) the impressive entrance to Murindati Primary School



January 2008: Construction well underway at Murindati

*..... and happy children say "Thank you"
- Kenyan-style—at Simba*



2. ANOTHER SCHOOL STARTED

In March 2008 we 'broke the ground' at Ngeteti Primary School. We have demolished the modest, old colonial bungalow on which the original school was based and have re-used the finely dressed stone on the entrance of the new school. Madventurer, with whom we have a good working relationship, previously built two classrooms to our design. Other, somewhat inadequate, classrooms had sprung up in the 1990s. All these had to be brought together in the final layout to make a pleasing and practical solution. A small ceremony to hand over the construction completed so far is scheduled for September.

and ...

3. TWO MORE TO START SOON

The truth is, the need for decent schools, teachers and resources in Kenya is limitless. I think the international community knows this but somehow progress is desperately slow. Our little charity has, since October 2003, done its best! My frustrations are as much aimed at the bureaucratic delays as at the certain knowledge that our schools are cheaper to build and of a higher quality than those built with money through 'official' channels. Repeated efforts to obtain British Government funding have always proved fruitless. **Silly, really!**

4. POST ELECTION VIOLENCE

..... AND ITS AFTERMATH

It was a sad time to be in Kenya in January-March this year as we witnessed Kenya tearing itself apart. We had, until then, taken pride in our peaceful acceptance of democracy - Kenya-style - and seemed quietly, if a bit sullenly, ready to accept the imperfections. Not so in January!

The huge influx of new families and children had to be cared for somehow. The children had to be accepted into government schools, and *at once*. Given that the main thrust of what we do in Kenya is to raise the educational standards amongst the poor, we watched in horror as class sizes rose to well over 80; teacher numbers became inadequate; syllabus textbooks were scarce and for many pupils a stone on a mud floor was all they had to sit on.

Alison and I decided to send an email appeal for help. Within six and a half days we had over £26,000 to spend, and spend we did. KST now employs eleven teachers, on three-year contracts, paid for equally by the local community, 160 three-seater desks were made in quick time as well as twenty low tables and



IDPs were dumped by the roadside with all their worldly possessions



A common sight on the roads

benches for the younger classes. Teachers' desks and chairs were ordered and distributed as well as four new semi-permanent classrooms constructed at Kariandusi Primary School. Our LWB Land Rover groaned with the weight of over 2700 textbooks as we climbed up the escarpment from Nairobi on the way to Gilgil. Our fervent hope is that not too much time was wasted in the education of the young and that the Langalanga Scholarship Fund, our sister charity, (see www.langalanga.org.uk), will have enough suitably successful boys and girls from which to choose for scholarships.

We will see in January 2009!

5. A UNIQUE EXPERIMENT

One of the schools soon to start is Ndogo Primary School. Situated against the Eburru Hills, this school is the most remote project we have ever attempted. Based on the old colonial railway station, the modest buildings have been used as classrooms. All teaching staff live many miles away in Gilgil down a dirt road. Absenteeism is commonplace, therefore. We are planning to convert the old railway buildings into four houses suitable for teaching staff in the hope that teacher-pupil contact will increase!

Ndogo is being funded by Ardingly College to celebrate 150 years since its foundation. It is hoped that each year groups of six formers will visit their Kenyan school and will strengthen the bond between them.

6. IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW BUT WHO YOU KNOW!

I have found during the 15 years of working in Kenya amongst the poor that help is always at hand when needed. A naive statement? I think not. The latest prime example is the arrival on our scene of Peter Ellse who has agreed to become a patron.

Peter is a highly successful man who came to see what we were doing in Kenya when all hell was breaking loose. He offered his help in ways too many to itemise here but one is to arrange collection and delivery to Kenya of the boxes of books Alison and Anne have collected.

Thank you, Peter, for your dynamism, enthusiasm and generosity.

Peter Ellse presents footballs to the children at Simba Primary School



7. DRAGOMAN AND THE WEB LAUNCH

KST continues to receive invaluable help from Dragoman Overland, the adventure travel company that has supported us from the beginning. In early December this year, KST will have a new database and website. Dragoman have kindly offered to send out an e-letter to coincide with the KST website launch allowing us to reach thousands more people who are likely to be interested in our highly effective charity. An effective committee in Suffolk organised the 'White Highland Ball' at the Suffolk County Show Ground, which raised £22,500.

A million thanks to you all.

Patrons: Sheila Ravenscroft, Sarah Beeny, Peter Ellse

Trustees: Colonel HE Vialou Clark, The Hon CHK Hopkinson, Ms SC Phelps,
Mr NC Farthing, Mrs AM Owen, Mrs AJ Vialou Clark.