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THANK YOU

Our annual income comes from our donors; some of that income in large donations and some in small amounts. Whatever the amount every pound or dollar is a valuable contribution to our work. We thank everyone for every donation and for taking an interest in our work and supporting what we do.

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The first renovation in 1995 at Mauo primary school. The ‘before’ (top) and ‘after’ (bottom) photographs of one classroom.

SCHOOL RENOVATION WORK

That first work was the renovation of a classroom at Mauo primary school where Katy was teaching English as a foreign language to Standard (year) III. Fundraising was much easier once there were ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs showing the utter transformation. Before long the whole of Mauo primary school was renovated. From there renovation and building work continued with the complete renovation of ten government primary schools, and help with renovation and building of classrooms, school lavatories, kitchen huts, putting in water standpipes etc. at numerous other primary schools.

The renovation work was a good starting point for the charity; it made an immediate difference to each school with improved morale and increased attendance of pupils; it was something visual for donors to see what their money had produced; it gave VEPK publicity and credibility in its first years of operation; it enabled VEPK to start to cooperate with school staff and education officials.

This work has not been a main focus of VEPK for some years, but sometimes there are donors who wish to help at a particular primary school and we will then help to get building or repair work done. Recently we were approached by a charity in Dubai, for which we had renovated a primary school in 2002, asking if we could choose another school for them to sponsor the renovation. We chose Sumaye primary school in Mabogini ward. One classroom and an office have been built, and funds to enable more classrooms to be built are expected later in the year. Sumaye only has three classrooms with 260 pupils and it needs seven classrooms and a proper staff room and an office for the head teacher. We are hopeful that all this will be provided which, in the words of Mama Miombo the head teacher, “is more than my dream come true. I have prayed to God to help my school and I never gave up hope.”

THE BEGINNING OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND THE YEAR’S PROGRESS

From the very beginning it was clear that the lasting help which was really needed was to work with the primary school teachers to increase their knowledge of their subjects, their confidence and their teaching methods. This was a more difficult area to penetrate. Teacher training and professional development are matters under the control of the government, and the teachers themselves are very aware of the authorities above them and of the need to conform.

In 1996 a teacher-trainer at the Marangu Teachers’ Training College came, at VEPK’s request, to Mauo primary school once a week to help the teachers with their teaching of English. That was the beginning of various specialist volunteers visiting to work with primary school teachers in the schools and to give seminars. In 2003 VEPK gained valuable assistance from British Executive Service Overseas, and Geoffrey Dixon, a retired primary school head teacher, made his first of several visits.

Geoffrey could see what we were trying to do and he guided VEPK to start its Whole School Development Programme (WSDP) and so to formulate a programme with aims to: improve teaching and learning; raise the level of teachers’ understanding and knowledge in relation to their subjects and generic teaching skills; assist head teachers with management and administration; build closer links between schools and the community; work closely with the district education authorities in all parts of the programme and to work with education officials at all levels with the aim of VOLUNTEER TEACHERS FOR THIRTEEN YEARS

The initial work of VEPK was also to help the primary school pupils. Katy started teaching English as a foreign language to pupils in Mauo and Mshiri primary schools in 1995. From that work the ‘gap year’ programme arose. Each year from 1998 to 2010 native English speakers from England who had completed their schooling or their degrees went to Kilimanjaro to teach English to primary school pupils. They taught from the beginning of the school year in January until August or September, and so were able to complete the school syllabus. In November before their departure to Tanzania each group attended an intensive two-week training course which Katy and other specialists ran. This introduced the ‘gappers’ to the local culture, gave them a crash course in Swahili, gave them instruction in English grammar and teaching methods, and gave them extensive practice in teaching various mini-lessons. Over the thirteen years the ‘gap year’ programme was a great success with 77 volunteers taking part. With the programme came the annual school outings for the pupils. Each year Standard IV pupils from two chosen schools went to Lake Manyara national park to see the animals for the first time in their lives, and then to Pangani on the Indian Ocean to see the sea and swim in it and to have their first ever holiday. For a few years some of the older pupils climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with the ‘gappers’ and the boys realised that their aspirations to be porters on the mountain to be like their fathers was not perhaps what they wanted.

VEPK is still grateful to all the ‘gappers’ who put so much energy into their teaching and who gave their pupils confidence in speaking English along with many fun lessons. It was not an easy time for them grappling with village life in such a different environment and culture but they all coped admirably and helped to promote the reputation of VEPK. Some head teachers wrote to VEPK demanding ‘their right’ to have ‘gap year’ teachers in their schools.

By 2010 VEPK had moved its work in government primary schools to Mabogini ward which is a 90 minute drive from its office and accommodation in Mshiri village. It was no longer possible, with the problems of transport and logistics, to run the ‘gap year’ programme with proper supervision and observations in Mabogini. The programme ended in 2010.

Sumaye primary school’s new classroom in June 2014

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influencing policies of the Ministry of Education & Vocational Training.

The current WSDP was approved by the District Education Officer for Moshi Rural and implemented in 2006. A year later a formal partnership and collaboration was established with Singa Chini Teacher Training College.

From our previous experience working with teachers and from the work of our specialist volunteers we had a valuable insight into the main difficulties facing teachers and which hindered them in their teaching. In order to solve some of the problems it was necessary to build closer relations with the district education officials. Four separate training programmes were held for each District Education Officer and each Chief Inspector of Schools from the seven districts within Kilimanjaro region. These were historic as at no other time did these officers sit together. Indeed, it was admitted that very few District Education Officers knew their Chief Inspector of Schools by face. The objective of improving the administration in their offices and their liaison with each other and other education officials was only partly met. Transfers and retirements meant that the same individuals did not attend all four programmes. However, those who attended benefited, and the reputation of VEPK as a serious partner in the region’s educational development was cemented.

The partnership with Singa Chini Teachers’ Training College has proved to be greatly beneficial. A handbook for school committee members which has recently been printed and distributed to schools.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

In August last year Anne facilitated the final of several sessions with the District Inspectors of Schools for Moshi Rural district and the tutors of Singa Chini Teacher Training College to conclude their discussions on the assessment of pupils’ work.

Currently, the only methods of assessment permitted in the schools are written work in exercise books and tests and examinations. As the government is stressing ‘participatory teaching’ it is important to bring in new methods of assessment. A representative of the Zonal office of the Inspectorate of Schools for the north-eastern zone was present, and helped to guide the session to its conclusion. After discussion it was agreed that a report of the conclusions from these sessions should be written and sent to the Ministry of Education & Vocational Training passing through the Zonal Chief Inspector of Schools for the north-eastern zone. The conclusion was that restricting the mode of assessment which teachers can use in their lessons to written work is hampering the adoption of ‘participatory teaching’ or ‘child-centred learning’. These learning/teaching methods are also called ‘active learning’ and ‘visible learning’. In our report we used the term ‘effective learning’. Promotion of creativity and problem-solving amongst others is still possible if effective learning is adopted in full. Primary school teachers are still using the old teaching methods of ‘chalk and talk’, and pupils are still much occupied copying exercises and notes from the blackboard. A new development has been the placing of pupils in groups. The development of ‘group work’ is seen as evidence of effective learning. However, in itself group work does not amount to effective learning. The new reliance on group work is concealing the full understanding of effective learning – what it looks like and how to achieve it. Effective learning promotes the learners to think critically and to innovate their own ideas, with the teacher as their facilitator. Learning is by nature an active endeavour, and different pupils learn in different ways. The unique advantages of effective learning are that the pupil is not subjected to endless passivity, it requires no special aids or equipment, pupils can be resources for each other through paired and group activity, it is applicable in large classrooms, and it allows all pupils to speak and participate through discussions and presentations. Mostly the teacher will see and monitor whether learning is taking place and whether real understanding is achieved as the task itself forms part of the assessment method. To insist that in each lesson the pupils must write in order for the teacher to assess the learning from the lesson undermines the core principles of effective learning. Understanding how to assess the pupils’ learning is a key part of understanding effective learning.

The report made the following request of the Ministry:

‘...that an explanatory circular be distributed to all primary school teachers and inspectors, and other stakeholders, which makes clear that assessment must be effective for the objectives of the lesson or part of the lesson.

‘Therefore, such an explanatory circular to be distributed to all stakeholders could set out that Assessment Evidence can be:

a. a teacher’s observations of a task being completed by pupils
b. questions asked by the teacher which elicit the knowledge and understanding of the pupils
c. reference to a teacher’s checklist listing which pupils achieved/understood what task/activity
d. pictures or models composed or made by the pupils

• any other assessment method that is effective to assess the learning and understanding of the objectives be it evidenced in writing or by any other means’.

The report was signed by all parties, and the Zonal Chief Inspector of Schools sent it to the Ministry of Education. A response is awaited and this is being followed-up.

MEETINGS IN DAR ES SALAAM

Over the years VEPK has had meetings with many key officials in Dar es Salaam at the Ministry of Education & Vocational Training, the Tanzania Institute of Education, the University of Dar es Salaam and, in 2011 an audience in the State House with His Excellency the President, Dr Jakaya Kikwete. In the last year VEPK has had productive meetings with the new Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education & Vocational Training, and with the Director of Research at the Tanzania Institute of Education. For the latter Barbara Kerr and Katy Allen prepared a detailed analysis of the primary mathematics syllabus and its deficiencies with recommendations for improvements.

Detailed analysis for maths teaching

Barbara and Katy’s document noted, ‘All primary education is a delicate mixture of developing skills within pupils and giving them knowledge. ...However, in primary education the skills which are developed consciously in the teaching of mathematics are: counting skills; skills in working with numbers – adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying; place value skills; thinking and problem-solving skills; application skills (applying knowledge gained); skills in measuring; skills in sorting and classifying; skills of estimating; visual/special-awareness skills; skills in logical progression; skills of logical deduction. Many of these are missing from the syllabus. Those skills very much relate to mathematics being part of everyday life.’

...The most relevant and interesting way to teach mathematics is to use real-life situations. This will use ‘narrative’ questions, so that pupils are given a scenario and then have to work something out.’

The document then analysed the syllabus for each Standard noting the deficiencies and then noting what was missing altogether. For example:

‘Standard 1
i. The syllabus jumps from working with numbers 1 to 9 to working with numbers 1 to 99. There is no development of number facts and counting, nor of place value for units and tens. These underpin place value knowledge in other Standards. This is a huge problem further up the school.

ii. Adding with carry numbers: pupils are still developing the facts of numbers and basic processes; they have not been introduced to place value, and they are required to add with carrying. This is too advanced.

iii. Adding and subtracting horizontally with carrying: This is using the ‘abstract’ too early, and is too advanced at this stage. Place value must be introduced first, with lots of ‘concrete’ work.

iv. Number facts and processes must be introduced moving from ‘concrete’ to ‘abstract’. This needs to be done slowly because at this level pupils are still very much at the basic ‘concrete’ level of learning and understanding.'
Topics are taught at separate, discrete times, and there is no integration of mathematical ideas, processes or concepts. …

The syllabus more often than not goes immediately into ‘abstract’ concepts before the pupils have an abstract use of numbers can be introduced. By the end of the teaching of that topic the pupils will be using sums alone and answering problem-solving questions. In this way pupils will understand, and enjoy their learning. Success breeds success, and only if pupils can understand the very basic stages in mathematics will they succeed in their future studies.

If the teaching and learning of mathematics is to improve then the primary school syllabus needs to be re-written to take account of the issues mentioned above.’

This analysis was very well received and it was said it will be used as a basis for rewriting the syllabus when the Institute decide to do so. This will be pursued, and VEPK will try to exert pressure for the urgency of a revision or overhaul of the syllabus.

It should be noted that no other charitable organisation is producing research and analysis of this nature in order to improve government primary education. To be able to do so requires long experience of working in the primary schools with the teachers together with a thorough understanding of the syllabuses and prescribed textbooks. Again, this evidences the value of Village Education Project Kilimanjaro’s long-term approach to its work.

TEACHING MATERIALS

Building on our achievements working with teachers in the teaching of mathematics, Jane Firth wrote three books to guide teachers in their teaching of basic mathematics to pre-primary, Standard I and Standard II pupils (aged 5 to 8). VEPK has printed these and they are in use in the schools in Mabogini ward.

In September last year Jane gave a day’s presentation at the Mathematical Association of Tanzania’s annual conference in Mbeya. This was for primary school mathematics teachers who teach the ‘early years’. Jane emphasised the use of ‘concrete’/real items so that regard is given to the development and ability of the pupils. Other issues covered were the importance of ‘place value’ (units, tens, hundreds) and the importance of number-bonds (all additions and subtractions of numbers from 0 to 10). The annual conference had not catered fully for the needs of primary school teachers before, and their feedback was wholly positive.

As well as Jane’s books, Geoffrey Dixon also wrote six guides for teachers of mathematics in Standard III to Standard VII. These guides cover topics which cause great difficulty and in which the teachers lack knowledge and confidence. The guides are for teachers to gain a thorough understanding of the topics before they attempt to teach them. The topics include fractions, graphs, geometry and algebra. The teachers’ guides have been translated into Swahili and combined to form one book. VEPK now has funds to print the books for distribution to the teachers.

For the teaching of English VEPK has produced the NOEC books. The books are an amended version of the tried and tested English course (New Oxford English Course) which was in use in all Tanzanian primary schools and from which the pupils learned enough English in the first two years to be able to pursue all their lessons in English from then onwards. The course starts in Standard III. The new title, New Original English Course, preserves the well-known NOEC acronym.

VEPK has also produced a new Language Awareness Course for Standard I and II in order to prepare and motivate pupils for learning English.

NEW PILOT PROJECT

In 2013 VEPK entered into an exciting partnership with FT Kilimanjaro. The latter is a Dutch organisation which works in the Mabogini and Arusha Chini wards in Moshi Rural District in health, agriculture, infrastructure, income-generation and education. Two Dutchmen head up the operations in Tanzania and neither has the necessary expertise to run the education programme they desired to run in six government primary schools. VEPK is running this programme and the funding is being shared. With the reputation of FT Kilimanjaro and its experience working in Moshi Rural District, shared with that of VEPK, this joint programme is charting new waters.

Four of the primary schools are in Arusha Chini Ward and are new to VEPK. Two of the schools are in the next door ward of Mabogini and are schools in which VEPK has worked since 2010. The ward education officer for Mabogini is Mr Msuya with whom VEPK has already enjoyed working. The ward education officer for Arusha Chini is Mr Ngowi who is equally as efficient and amicable as Mr Msuya. FT Kilimanjaro have secured the assignment of Mr Mlay as the programme’s coordinator, and VEPK worked most successfully with him when he was head teacher at Mserikia primary school in Mabogini ward. These three are not only a joy to work with but ensure that the programme is a full collaboration between the government from their side and outside expertise on our side.

The District has approved the running of the pilot programme and the use of Jane Firth’s maths books for teaching mathematics in pre-primary, Standard I and Standard II, and more importantly the use of the new English books for Standard I and Standard III.

For Standard I there is a brand new Language Awareness Course which adopts a distinct and new
teaching approach for the teachers. The approach is based on the ‘think-pair-share’ method which means that young pupils talk and discuss in pairs and then in groups of four, and this helps to improve confidence and to ensure that every pupil is involved. The course is based on activities, role-play and learning about life outside the pupils’ own environment including that of white people in four English-speaking countries; England, America, Australia and Canada. There is no pupil’s book, and the teacher’s book is in Swahili with thorough guidance, and a pronunciation guide for teaching the English words that are to be taught. Those words are ones which have been adopted in the Swahili language from English and so are easy for the pupils to learn which gives them great motivation and fun. For example: pencil/penseli; ruler/rula; jug/jagi; bicycle/baisikeli; taxi/teksi; bank/benki; stamp/stempu etc. Indeed, from April to July last year Anna Herrara came from Finland as part of her teacher-training degree and worked with Paulina, the Standard I teacher at Mabogini primary school, using the book. Paulina and her pupils enjoyed the book and its activities, particularly the emphasis on general knowledge and skills development.

The pilot programme also adopts the use of the NOEC books for teaching English as a foreign language starting in Standard III, as this is considered the desired level at which to introduce a foreign language to Swahili speakers who may well also have a tribal language as a mother-tongue. Unfortunately, the approval for the pilot programme was delayed and it did not start as planned in January at the beginning of the new school year. Initial seminars to help the teachers to use the new books were not given until late February. However, the seminars, which ran over a two week period, were most successful.

The teachers were excited by their new material and all thought that their lessons would be much improved because of the detailed explanations and guidance given to them in the books.

Katy, assisted by Dilly Mtui, gave the English seminars, and Jane, assisted by Marna Sandi and Barbara gave the mathematics seminars. Follow-up work and observations are encouraging with teachers using the new materials well and showing confidence in involving their pupils.

The pilot programme will run for at least another year, if not a lot longer, and the teachers’ assessment of the books will be a major factor in being able to introduce the books nationwide.

Other organisations are requesting our assistance for teacher training on their programmes.

A practice lesson using the NOEC books

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Of great importance has been the work carried out by Barbara in analysing examination results in mathematics. Barbara was entrusted with original examination scripts, and produced graphs and charts which show where the weaknesses in pupils’ knowledge are, and then analysed the syllabus to see why and how those weaknesses have arisen. The resultant findings are no surprise to us as they only confirm what we already know about the syllabus and its gaps and non-sequential treatment of topics. However, Barbara’s findings have made a great impression on the District Academic Officers, the Ward Education Officers and the head teachers. This is the first time that any purpose behind testing and examining the pupils has been evidenced. With such analysis Barbara can work with the teachers to rectify the shortcomings in the syllabus – and the government textbooks – and Barbara has also highlighted the importance of all teachers of mathematics working together as lack of understanding in, for instance, Standard III can have dire consequences in, say, Standard VII. The teachers now realise the nature of mathematics teaching as a development of number concepts, facts and skills which are inter-linked across the years.
highest quality, and eventually he connected the centre to the internet. The centre went from strength to strength being used as both a business centre for photocopying, printing, laminating, typing, internet use and training, and as a social centre where young people in the village would come to learn about and use the internet.

In recent years we were lucky enough to have Craig Collier to run the centre with his immense knowledge and complete ‘techie’ approach. Sadly Craig decided to return to the UK in December 2013. He is still in touch and very happy to offer ‘remote’ help. Luckily for us he had already trained Michael Adams to a high standard. Michael is now running the centre and running courses on computer use. Doreen Mzava still takes charge of photocopying, laminating and printing.

With mobile telephones now offering so many services the use of the centre for email and internet has reduced. However, Michael is busy with students who want to learn how to use a computer and various programmes, together with typing skills and English language for computer use.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

At the request of villagers VEPK was encouraged to build and start a vocational training centre with courses which were popular at the time. In 1999 the centre opened offering courses in masonry, carpentry and tailoring. However, as all girls blindly pursued to build and start a vocational training centre with centre opened offering courses in masonry, carpentry and tailoring. This will be done under the authority of the District Executive Director who is custodian of the land on which the buildings stand.

VEPK is building a new centre which will principally be a motor-mechanics training school. This is an expanding area of employment as more and more new vehicles enter the country, and the old ones keep going. The first site with a building completed on it was then announced to be on the route of a proposed highway and so the building was ordered to be demolished. Only two-thirds of the promised compensation has been paid, and that was received 18 months after it was due. After negotiations it was agreed that the building could be demolished and all materials taken to the newly acquired site in lieu of interest which should have been forthcoming for the late payment. This was done. The outstanding compensation should be paid after the government’s new accounting year starts in July.

The new site is on the main road from Himo to Moshi which is on a busy bus route and so is easily accessible by teachers and students alike. The buildings are progressing well. The new motor-mechanics workshop is nearly finished, and a block of three classrooms is well underway. Already finished is a carpentry workshop which will be used, not necessarily for training, but principally for commercial production. The motor-mechanics will also be a commercial garage, as well as a training school for students although students will not work on the vehicles of clients initially but only on special engine parts and old vehicles.

We are also working to forge links with motor dealers in Dar es Salaam for work-experience and post-qualification apprenticeships for our students.

The motor-mechanics training operation should start in January 2015 and we are now recruiting volunteers from the UK who have experience in running a garage to come to help set up good working systems.

The site is large and so there is plenty of space for a smallholding where the students can help to grow maize, red kidney beans and vegetables for their own consumption as well as for sale.

New motor-mechanics workshop

ADMINISTRATION

For the first ten years the UK office was a cramped bedroom in Katy’s mother’s house. In April 2005 the trustees agreed that there was enough income to warrant the rent of an office. That first office is still rented today at a cost of £118 per month.

For the first seven years very little was charged to the charity to cover administrative expenses and no salary was paid to anyone. Only in late 2002 was there deemed to be enough money to pay a small salary to Katy. From an initial £6,000 gross p.a. the salary has risen to £17,000 gross p.a. There are no other paid employees in the UK although the charity does pay for some services to help with design, printing, and publicity.

Most of the work of the charity is carried out by volunteers: Michael Brignall acts as Independent Examiner for the annual accounts and over the years has given sound advice; Barbara Chinner helps with all correspondence and administration when Katy is not in the UK; John Douglas works tirelessly for fundraising climbs and events, and travels the country getting donated equipment for the new motor-mechanics workshop, and leaves no stone unturned in his quest to get more money for our work; Pat Knight keeps the cash books and donor information up-to-date on spreadsheets; Vince Robbins does all the technical work on the website and keeps it high up in the Google ratings. In Tanzania Anne Samson, Jane Firth and Barbara Kerr work to make the Whole School
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Registered Charity No 1041672
In association with Village Education Project Tanzania Limited
Patron: Dame Judi Dench CH

PROJECT’S PROGRESS

SUPPORTERS’ NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2014

A pupil holds one number on his head and counts on

Pupils use dice then cover written numbers to reinforce number recognition

Jane’s seminar training teachers of mathematics

Change in education happens successfully when those involved understand the reasons for it and the benefits that will come from it. What to change and how to do it starts by being with teachers in the schools (ground level), and progresses to cooperation with officials which leads to changes to curriculum, syllabuses, textbooks, etc. (upper levels). The aim of VEPK is to bring the ground level and upper levels together so that lasting improvements take hold. This is ambitious for a small charity, but VEPK is steadily fulfilling that aim.

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