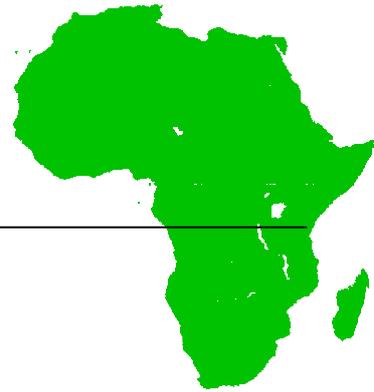


PROJECT'S PROGRESS



VILLAGE EDUCATION PROJECT KILIMANJARO

Registered Charity No 1041672

Registered company limited by guarantee in Tanzania: No 69681

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SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER – Summer 2010

In the year the pace of progress has, of necessity, slowed a little compared with last year. It is not possible or wise to keep great momentum going in the Tanzanian environment, and some consolidation has taken place.

Many of our supporters continue to ask, 'How is your school?'. This is puzzling as our work is in government primary schools supporting the government system, and no primary school is owned or run by the charity. However, Mshiri Vocational Training School is one of the projects of the charity, and it provides the training of skills for young people – many of whom are now running their own small businesses.

The main work being undertaken in Tanzania is within our Whole School Development Programme. This programme seeks to improve the quality of education in government primary schools, and we are working in schools with teachers and headteachers, at district level with the education officers and inspectors, and with central government with the Minister for Education and the Tanzania Institute of Education.

George Kasenga joined the programme in January 2010. George was a teacher-trainer in government teacher-training colleges for many years before joining Oxfam to work for five years on one of their education programmes.



George Kasenga our new Programme Manager

We are delighted that George is now our full-time programme manager. George works with Mama Sandi the co-ordinator of Mshiri Teachers' Resource Centre, and with Mama Mkure the co-ordinator of Mengeri Teachers' Resource Centre, for in-service training in four primary schools which are the main target of our work on the ground. Those four primary schools have weekly

sessions when all staff are together, and management and administration issues are discussed, or topics within the syllabus are looked at in order to help teachers with problems they encounter in understanding them or teaching them. Mostly the topics are from the maths syllabus.

In January 2010 Suzanne Al Kaddah, a specialist teacher of English as a foreign language, came for her first assignment. It is hoped that Suzanne will be able to assist regularly, and another visit is planned for September. Suzanne worked in the four target schools, and as well as giving help to the teachers on how to teach difficult structures in English, she assessed their main needs with a view to a seminar or workshop during her next visit.



Suzanne Al Kaddah helping teachers with the passive voice

Early-years teaching to pupils in pre-primary (5 and 6 year-olds) and in Standard I and II (7 and 8 year-olds) has continued as a main focus. The poor level of teaching mathematics is recognised nationally as an urgent problem. Jane Firth, who has worked with us before, visited again in July 2009, October 2009 and in March 2010 to give more training for the teachers and to visit them in their classrooms. Jane's training sessions were for teachers from 19 nearby primary schools. In July Jane visited many of those pre-primary teachers who had attended her earlier seminars. Jane's aim was to see how the teachers were implementing the various activities for mathematics. Jane also observed teachers of

Standard I in order to gather research for her work in October. Jane had to help many teachers with their classroom organisation; from the storage of materials, the handing-out and collecting in of equipment, to the choice of an activity to suit the aim of the lesson.



Jane Firth and Mr Temba assist the teachers

In October 2009 Jane gave another three-day seminar for pre-primary teachers which incorporated story-telling as well as more basic mathematics. The story-telling was a great success, and most teachers were confident and relaxed using their hand-made puppets and telling their own stories. In all seminars Jane is assisted by Mr Temba the early-years trainer at Singa Chini Teacher Training College, and an Inspector of schools, and by Mama Sandi and Mama Mkure the teacher resource centre co-ordinators who also translate everything for the teachers. Throughout, Jane emphasised the essential use of 'concrete' items before any abstract elements were introduced. This persists as a stumbling block for the teachers who, for example, perpetuate the chanting of numbers before the pupils are confident with the number 2 corresponding to two bottle tops et cetera.

Jane's other seminar in October was for teachers of Standard I in teaching basic mathematics. The Standard I syllabus leaps to counting to 100 which necessitates an understanding of units, tens and hundreds and 'place value'. Each teacher was given a box of resources which Jane had made from local materials, and the teachers were given time to make more of their own. Bundles of straws were used for the 'concrete' activities

to show 'place value'. The teachers enjoyed the simplicity and clarity of this. Jane took time to visit as many classrooms as she could and gave help with these new ways of teaching. The classes are large and it is not easy organising activities for 50 pupils especially where storage space is limited. Jane was able to give very practical advice and helped to solve many classroom problems.

In March 2010 Jane helped Standard II teachers with a three-day seminar for basic mathematics teaching. The teachers were quickly taken through the foundations that the pupils should have been taught in pre-primary and Standard I. The Standard II syllabus covers addition and subtraction with 'carrying', multiplication, and basic fractions. Again Jane used many 'concrete' objects which will help the pupils to understand. Some of the teachers were heard to say 'How can you not understand when it's done this way?'



Learning to make place value easy

The follow up visits to the classrooms revealed that some teachers had not fully grasped the progression of activities, and they were not taking their pupils step-by-step in a logical order even though they were enthusiastically using the new resources.

This work evidences the very large problem in the teaching of mathematics, and how the teachers struggle to comprehend the needs

of young learners. Overnight changes are not realistic expectations. However, Jane's work enables us to assess the reality, and to assess the needs of the teachers. We have asked Jane to prepare a written guide and materials for teachers of early-years mathematics so that they are carefully taken through the stages of teaching counting, number bonds, place value and other essential elementary topics. This will be translated into Swahili and put forward for adoption by the Ministry of Education as a training guide and handbook for all practising teachers.

Mathematics booklets prepared by a previous volunteer, which guide teachers of pupils in higher Standards through various difficult topics from simple beginnings to the advanced stages, on, for example, fractions, algebra, three-dimensional shapes and geometry, are now with a publisher in Dar es Salaam. It is hoped that they will be used not only by practising teachers but also by trainee teachers and tutors at teacher-training colleges.

Dr Anne Samson visited in August 2009 and in February 2010. Anne is the researcher and adviser for the Whole School Development Programme. In February Anne spent much time with George Kasenga discussing the programme and planning its next stages. They had meetings with the District Education Officer for Moshi Rural district, the Ward Education Officers in whose areas we work and the headteachers of the four target schools.



Anne Samson (r) with ward officers, headteachers, Mama Sandi, Mama Mkure and George Kasenga

They visited each of those schools, and they outlined a schedule of work for the next year. In-service training in schools will continue, but meetings and co-ordination

with officials will play a greater part, as will holding training sessions for the more competent teachers with a view to their eventually being able to train and assist the less competent teachers in their own or nearby schools.

In August 2009 Dr Anne Samson, Dilly Mtui and Katy Allen presented a colloquium at the 6th Pan African Reading for All Conference held at the University of Dar es Salaam. Dilly Mtui is the charity's overall co-ordinator in Tanzania, and Katy Allen is the charity's director. The conference was opened and attended by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and participants came from all over Africa. The colloquium outlined the work of the Whole School Development Programme, and the advantages and disadvantages of using foreign (eg UK) volunteers, and addressed the specific problems of the teaching of English as a foreign language in the primary schools and the steps the charity is taking to try to improve the situation.



Teachers learn the importance of number-bonds

Work at national level to improve the teaching of English in primary schools has developed. This is very important because secondary, further and tertiary education is through the medium of English. The very low levels of English language teaching and learning are affecting the entire education of many Tanzanians. The problem is severe, and needs to be addressed first with the teaching in the primary schools. Katy Allen has met the Minister for Education on several occasions to discuss her proposal that an old English course used successfully in the 1950s to the late 1960s be reintroduced, as a tried and tested solution.

The books are unparalleled in their detail, their content, their instructions and their explanations.

In August Katy Allen was asked by the Minister for Education to write a 'Concept Paper' on the merits of the proposal. In January 2010 Katy was invited to chair a committee to discuss the proposal. The committee was called by the director of the Tanzania Institute of Education at the request of the Minister for Education, and comprised six Tanzanians from various government posts: from the central ministry inspectorate; from the education department of the University of Dar es Salaam; from a secondary school and a trainer from a teacher-training college. The committee sat for three days and produced a report which was submitted to the Minister for Education. The report recommended the reintroduction of the English course and agreed that the teacher's books should be translated into Swahili so that the teachers understand the explanations and instructions. The old course was written to be introduced for pupils in Standard III, and so a new course has now to be introduced for Standards I and II. The agreed new course, prepared by our charity, is a language and cultural awareness course designed to motivate pupils to want to learn English, and to cater for the teachers of Standards I and II who invariably know very little, if any, English.

Preparing the old course books for re-publication is a large task not only entailing putting everything into electronic form, but also expanding the teacher's books so that the teachers are thoroughly guided in what to do, in a way that the teachers years ago did not need. A contract with the government is being negotiated.

Work on these books will continue into 2011, and then it is hoped that the charity's involvement will develop to include, among other things, assistance with supplementary training for teachers, and radio broadcasts to support the English teaching.

Two workshops for all the District Education Officers and their Chief

Inspectors of schools in the Kilimanjaro Region were held two years ago, and at last suitable facilitators have been found for another workshop. This next workshop will be facilitated by trainers from the Business School of the University of Dar es Salaam and will, over the three days, look at management and communication problems affecting the running of the district offices. These workshops are unique in giving the district officers a forum for discussion and for them to put forward their suggestions for improvements to the education system.

TEACHING VOLUNTEERS

We have just three volunteers teaching English as a foreign language in the local primary schools. They started their assignment at the beginning of the new school year in January 2010. They are three very competent and outgoing volunteers, two of whom left school last summer and one of whom has graduated from university. They are teaching English to Standard I, II and IV in four primary schools. They accompanied 35 of the Standard IV pupils to Lake Manyara National Park in March, and will accompany pupils to Pangani on the Indian Ocean in August. They live in rented houses in Mshiri village and fully enter into village life. One of the volunteers is visiting a local family home three evenings each week to help with chores so that she can experience the work undertaken by local women and learn how to cook local food. They are all learning Swahili and using it as much as possible.

There is some interest for the teaching programme for 2011 but generally it is getting much harder to recruit volunteers. This is partly because of the fee they have to pay to cover the costs of their placement, but also because the teaching assignment requires a commitment of at least seven months, and many volunteers are opting for shorter assignments run elsewhere by other organisations.

The contribution made by these volunteers is not to be under-estimated. They are trained in the UK before they leave for Tanzania so that they are familiar with the English

syllabus, the books, and basic practices in the local primary schools. They learn how to teach English as a foreign language specifically to Swahili primary school pupils. They not only teach well and teach every period assigned to them, but they bring to their schools energy and enthusiasm which motivates their own pupils and other pupils in the school. Over the years of running this project the confidence of primary pupils has increased and they all try to speak English when they see a white person. The local teachers have also learned some teaching techniques from the volunteers, and particularly that their pupils can learn whilst having fun. The volunteers have assisted the local teachers with English language problems, and with drawing posters for English and other subjects.

MSHIRI VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

The school offers courses of up to three years for young people to learn carpentry, masonry, and tailoring with cloth technology. The carpentry, masonry and tailoring courses lead to examinations under VETA (Vocational Education Training Authority) but the cloth technology of batik/tie & dye has no VETA programme. In the 2009 VETA examinations at Level One carpentry and tailoring had a 100% pass rate, and masonry 57% pass rate. At Level Three, the highest level, one carpentry student had stayed for the third year of study and he passed.

The school was fully inspected as part of the nationwide programme of VETA to assess every training school for different levels of VETA registration. The registration of Mshiri vocational training school will be confirmed soon.

The accommodation building in which it is planned to start boarding at the school is not yet ready for use. Without finding a manager to run the school and its projects we are reluctant to open the school to boarders. At the moment the school is insufficiently staffed to cope with running a boarding side. Additionally, the courses offered by the school are being reconsidered so that the

needs and wants of young students might be better met.

Recruiting staff is a major problem. This is because most young Tanzanians want to be in towns, and older Tanzanians want to be in their home area. We are unable to compete with some of the salaries being offered in towns and cities.

The shop at Marangu Mtoni is thriving with new sources of stock. As well as selling items made at the training school it now stocks leather goods made by disabled people in the nearest town, and hats, pictures and other goods sourced locally. We are lucky to have groups of tourists from an overland travel company who, as part of their itinerary, spend a half day walking round seeing some of the charity's work and they all visit the shop.

ADMINISTRATION AND PLANS

We are delighted to announce the appointment of John Samson as a new trustee. John was appointed in June 2009. He has an accountancy background and works in the financial services sector. John was born and brought up in South Africa, and has visited our projects in Tanzania each year for the last four years.

Most of the charity's work is administered by its director, Katy, with the help of a handful of volunteers in the UK. Fundraising remains a problem with lack of time and expertise to devote to it. However, the charity has many loyal donors who continue to support the work being undertaken in

Tanzania, and with careful budgeting and planning the projects are able to continue and progress. The charity is recognised for its long-term commitment in the government primary education sector, and particularly for helping to tackle the great problem of the quality of teaching and effective learning. There are other problem areas that attract high levels of funding and, hence, attract other organisations to work on those areas whilst the funding lasts, but we are committed to the principle of helping the core problem of quality of education in the primary school classrooms rather than to chasing fashionable areas where funding is available.

The impact or result of our work is hard to measure; whilst there are encouraging improvements in the target schools and shown by teachers who have attended our training sessions, it is influence at district and national level that will best serve Tanzania's education. Our new work on text books, guides and other printed materials for teachers is an important development for the charity, and we are committing many of our resources (money as well as man-hours) to it. This we hope will lead to our being able to exert a greater influence on the training of teachers both pre-service and in-service.

We thank all our donors who continue to support our projects, and who share our view that a good primary school education is the best gift that can be given to a Tanzanian child.



Pupils learn to think about numbers

Our overall aim is to enhance the quality of education, especially for village children, in order for future generations to become confident and responsible citizens

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH
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