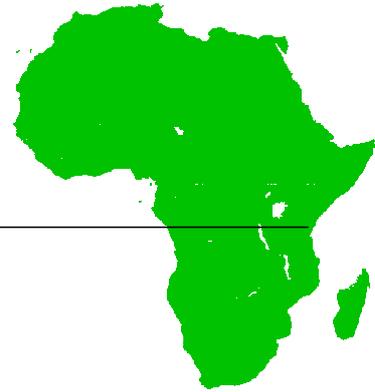


PROJECT'S PROGRESS



VILLAGE EDUCATION PROJECT (Kilimanjaro)

Registered Charity No 1041672

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In association with Education Projects Committee

Tanzanian Co-ordinator: Dilly Mtui

Patron: Dame Judi Dench CH

Trustees: Miss KJ Allen MBE, Ms AG Beldam, Mrs ML Branson, Mr MA Richmond, Mrs S Todd, Mr GO Todd

Address: UK Mint Cottage, Prospect Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UA **Tanzania** PO Box 737, Marangu

Telephone: UK 01732 743000 or 01732 459799 **Tanzania** 0754 312086 or 027 2756555

Email: project@kiliproject.org www.kiliproject.org

SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER – Summer 2007

If you have read our newsletters before you will have a picture of our various projects: many rebuilt primary schools; volunteers helping to teach the primary pupils; a much needed vocational training school and a wonderful computer centre. Now, as indicated in our last newsletter, the focus of our work is on our Whole School Development Programme (WSDP). This programme is looking at the entire primary education environment and working with all actors – education authorities, headteachers, teachers, school committees, parents et al. – to improve their performance and interaction in order to improve the provision of primary education. To understand the conditions in which the WSDP operates it is necessary to realise that Tanzanian government primary schools are quite different from UK ones, having seven standards, or years, taking children from age 7 to 14. Typically, standard I and II have half a day at school, and often share a classroom and a teacher. Their teacher is with them the whole time taking all lessons. From standard III upwards the children sit in one classroom and different subject teachers come in to teach. The headteacher is one of the teaching staff with, often, quite a number of teaching

periods. All teachers are employed and posted by the Ministry of Education through the District Education Office. No jobs are advertised, and teachers can be transferred to fill various vacancies. A headteacher has little control over which teachers come to the school or leave it.

Aware of this background, in August Dr Anne Samson arrived with a team of subject specialists. Anne is a teacher-trainer from London, and her colleagues who volunteered were Parvez Alam a maths specialist; Bina Bardhwaj a science specialist; Sean Byrne an English as a foreign language specialist



Parvez giving guidance for maths teaching

and Safina Alam an experienced nursery school teacher.

They worked in the three primary schools which are the focus of the WSDP. They held sessions in each school with the local teachers who teach their subject and helped with content both within and beyond the syllabus, and with tips on how to teach topics. They joined individual teachers in the classroom to observe, demonstrate and to share teaching. At the end of their assignment they jointly held a one-day seminar for all the teachers in the three schools. This was a great success as each teacher highlighted their needs and progress. The science teachers felt the most need as they struggle without sufficient equipment or the confidence to use it.

Anne was able to assess the plans for the programme and to start to implement the skills-training for the teachers.

Patricia Mulkeen, a lecturer in languages, came in September for two months for a second visit. Patricia continued work in the three schools with the teachers of English, helping with lesson planning and delivery and revised difficult grammar topics with the teachers to build their own understanding and confidence.

In September Ruth Senior took up her post as Co-ordinator of the WSDP. Ruth has seven years' experience as a primary school teacher in the UK, has TEFL qualifications and spent a year in Morogoro working with Tanzanian primary school teachers.

Ruth's main aim is to develop the teachers so that they can change the way they view and interact with children in order to introduce active-learning or child-centred teaching methods. Ruth divides her time between the three schools helping teachers, predominantly with maths and English in the classroom. Once a week in each school Ruth joins with Dilly Mtui, the overall Project Co-ordinator, for a session with that school's teachers. This is the opportunity to develop the teachers' own skills such as creativity, lateral thinking, analysis, planning, problem-solving and adaptation, whilst discussing, for instance, use of teaching/learning aids or syllabus topics, or the importance of

teaching certain concepts used throughout a pupil's school life. Once a month these sessions focus on the administration of the school rather than on classroom teaching and are led by Dilly with his experience as a headteacher for over 25 years.



Ruth assisting teachers Bertha, Shoose and Nosta

The schools closed for the year in early December. The break was useful for Ruth and Anne to meet and to adjust their scheme of work in the light of Ruth's experience. All was set for a good start for the 2007 school year in January. However, two of the three headteachers had been transferred with no replacements announced, and new formats for schemes of work and lesson plans had been introduced. The teachers were flummoxed. The new school year was in shambles with no timetable in place, and very few lessons taught whilst teachers sat preparing schemes of work and lesson plans. In March new headteachers were appointed, and the schemes of work for the Marangu East Ward (14 primary schools) were produced under the guidance of the Ward Education Officer. Ruth continued working throughout but teachers' morale plummeted and very few could concentrate on our programme while grappling with their day to day troubles. The WSDP is now back on track, but we are three months behind our plans.

A recent meeting with all three headteachers and their deputies to clarify the aims of the programme and the needs of the teachers and schools was most helpful and encouraging. All of them see the need for the programme and are grateful to be part of it, but at the same time are afraid of any extra work and are particularly afraid of any

possibility of falling foul of school inspectors.

However, we are in close liaison with the District Education Officer (DEO) and with the inspectors in his district. They all support the WSDP and know the programme is fully in-line with the government of Tanzania policies developed under international conventions and frameworks including the goal of quality education for all by 2015.

The need, therefore, for the inspectors and teachers to work more closely together is crucial. The three headteachers and their deputies, with Dilly and Ruth, are attending a week's training course in mid-May. One of the district school inspectors will also attend. The training will demonstrate the need for team-building by the headteachers for their staff and how to begin the process as well as how to manage any conflict. The course is being held near Arusha at the MS Training Centre for Development Co-operation, and as it is residential it should lead to wider discussions and help to build working relationships between the teachers and inspectorate. The course will give rise to specific plans for the headteachers to implement in their schools which will be followed up by Dilly Mtui, and also to plans for the inspectors to be involved with Dilly's and Ruth's work.

Difficulties remain. Much that happens in the primary schools is beyond the control of the staff there. Policies, curricula, syllabi and books are all imposed on them. From many frank discussions with the DEO, he is aware of the lack of discussion, debate, conference and planning offered by those at central level.

However, our work at grass-roots level over 12 years has given us unique experience, and now it is important to use this to try to influence and help. In January Katy Allen met the British High Commissioner in Dar es Salaam, and that gave rise to a meeting in February attended by Dr Anne Samson, Katy Allen, Dilly Mtui, the British High Commissioner, a representative from the UK Department for International Development and from the EC. The major donors are now

funding the government of Tanzania with 'pooled funding', and keeping watch on the use of the money by appointing lead partners in various fields. The EC is the lead partner for education for 2006/2007. Katy presented to the meeting a report of the charity's experience in the primary education sector and useful views were exchanged.

In March a Response to a government review of its primary education development programme prepared by Dr Anne Samson and Katy Allen was delivered by the charity to the Prime Minister and Minister of Education.

In March Katy Allen and Dilly Mtui attended a conference on Quality Education held in Bagamoyo and organised and hosted by Oxfam and TEN/MET (Tanzania Education Network). The conference, attended by about 70 representatives of non-governmental organisations, universities, schools, union and government officials, was opened by the Minister for Education, Mrs Sitta, and was invaluable for making contacts and promoting the charity's work and experience.

The DEO is to introduce Katy Allen to new officials at Regional level, and from there to gain personal introductions to those at ministerial level. If our work at the grass-roots level is to have recognition and be used as a guide for assisting the improvement of the primary education sector it is essential that we spend time and effort with officials at high levels.

We would like to host a workshop for the seven DEOs in Kilimanjaro region. Our DEO laments that there is no forum for DEOs to express their views, and yet they know what is happening and how central policies affect their schools and teachers. Whilst there is a major programme to decentralise power to local government it is still essential for district officers to be able to give suggestions to those in central office.

Our WSDP is in its early stages and even though there are many constraints operating in the primary education sector, we already see the teachers trying new teaching methods and trying to build a happy rapport with their pupils; we have headteachers who

now see the need to improve the running of their school; we have excellent working relations with the DEO and are building important contacts at higher levels. In what is, inevitably, a long process of change we are pleased with this early, positive response.

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLING

The government announced that all primary schools should have a pre-primary school for pupils from age 5 to 7. Many have enrolled pupils and have appointed one of their teachers to teach them. This has given rise to over-stretched teachers trying to juggle with pre-primary and the first two years of primary.

Safina Alam came with Dr Anne Samson's team in August 2006. She worked with all three pre-primary teachers in the three schools giving them ideas for educational play. Many of her ideas used local items and the environment. The teachers had been used to having their pupils in desks and doing work from the blackboard. It was difficult for them to organise the pupils for work away from the desks, but they enjoyed Safina's methods. Janet and Katie Owen came to continue Safina's work. Katie was a 'gap year' volunteer in 2003 and then worked as a primary school teacher in London. Janet is a recently retired primary school teacher. Katie helped with standard I and II classes also trying to encourage fun learning and the use of learning aids. Janet and Katie enjoyed working with the local teachers but sympathised with their difficulties; having very large classes, very few resources and no budget. However, a foundation was laid and teachers saw the advantages of new methods for teaching young pupils. In time they will build confidence and ability.

In January 2007 Helen Doherty, a recently retired infants teacher, came to help set up the new Guerba Pre-Primary at Mshiri primary school. The building was constructed with funds raised by a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro organised by Guerba World Travel. Mshiri primary school already had a pre-primary class who were taught in a dining hall. Helen's assignment was to help the local teacher, Mama

Matesha, implement new practices in the new building. Once parents heard that Helen was there the little children flooded in. Helen had 51 pupils, and some as young as 3 had been brought in by their siblings.



Helen Doherty with her pre-primary pupils

Helen worked with Mama Matesha, and the pupils lined-up outside every morning before taking off their shoes and going single-file into class. These are practices long forgotten in the primary schools to the detriment of the smooth running of the schools. The pupils then sat on floor mats for registration and a couple of activities before they went to their desks. Here they sat four together sharing crayons and pencils to draw and to learn to read and write. After a short break outside learning to use skipping ropes and to play catch, they used the second classroom for fun learning playing with water, sand, wooden bricks, stuffed toys etc.

Helen worked tirelessly, and her little pupils knew a good smattering of English by the time she left. It is a struggle for Mama Matesha to carry on with all of Helen's practices and activities on her own and so one of the 'gap year' volunteers is lending a hand two days a week to help put out and supervise the play activities.



Helen's pupils enjoying painting for the first time

Already other pre-primary teachers have come to see what is being done. It will take

time for all the ideas to be used but the process has started, and Helen's pupils have had an excellent start to their school life. Safina Alam is returning in August 2007 and will work again with the three schools' pre-primary teachers to reinforce the active-learning through play and discovery.

Before Safina arrives we plan to host a one-week training seminar for existing and potential pre-primary teachers in the Marangu East Ward (14 primary schools). As advised by the DEO, teacher-trainers from a local teacher training college would run a crash course for teachers to gain the main principles of teaching young children, and that will then enable the Ward Education Officer to register the pre-primary schools and to apply for specific pre-primary teachers for each one.

GAP YEAR VOLUNTEERS

In 2006 two of the 'gap year' volunteers taught standard VII, the final year of primary school who take national examinations. Whilst the results are not broken down between subjects, the schools where they taught had record numbers passing and gaining secondary school places. These classes had had a 'gap year' volunteer since starting school in standard I and it is evident that their command of English is greater than other pupils.

In August 38 pupils went to Pangani on the Indian Ocean for the annual school safari. While seeing the sea for the first time, and seeing historic buildings in Pangani town, they also visited a sisal factory and estate and saw the processes from cutting the leaves to bailing ready for export.



James teaching adjectives to standard III

In 2007 there are six 'gap year' volunteers who are between them teaching standards I, III, and V in five schools. They are giving some excellent lessons, and are running

extra reading classes as well as organising inter-school football matches.

In March 51 pupils from standard IV chosen from six schools accompanied them for a weekend to Lake Manyara National Park to see the animals. Again the lions were elusive but the children were intrigued to see elephants and giraffe so near to the windows of their buses. They loved the antics of the baboons and monkeys, and also enjoyed staying in the hostel with bunk-beds over which they jumped most of the night!

SCHOOL RENOVATIONS

This part of our work is no longer a main focus but is always something with which we will be involved.



Kilaremo primary school undergoing renovation

Kilaremo primary school is undergoing a complete renovation. All but one block of classrooms have been re-roofed, with classrooms plastered and floored. An old dining hall has been demolished and rebuilt to provide two classrooms and an office. There is still much to be done but already the school's appearance is transformed.

The renovation of Kochakindo primary school continues. This was started in 2002 and has taken time as it is so remote. In the rainy season it is cut-off to vehicles. The school now urgently awaits the new lavatory block being built as the existing one has been condemned by health officers.

At Mshiri primary school the staffroom has been extended. It is now double its previous size, and is much brighter. This school is part of the Whole School Development Programme, and when they had a cramped, dark room the teachers could hardly be blamed for lack of organisation and care of resources.

GUERBA COMPUTER CENTRE

This Centre has built up a very good reputation which is largely due to Tony Mollel and Gladness Nkya who run it with efficiency and courtesy, and have many regular customers using the photocopying and internet services. Tony has a steady flow of students for his computer courses. It was a major blow at the beginning of April when thieves stole all the equipment from the outside dish, thus depriving the centre of any internet connection. The equipment is being replaced but it is doubtful that insurance will cover the whole cost.

MSHIRI VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

Whilst the charity's projects mainly operate in government primary schools, in 1998 the charity built the training school to help village youth gain vocational skills. The school continues to be run by the charity but it is registered under the Vocational Education Training Authority (VETA).

In October 2006 Herman Mlay was appointed as manager of the training school. The school is expanding, and now not only runs courses but has the carpentry workshop which is run as a separate business and needs supervising and monitoring. The new accommodation building is progressing, and in advance of it opening management plans need to be in place as well as staff engaged.

The masonry students have built Herman a new office next to the Principal's office, and the carpentry students assisted with the roof frame and will be making the office furniture.



Herman's new, unpainted, office on the far left

The examination results for the national VETA examinations at the end of 2006 were the best the school has ever had with 95% passing both theory and practical in masonry, carpentry and tailoring.

A small group of girls who have completed the craft-tailoring course have formed a workgroup at the school and produce goods for the school's shop. The shop, Village Crafts, is at Marangu Mtoni and attracts passing tourists particularly with its café. A new shop has been built as the existing one is under threat from a road-widening scheme. In January 2007 Ebony Andrews, a fine art graduate, came to assist with the planning of the shop interior. Ebony designed shelving and a display stand for greeting cards, as well as signs to advertise the shop's new location. Ebony also helped the workgroup with designs for new cards. The new shop needs verandas built at the front and back for café tables, but cannot open until electricity is connected. This is at the whim of the national electricity supply company and, unfortunately, could take many more months.



Ebony and the new display stands for greeting cards

The accommodation building for future boarding students was given a boost by a visit from another group from Quest Overseas. The group came in January for five weeks and plastered the whole of the inside of the first floor, laid concrete floors in all rooms on that floor, and then painted all the walls and ceilings. They also paid for the electricity pipes and conduits to be installed. The building has since been built to second floor level and roofed. Using just the ground and first floors it may open to students in 2008. As the school has many applications from students living far away it needs boarding accommodation as soon as possible. Also the computer centre can run residential courses when the accommodation is available.

The carpentry workshop is flourishing. This is now run by Gilbert who takes a

percentage of the profit, and the balance is income for the running of the school. The national electricity crisis from September to December last year was a problem with electricity only one or two days a week, but since then Gilbert has been inundated with wood to be planed for customers – sometimes receiving 300 planks at a time. He has also had many orders for doors and frames, office and school furniture and household furniture.



Gilbert (l) in the carpentry workshop

THE ROAD AHEAD

With our Whole School Development Programme we are privileged to have a unique role to play as we can provide a model of what time and persistence can effect in training and organisation. We must continue that role, but there are expenses in engaging expert help; the increased provision of training; being in constant communication with the UK and with the Tanzanian education authorities. This is important as it is the only way to help to achieve changes and improvements. The time needed is longer than other

organisations have envisaged in the past, since if support is withdrawn too early very little of any apparent change is fully adopted. We are confident of bringing about change as we are a constant presence in the schools, fully aware of all that is going on.

Our work with the primary school pupils learning English from native-speaking volunteers, and the work in our computer centre and at our vocational training school will continue. Work on the new accommodation building at the training school will progress, possibly ready for its use in 2008. The renovations of Kilaremo and Kochakindo primary schools should be completed soon.

It is gratifying to reflect on what has been achieved. Over 180 teachers and 6,000 pupils benefiting from renovated school buildings; over 1,000 pupils taught English by native speakers; over 200 young people given skills for earning a living at our vocational training school; countless people accessing the internet at our computer centre. Overall our work has provided improvements for over 70,000 villagers. All of this has earned us the confidence of the government and education officials, and was made possible solely by the generosity of our supporters.

We thank all of you who have helped us to carry out so many of our aims and look forward to your further support in our challenging future on a wider scale.



Building a good foundation from the early years

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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 VILLAGE EDUCATION PROJECT (KILIMANJARO)**

Address: Mint Cottage, Prospect Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UA or PO Box 737, Marangu, Tanzania

Telephone: UK 01732 743000 or 01732 459799 Tz 0754 312086

www.kiliproject.org