

Registered Charity No 1041672  
In association with Village Education Project Tanzania Limited

Patron: Dame Judi Dench CH



Education is life – Elimu ni uhai

# PROJECT'S PROGRESS

*21<sup>st</sup> Edition*



**SUMMER 2015**  
**SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER**

In the year we have expanded and also consolidated our work. Our main focus continues to be improving the teaching of mathematics and English as a foreign language in the government primary schools. The other strand of our work lies in vocational training. Our teacher-training work is expanding and our vocational training work has been consolidated.

All of our work relies on our staff and to a very great extent on volunteers. At the helm in both England and Tanzania is the director, Katy Allen, but the projects in Tanzania could not function without the Tanzanian coordinator, Dilly Mtui. Beyond those two all of the work is carried out by volunteers. Dr Anne Samson continues to oversee the Whole School Development Programme and in the year made two visits to monitor and evaluate the programme's work. Barbara Kerr is the stalwart and invaluable permanent, full-time presence in Tanzania. She provides the continuity and momentum that the programme needs. Barbara runs the mathematics component of the programme, and also analyses all the examination data with which she is entrusted by the district education officials. Jane Firth is an expert in early-childhood development and education. Jane continues to help with teacher-training in the use of the mathematics books for Pre-Primary, Standard I and Standard II pupils which she wrote specifically for us based on her many years of experience with us. Two new volunteers joined us at the beginning of 2015. Madeleine Eriksson is a primary school teacher from Sweden. Madeleine assists Barbara with in-service training of the mathematics teachers and particularly observes and supports the teachers who are using Jane's books. Penny Harris is recently retired from a whole career in teaching in primary schools in England. Penny visited for two months early in the year. Penny assisted Katy and Dilly with the training of teachers in the use of the English books, and went regularly to the schools to observe the teachers' classes and to give support where needed.

## Whole School Development Programme

### Expansion To Work In Babati

In January we ventured to Babati which is about a six hour drive from our base in Marangu. We were to embark on life in a hotel whilst running seminars from Monday to Friday for two weeks. On the first Sunday we drove into the countryside to see the venue for the seminars and to set-up as far as we could. We were there at the invitation of an Australian organisation called So They Can to help with their education work. They wanted us to run a pilot project in the four government primary schools in which they are working, to assist the teaching of mathematics and English.

The first morning of the seminars was a little chaotic. Teachers arrived late, and with only four teachers for each subject we occupied just a corner of each seminar room. For the English seminars Katy Allen, Dilly Mtui and Penny Harris nearly matched the number of participants. For the mathematics Barbara Kerr, Jane Firth and Madeleine Eriksson were outnumbered as eight teachers from both Standard I and Standard II teachers were being taught together.

The seminars were timetabled so that for mathematics the Pre-Primary teachers would attend on one day and the next day would be the turn of Standard I and Standard II teachers. For the English seminars St I teachers came on one day and Standard III teachers came on the alternate days. The mathematics teachers each received five days of training. The English teachers of Standard I received five days of training but the Standard III teachers received only four days of training because of a mix-up over dates.

The mathematics seminars generated discussions that we have not known before. The teachers were keen to have a chance to vent their annoyance about the government textbooks they have to use which have so many mistakes in them. Guided by Barbara and Jane the teachers could see why their teaching was failing; this is because the methods in those textbooks lead to mistakes. A few examples are: not writing 0 as a placeholder and hence the pupils lose their understanding of place-value (units, tens, hundreds etc); not writing the number to be carried-over when doing a sum such as  $28 + 5$  so that the initial addition total of 13 is only recorded as 3 and the 10 is to be remembered and not noted anywhere; the presentation of subtraction sums as if they are additions,

$$\begin{array}{cccccc} \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} \\ \hline & & & & & \\ \hline & & & & & \end{array} - \begin{array}{cc} \text{Apple} & \text{Apple} \\ \hline & \\ \hline \end{array} = ? \quad (6 - 2 = 4)$$

but what the young pupils see on the page is eight apples, and so their understanding is compromised. The teachers relished finding new ways to teach, and all the time using real items so that their pupils see the mathematics in action, and hence understand it.

The results from the seminars were beyond our expectations. In the pre-primary group was Mr Mwiru who had retired but has returned to teach the little children. Every day he has 117 five and six year olds in his class. When he first attended the seminars he adopted a very dull approach of writing sums on the board, and chanting numbers. We returned in early March to visit the teachers in their schools. Mwiru's pupils were all outside split into groups. Some were counting with sticks, some were putting items in containers to match the number written, and others were with him matching domino numbers in order to reinforce the recognition of numbers. The scene was one of fun and total absorption in the tasks. He was using the materials from the seminars, and was

following the book with its attention to activities with 'concrete' items. The seminars inspired him, and to keep 117 pupils happily occupied and learning is a challenge for anyone.

Four lively teachers attended the English seminars for teaching English as a foreign language to Standard III. This is the first year of teaching from the NOEC (New Original English Course). The teachers were Catherine, Mkindi, Mao and Dalei. Since the seminars Dalei has been made a head teacher in another school and so no longer teaches English which is a great shame. He was very good in the seminars and gave a lot of help to Mao who was struggling.

The books for Standard III introduce pupils to the sentence patterns and structures of English. The teachers are guided very thoroughly as the explanations and instructions in the teachers' guides are in Swahili. Mao was not confident in his knowledge of English, and because of that taught in quite a fierce manner so that his own inadequacies were not shown up. During the seminars Dalei helped him in the preparations for his mini-teaching practices. He easily became confused and had difficulty following the books. We really thought that he would not return in the second week. Mao did return, and he was encouraged and helped. Suddenly Mao understood that he could trust the book and all he needed to do was to follow it. He was transformed – success built upon success and his teaching practices became confident with pace and flow, his English pronunciation improved as did his use of the sentence patterns. On our visit to his school in March we observed his English lesson to his 82 Standard III pupils. He had arranged the desks as we had advised, in a U-shape with two tiers. He knew most of the names of his pupils. He still adopted a somewhat machine-gun delivery and used rather too much choral repetition, but when pupils came to the front to perform actions with



Pennt and Madeleine



Mr Mwiru with some of his pupils



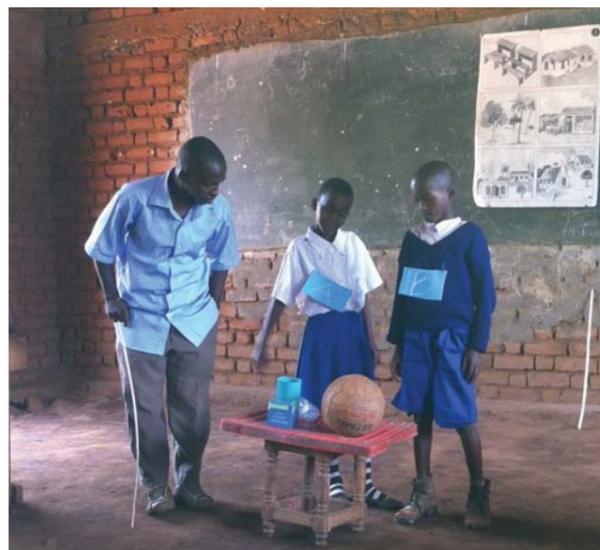
Mr Mwiru with another group of his pupils



Mao (left) during a teaching practice

words it was evident that they understood and knew what they were doing and saying. Mao was so pleased to be able to show us that his pupils were really learning, and we were astounded by his own improvement. Mao still has a long way to go but he is now an inspired teacher with a new mission. This confirms to us that the NOEC books work; teachers with hardly any knowledge of English, of whom there are many in Tanzania, can give good, sound and fun lessons.

Another joy on our visit to the schools in March was to see Mkindi's lesson. He came into his Standard III classroom followed by three pupils. One carried a stool and placed it in the middle of the classroom floor. With the U-shape layout there is a space in the middle where all pupils can see props and demonstrations. The next pupil who was carrying a red plastic tray placed that on top of the stool. The third pupil placed various items on the tray. Mkindi looked to where we were sitting at the back of the class and explained, "We don't have a table, and so this is our table." His lesson included calling pairs of pupils to the front to ask each other questions about a poster on the wall. For example, one would touch the picture of the church and ask with correct stress, "Is this a *church*?" to which the other would point and answer, "Yes, that is a church." Then the first would touch a mosque and ask with correct stress, "Is *this* a church?" to which the other would answer, "No, that is a mosque." This was excellent and showed that his pupils thoroughly understood what they were doing. Hands were up to be the next to be called to the front. Suddenly the bell went for the end of that period. The pupils continued with their hands up saying, "Me, me – please me!" Mkindi said there was no more time and the lesson was over. There was a groan from



Mkindi guides two pupils

the pupils. This is unheard of. Most pupils across Tanzanian primary schools dislike learning English, and the second the bell rings they close their books and completely switch off.

There were only three Standard I teachers on the English seminars as one of the four schools has so few teachers that they took a decision not to teach English in Standard I. Teddy, Christina and Neema attended. The Jiandae language awareness course is something entirely new for Tanzania. The book is the teacher's guide, and there are accompanying coloured posters. There is no pupil's book. The teacher's guide is entirely in Swahili as the course is given in Swahili. Its English content is the learning of words which have been adopted into the Swahili language, and this enables the pupils to consider the different stress and pronunciation of the words, for instance, '*bicycle*' and '*baisikeli*', '*station*' and '*stesheni*' etc. The Swahili content of the course gives the pupils the opportunity to learn more about their own country and about the countries where native English speakers live. The course aims to develop the pupils' thinking skills as this is something that is missing from all the primary school syllabuses. In order to do this the teachers are guided to use the 'think, pair, share' teaching method so that silent thought is encouraged and then sharing thoughts with a friend and finally with two more pupils. This should ensure that each pupil is involved.

Neema is a natural teacher. She is also a very attractive young woman, full of personality and with her fair share of cheek. On the course Neema took to the Jiandae book immediately. She understood the aims of each lesson and showed the other teachers that by



Pupils practise using a wall chart



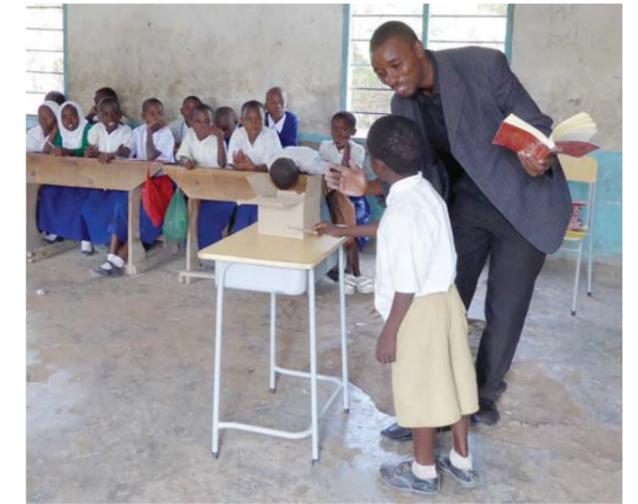
Neema

following the book the lesson would be fun and instructive. On our visit in March Neema's lesson to her 57 seven year olds was a delight to observe. Every word in the teacher's guide was followed and all the pupils were engaged fully. At one point when they started to get over-excited Neema folded her arms in front of her, and the pupils followed suit knowing this was the classroom code to sit quietly. At the end of the lesson the feedback to Neema was wholly positive. She turned to Katy and coquettishly said, "I told you I wouldn't let you down!"

The pilot project in the four rural schools in Babati district is proving to be very successful indeed. In March we met District Officials who were themselves very enthusiastic about the project. We have forged a link with the local teacher-training college, Mamire, and hope to start to help tutors there with new methods of teaching mathematics and English.

### Pilot Project In Lower Moshi

In Lower Moshi the pilot project continues with very encouraging results. Madeleine observed one of the best mathematics lessons she has ever seen. This was a lesson to 90 pre-primary pupils in one classroom laid out with a double row of desks in a U-shape. The lesson given by Shangwe followed the charity's mathematics book and was introducing the number 6 and revising all numbers up to 5, using number cards along with cards with different numbers of items drawn on them. The teacher used many different pupils at the front of the class but at the same time the other pupils had to show the correct number of fingers so that they were all engaged. Shangwe made the lesson fun by pretending not to know things himself, and also by



Edward with his class

hiding cards. At one point the pupils were nearly beside themselves with laughter. This is how mathematics should be; fun, visual and active.

Teaching English to Standard III at Mikocheni primary school, Edward described using the NOEC books to teach his 92 pupils, "We are having a party and beating drums in comparison to other English classes, and not only that but my pupils already know more English than those in Standard V."

In Standard I at another school Rose gave an excellent lesson with her pupils. The topic was *food and parties* and it required a lot of use of the think-pair-share technique for the pupils to be able to remember what they might have seen and heard, and to talk about it. The answers after the 'sharing' stage demonstrated that the pupils were actively processing information, and this is the beginning of the development of their thinking skills. Rose elicited from her pupils all the different events that are celebrated by parties. It was a very lively lesson and when the pupils had to talk about party clothes they became very excited. At one point Katy and Penny who were observing the lesson became so involved that they nearly shouted out the answer to a question.

Running successful pilot projects is our first step in order to gather evidence and feedback to promote the books. We have tried to see senior government officials in an attempt to discuss more widespread use of the books but regrettably no appointment has been available. Tanzania is due to hold a general election in October 2015 and so nearly everyone in government is preoccupied. After the election will be a good time to gauge the commitment to improving primary education.

## Mathematics In Depth

Barbara continues her in-service sessions with teachers of mathematics in each school. This year we have four new primary schools which have joined the pilot project in Lower Moshi. A couple of examples of sessions with all teachers of mathematics at one of those four new primary schools will show the low standard to which education has stooped as a result of poor textbooks which themselves follow a poor syllabus, and as a result of the lack of any national programme of professional development for teachers. The topic of Barbara's lunchtime session was subtraction without and with carrying. Madeleine was demonstrating the 'concrete' method using straws on the floor with 'units, tens and hundreds' columns while Barbara was writing the full notation on the blackboard. The teacher who teaches Standard IV pupils stepped in and said that it was all wrong. She showed her way, and instead of borrowing 10 she borrowed 1. This meant that after borrowing from the 10s column instead of remaining with 30 she said it should have been 39. She quite obviously has no understanding of 'place value' and yet has been teaching for years. The very following week she did the same with addition, and ended up with the following,

$$\begin{array}{r} 300 + 40 + 5 \\ + 200 + 30 + 7 \\ \hline 500 + 71 + 2 \\ \hline 1 \end{array}$$

at which stage she started to realise that she had been mistaken.

Another topic for a lunchtime session was using 0 as a 'place-holder'. The syllabus and textbooks state the using 0 as a place-holder is not necessary in long multiplication. This results in numbers not being properly represented. The example given by Barbara which finally persuaded the teachers that 0 is necessary to put in, was when writing down money. Suddenly they could see that the 0 needed to be in the number. They saw that 20, 650/- was very different from 2,650/-. At last the value of the 0 was fully understood.

All the teachers enjoy these sessions, and none has thought the level of the discussions too simple. They all say they are learning more with Barbara than they ever learned at teacher-training college, and they are now beginning to understand that the prescribed textbooks are probably the biggest problem in the teaching of mathematics.



*The new motor mechanics site*



## University Link

In February 2015 Barbara, Katy and Dilly went to the Aga Khan University in Dar es Salaam to give a presentation to the Aga Khan University Institute for Education Development as part of their Research Seminar Series. The time allotted was ninety minutes including questions. Questions were still coming thick and fast after two hours, and our host Dr Joyce Ndalichako said that we should have had a whole day seminar. We were there to tell of our work with primary school teachers in the teaching of mathematics and English and the use of our books. The books are the culmination of years of our 'action research', and of our experience in child development and teaching methods. The audience comprised some of the university's lecturers and their post-graduate students from all over Africa. What transpired clearly from the questions was that many other countries face the same problems which we have encountered in Tanzania's primary education system. It was an inspiring afternoon and we were invited to continue to share our work and findings. We hope that such a liaison might help to influence positive changes to primary syllabuses.

## Vocational Training

The vocational training school in the Masia part of Mshiri village has at last been handed over to the District Executive Director for Moshi Rural District to be run under his direction. It is now being run by a training school called Geno who have expanded their existing operations in Mwanga to bring their students to Mshiri village. Village Education Project Kilimanjaro supported the running of the Mshiri vocational training school for many years and it was always hoped that it would eventually be able to run without further donor support. VETA (Vocational Education Training Authority) put us in touch with Geno which is now running the training centre. This has enabled us to consolidate our work in this field.

Our new training centre down on the plains is in its final stages. Its completion is embarrassingly late, but we are subject to the weather and other constraints. The weather was unusually dry and hot for month after month. This delayed the laying of the final slab on the building which will form the classrooms as the slab cannot be laid without sufficient water being on-hand. The rains started in late March and so after the Easter break the work started. The centre is being built mainly for use as a motor-mechanics workshop and training school, but also with space for welding, electrics, paint-spraying etc. We have met people from motor dealerships in Dar es Salaam who, in order to improve their sales, need to address their after-sales servicing of vehicles. We are hoping that one of these will take on the motor-mechanics training, and that other people will run other training courses at the site.

## Fundraising

The UK accounts for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 show an income for the year of £141,107.28, which is a about £24,000 less than the income of the previous year. In the 2013/2014 year £90,000.00 was transferred to bank accounts in Tanzania for the projects there, and over £21,000.00 was spent in the UK on those projects, such as sending equipment for the motor-mechanics training centre, printing books and other materials for the Whole School Development Programme, and air-fares for volunteers. Over all the 21 years of our existence the administrative costs have averaged 3.2% of income.

We try to boost our income by organising fundraising events. The main one of these is the KiliClimb, climb of Mount Kilimanjaro, which John Douglas organises in conjunction with Action Challenge. John is organising two events; a cycle ride round Mount Kilimanjaro in October 2015 and a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro in February 2016.

Other people and organisations arrange their own fundraising events on the charity's behalf and this brings in much needed and hugely appreciated help. Many of our donors give to the charity again and again, and it is heartening that they continue to support our work.

The charity cannot survive without its fundraisers and donors, and we hope that our steady progress over the years which is now really getting to the heart of improving primary education continues to give value for money.

# Looking Ahead

We have been invited to become part of a project being run by the Tanzania Teachers' Union which is now recognising the value of in-service teacher training.

In late August 2015 we will be running some sessions for primary school teachers at the annual Mathematics Association of Tanzania conference which this year is being held in Moshi.

Katy Allen and Dilly Mtui will be making a second visit, and probably more after that, to Kigali in Rwanda with a view to extending the Whole School Development Programme. The in-service training for teaching English as a foreign language is particularly pertinent as their second language of French has recently been replaced by English. On their initial visit in March 2015 Katy and Dilly were able to meet officials in the Ministry of Education and at the Rwanda Education Board with the help of a Rwandan government official who has long been aware of the work of the charity. He is committed to helping the charity if it decides to work in Rwanda. This is potentially a very exciting development and one that could be prudent in the light of changes on the horizon in Tanzania which could make obtaining permits for foreigners very difficult.



The Charity Commission has agreed that Village Education Project Kilimanjaro can extend its work into Rwanda and that, to reflect this, the charity adopts the new name of Education East Africa.

## Thank You To All Who Help

It is hard for our donors and volunteers to know just how much every contribution and donation is valued by us. It is also probably hard for our donors to know how much the trustees, and especially Katy Allen who is mostly 'in the field', agonise over using donated money effectively.

However, we do satisfy ourselves that the money is well used and represents good value. Other organisations highlight the problems in primary education but research into solving those problems is lacking. Our work with the primary school teachers is unique as no other organisation is working in the schools on such a committed basis and bringing about noticeable change in the teaching and learning.

None of our work could be done without donated funds, and we remain constantly grateful for every penny and pound which comes to us. Please continue your support and help us to carry on our valuable work.



*Teachers during a maths seminar*



*Pupils learning how to count*



*Teachers during an English seminar*

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.

***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***