

Visit to Kenya by EducAid Africa 2017

Two extra suitcases worth of gifts from our supporters to take out to sponsored pupils, nurseries and a primary school. Thank you all!! ...Just sorting them out.



Here is Jenni with our new sponsored pupil at **Ribe Boys' School**. The year starts in January so he had only been in school a few weeks. He was just back from half term break at home where his Mum was not well, so inevitably a little shy to chat to us. Being the only one didn't make it easy for him. He was pleased to receive a gift and letter from his sponsors. A National School, Ribe Boys has brought its fees back down to an acceptable level so we are happy to be able to support pupils there again. Our two boys who left recently had good exam results.



Ribe Girls' School. We meet our sponsored pupils and they choose something from our lucky dip toiletries as well as a pack of stationery items.



Tuesday and our first visit to Mazeras High School where we now have 5 sponsored boys. These are essentially young men. Three of them are in their last year. They were delightful and determined to work hard, but, like all schools, this one is always short of materials and facilities. Their day starts at 4 am and ends at 9pm, lights out at 10pm! They make do with what they have. The teacher in charge of sponsored students, Cornelius, showed us round behind the scenes. He was the sports teacher and about to take a group away to some regional competitions in the school bus, but very enthusiastic to give us his time and tell us about the school. We are about to buy revision books to help our sponsored students with self study.





There has been no significant rain since April last year and this is officially a drought, a national disaster. Water is an issue as always but so far it is the animals that are struggling most. This is one of our regular routes to the Kaloleni area and the giant 'molehills' of earth take up half the road for many miles as there is a plan to improve the surface. It needs doing soon before the hoped for long rains come and wash it all away. The Met office here is advising farmers to plant fast maturing strains of seed so they will get a harvest. Traditionally farmers save their own seed from one year to the next ...

Everywhere is much drier and dustier than we have seen it before including 2011 when there was also a drought. This is a poor area with many subsistence farmers.



At Mazeras we called at the oldest standing Methodist chapel in Kenya, dated 1893. Mazeras school was founded by the Methodist church and has about 550 pupils now.



On Tuesday we had also visited the Ushindi dressmaking school in Kaloleni where we donate funds to allow a few young women to learn to make patterns and sew the clothes using treadle sewing machines. Once they pass the basic exam they have the opportunity of working in a factory in Mombasa or setting up on their own with a machine.



Tuesday afternoon saw us at St John's School Kaloleni where we sponsor just 3 pupils. Agnes and Judith are in Form 4 and Beatrice (centre) in Form 1. All three are members of Christian Union and like singing. They did sing for us rather shyly. We had an interesting meeting with the Deputy Head who had news of a past pupil we sponsored who is now a successful teacher. We hope to meet up with her and other former students in Mombasa on Saturday



Wednesday was a sort of day of rest, but today, Thursday, we ventured out to St George's school where 17 boys are sponsored through EducAid Africa. We took the main Nairobi road, turning off at Mazeras to Kaloleni. This way is almost all tarmac though not without its bumps and potholes and crazy traffic. Only the last stretch is earth road.

We met the headmaster again, regaled in bright yellow robes for a big regional sports event they are hosting for various schools in the area.

All the boys arrived to meet us together though 3 were missing. Unfortunately one has permanently decided to leave the school rather than repeat a year. The other two included my own sponsored pupil who had been sent home to fetch a book, fortunately he arrived back before we left so I was able to meet him.

The other, a Form 1 was late returning from half term because his father a mason had fallen from a building and punctured a lung. So sadly we didn't get to meet Mark.

It was good to learn a bit more about the school, which has added some new buildings since we were last here.

Water is an issue as their reservoir is dry but the water tank is filled by lorry as needed.





This young man we had heard about earlier in the week. The Headteacher at Mazeras has explained that there was a young man in school who had great potential but his parents were unable to pay the fees. One of the teachers had paid the first term because they recognised he was a good student, but so far there were no other options to keep him at school.



After visiting St. George's where we heard one of our students had dropped off the radar (a rare thing) we asked to call back at Mazeras and find out more about this young man. He is called Safari and he was delighted when we promised we would secure a sponsor for him.

He will also be given the starter pack of equipment : uniform, mattress, mosquito net, calculator, bucket and bowl.

Thanks to email we have been able to confirm a sponsor among our supporters in the U.K.

Today, Friday, was our last day for the drive out from Mombasa inland to the Kaloleni area. This time we were scheduled to visit Mbungoni nursery school and Malau nursery and Primary school.

The children at Mbungoni were delightful, and greeted us with songs. We took a few gifts and 100 hand knitted

puppets which they loved, but after the visit we have also promised to provide them with further items of equipment with some other funds available from a nursery we are no longer needing to support. On our last visit 4 years ago this nursery was meeting in the Methodist church. They are now more established with a classroom purpose-built by the church.



These children aged 3 to 6 begin to learn some English through songs, rhymes and games.



The 100 knitted hand puppets we distributed to the children thanks to a kind benefactor in the UK



Inside the M'bungoni Classroom

We then visited Malau School. On our first visit in 2004 this was a small nursery school crammed into 3 tiny classrooms. It is now a nursery and primary school with 8 classrooms plus the nursery and 2 toilet blocks. Largely built by parents over the years, we have helped with a roof, a toilet block, electricity, fencing and a gate

and many books and desks. This time we were to present some computers and tablets funded by Stratford Rotary Club and a contribution from Langley Primary. We also presented some books funded by Streetsbrook School. Other gifts included a large number of pencils and crayons given to us to bring by our supporters, soft toys from Tiger in Solihull, puppets and some more of the knitted puppets.



Some of the older Primary pupils perform a dance for us with singing in Swahili about the power of education, the help given through faith in Christ ... the young man in the front is drumming.



This has been our transport for the week with some interesting sights along the way. Hot and dusty but not to be missed. Tomorrow we meet some further education students and past students in Mombasa.



The arrangements to meet our further education students and past students were a little more convoluted than usual on Saturday as Wesley Centre was not available. Jonah's church was, but to get to it or give directions were really difficult. In addition, roads on the way across Mombasa were impassable because of some rally so we had an interesting route in our taxi. Fortunately this one had air con. .. what a difference! All was well and the space in the recently constructed but not yet finished church was great for our purpose.

Those who turned up included our old friend Felix who is featured on our leaflet and is now involved in aspects of the work here. He is a great advocate for what we do as well as a mentor and guide to the other students.

We are trying to create a feeling of family among those who we have helped and encourage them to keep in touch. We are finding that after qualifying, those from poorer less influential backgrounds can feel very alone seeking work and hope that they can support one another offering help and advice at these critical times.

Beatrice came along with her new husband Anthony, a teacher. She was superb too when we drew her across to talk to a girl who left school last year with a C+ and wants to train as a nurse. Beatrice was able to offer a lot of practical advice on how to apply and lots of wisdom and encouragement too.

Robert Mvoyi is sponsored by Solihull Methodist church and is the one who asked for a camera if we had one. He was roped in to help Martin take photos of everyone and was soon at home with Martin's camera - totally in his element. We were able to offer him one of the two cameras we had been donated , not quite the high spec he had just been using, but he was clearly delighted and took some photos on it immediately. The other camera we gave to Beatrice and Anthony.





Felix – an inspiration to us all and educated by our organisation



Past and present students gathered for a picture with our intrepid trustees.

Sunday 12 March and for several reasons we chose not to attend church at Wesley this trip. Not least that we needed to have a morning when we are not dashing out into the heat. We are not as young as we were!

So we had a more gentle start to the day and then went to wait for Stephen or Jonah to come and escort us to Stephen's home. We had been invited for lunch and then to hold our closing meeting there in the afternoon.

It was great to see their house which we had seen some years ago under construction. By going there we were able to meet Janet, Stephen's wife, who used to always accompany us on our schools visits. Sadly she is not well and has a carer living in to help the situation.

We were able to see his garden where they cultivate an area and keep about 200 hens. This is a retirement project to bring in some small income and something Janet can take an interest in. They even have an incubator in the living room! It only contained eggs so we were too early to see any new chicks!

After a lovely lunch prepared by Agnes we were able to have a debrief of our week of visits, firm up any actions and have good frank discussions about the way forward. It is always a learning curve for us as the culture is so different from that in the U.K. We are just thinking we are beginning to understand how things work here, then we learn something new.

There is a huge disparity between the haves and the have nots here and life is not fair. We are just trying to open the door to a better future for a few young people who deserve to hope for a better future. What they make of that opportunity is up to them.

We have concluded that it is certainly worth keeping EducAid Africa going as we are starting to see more of the ripple effect it can have. Some of our successful sponsored students, once in the world of work, are sponsoring and helping others in their wider family. As an EducAid Africa family we hope that, as a group, they will be involved in continuing the work here. Now we have to ensure succession planning at the UK end of the organisation and find some younger trustees to join us.

Before we said our farewells, Stephen surprised us with a gift of 8 mugs with a photo of Patrick Langmead, our founder, and the Kenyan and English flag. Stephen shared with us some of the early history of Patrick's visits and how it all started.

A lovely day to conclude our busy week and, we feel, a successful visit. Thank you to our hosts Stephen and Jonah for caring and guiding us and for all they do here to make it happen.

