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7th August 2009

“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRICLE”



Former Mara Rianda Primary School pupils now at Sosio Secondary School

Thank You

for your support and continued interest in the
Maasai community at Mara Rianda.

As I prepare to return to the Mara in September I reflect on what has happened since our last visit. But first a very grateful thank you for your continued interest and support. Whilst I hesitate to send yet another newsletter I am overwhelmed with the requests for news and information that I receive.



The new block of five classrooms are now being fully utilised with the minor teething problems now being rectified. You will recall that there were problems with the putty in the windows being picked at by the children, also the children were climbing in and out of windows while the putty was still wet causing the panes to loosen.



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The school is in great need of a kitchen. At present meals for 500 plus children are being prepared in a very small corrugated iron building not much larger than a shed. This is incredibly smoky due to the wood used for fuel. However the children are very grateful for the food provided and there are never any complaints. In March I met a UK family at the camp and they very generously offered to pay for the building of a new kitchen. Absolutely amazing, the prayers of the school answered. There will be further costs to complete this project in purchasing cooking equipment and tables etc. which I am sure we will be able to meet.

Unfortunately we are having some difficulties with the water pump at the school which has now been repaired and replaced twice. We are uncertain if this is being caused by the lack of water and we are having it investigated. There is very limited water at present and this is necessitating some rationing. We are very sad about this and uncertain of what the outcome will be.



Since January we have had a new Headmaster at Mara Rianda. I was delighted to meet him in March and he expressed sincere gratitude to the Trust for providing the water, new classroom block, new latrines, school books and equipment etc. I was then overwhelmed by his many further requests for assistance. I am encouraging the school and local community not to become dependent on us and to look to their own resources. Selling cattle to buy much needed resources is still a new concept for the Maasai. They know we will endeavour to do our best to provide where we can and with your most generous help we have provided well. As far as we can see this has not been the case with local government or the education department.

On a good note we are delighted to say that the work we commissioned to complete the provision of fresh water to Aitong Primary School is very near completion. Aitong is about a one hour drive from Mara Rianda School. Hopefully children drinking from the pond will soon be in the past. We need to raise about £8,600 to meet the outstanding cost.



In March some of the female teachers asked to speak to my wife Pola privately. They were concerned that the older girls were missing too much school. They asked if we would be able to assist with sanitary towels. We often wondered why the older girls consistently received far lower marks than the boys. Every month they miss one week of school. We happened to be travelling the next day into Narok, the nearest town some three hours away. We were able to buy about three months supply for the most needy girls, about 50 in total. There are over 100 girls in Year 5 and above. We sincerely hope to fulfil this ongoing need.

Through the generous support of sponsors in Cyprus we have been able to assist a young man, Tumpes aged 25, who has suffered from epilepsy since he was a very young child. He was initially misdiagnosed due to inadequate medical attention and treated for malaria. Because of his frequent seizures he was unable to attend school and now tends the family livestock. His desperate mother spoke privately to Pola about her concern for Tumpes. He was experiencing frequent seizures often when out alone in the Mara. We have been able to arrange for him to be assessed in Nairobi and receive the medication he needs. This will be an ongoing need and the family are very grateful.



We seem to become more and more involved in the local community with every trip. It is always very exciting for us but can also be exhausting. We are often overwhelmed by the needs and then amazed at the generosity from supporters that enables these needs to be met.

I recently received further disappointing news that Thomas, the Headmaster at Sosio Secondary School, has been transferred apparently for political reasons. I had a very good working relationship with Thomas, and valued and trusted him very much. He took good care of our 23 sponsored children. There is a new headmaster in place. I have been reassured by our local contacts of his integrity and I look forward to meeting him in September.

We are in the position to provide further bursaries for pupils to attend secondary school from January 2010. Last year we were able to provide 11 bursaries. If you are a UK tax payer a bursary can be funded by monthly standing order of £26 for three years. With Gift Aid your donations will effectively be the full amount required to fund one child for four years of education. If you are interested in assisting a child in this way please let me know and return the attached standing order and Gift Aid form. I am pleased to report that the Charity has become eligible to receive grants from CAFAmerica, this allows our US sponsors to make tax efficient gifts.



Support is always welcome and greatly appreciated. There is always a need for new books, sports equipment and general school supplies. Should you be able to give any further support to the school would you please make any cheque payable to The Mara Rianda Charitable Trust.

As usual I do apologise if you feel this letter is an intrusion and should you not wish to receive any further letters then please do let me know.



Finally may I thank you for your support and continued interest in the Maasai community at Mara Rianda. It is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Richard Long.

Richard Long
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