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“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRACLE”



Thank You

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

Wow! Where do I begin? We have had a really exciting few months. This has been made possible by the love and support we receive from people like you, and also the personal encouragement many give to me. Thank you again.

In September I went to the Mara, first with a group of Nikon photographers I had been asked to lead. It was my love of photography that initially took me to the Mara so it was really special for me to be able to share this with fellow photographers. A week later Pola joined me together with two supporters to commence our charity work.



When I take photos of the children and parents I always return with copies to give out. Many have never seen a photograph of themselves and they love to receive them.

We visited the children at the various secondary schools. It is always a delight to see them. As you know children have a habit of growing and it is wonderful to see them mature and become more confident and eloquent. Their letters express their gratitude far greater than I could ever relay in this newsletter.

Year 4 have just completed their final exams. They have agreed to volunteer at Mara Rianda Primary School for two terms as a way of saying 'Thank You' for the assistance and opportunity they have been given. We have agreed to give them a small monthly allowance to help with clothes and toiletries.



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As proud 'parents' we are always delighted to hear the news of pupils, especially those that graduated last year. Francis is in Nairobi doing a business course and we were able to meet and have lunch. In the Mara we were delighted to hear that Susan had gone to Narok to commence a child care course, Simon is training to be a driver guide and Michael is working at a local safari camp. Joseph and Raphael and James are still looking for opportunities. Jonathan continues to thrive at university and is receiving good grades.

Mara Rianda Primary School goes from strength to strength. The kitchen and dining room is being fully utilised. So if it rains the children do not have 'soup'. When it rains in the Mara it pours! It was wonderful to see the enormous pots full of food cooking the children's lunch in a lovely clean kitchen. Things we take for granted. The parents who assist in the kitchen are delighted.



The headmaster has introduced a very smart new uniform. I was initially concerned about the financial implications, especially for the poor families, but the children wear their uniform with pride. There are still a number of children wearing the original uniform and we hope to be able to assist them in buying the new uniform.

We visited four other schools the other side of the Mara River. Olopikdong'oe School, which is near a small town, had contacted Governors' Camp to seek help with the completion of the installation of mains electricity. I am pleased to report that the charity has agreed to pay for this. Electricity enables the children to work after dark, important for the older children who board.

Last week I received an email from Olopikdong'oe School which said *"We have no words to express our gratitude. For a long time our boys and girls have been living in darkness. Let there be light! says the Mara Rianda Charitable Trust. Long live the Trust!"*

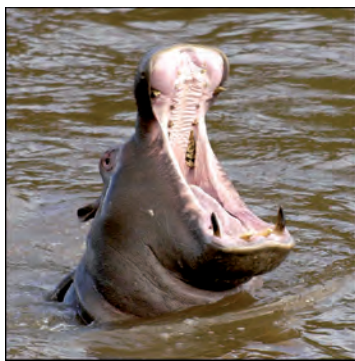
We also visited two very small primary schools each attached to a manyatta (a group of Maasai houses forming a small village). The small buildings were made out of mud and dung. As you can imagine these buildings are very dark inside – no glass windows or electricity. At one of the schools the children were being taught under the trees.





The two separate communities built these schools for the very young children as their nearest primary schools are too far for the little children to walk and also dangerous as wild animals roam.

One of these schools sends their older children to Mara Rianda Primary School once they reach Form 3 aged about 8.



These children have to cross the Mara River, safe during the dry season, not so in the wet, walk nearly two miles to school and hope that there are no hippos or lions lurking. And we worry about school time traffic!!



Due to generous support received the charity was able to agree the building of a block of four classrooms at each school. Construction at one of the schools has commenced. Of course once they are completed we will need to think about water harvesting, furniture, school supplies, electricity and possibly teachers. It sometimes feels like a never ending task, however it is such a joy to see the work develop. It is a miracle that we receive donations to help every need.



We delivered to the Mara Rianda dispensary bandages and dressings as well as the birthing couch, baby cot and scales, which I wrote about in the previous newsletter, They were delighted. The dispensary consists of two small rooms and a small store room. They are managed by medical officers. They would love to have further rooms to house the maternity equipment. This is something we would love to do once the two schools have been built.

Maasai women give birth in their mud and dung houses, assisted by other mothers and we do not wish to change their ways. However when there are complications the nearest hospital is about three hours away on matatu (small bus). We constantly seek wisdom as to what to get involved with and how to help. We feel it would be right to build a maternity unit for these lovely proud Maasai women.



A local Hertfordshire sewing group has given us over 400 bags for the children to carry their books in. It is always a pleasure to give these out.

We are looking to provide further bursaries for pupils to attend secondary school from January 2012. Last year we were able to provide 10 bursaries and we hope to do at least the same this time.



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 enclosed standing order and Gift Aid form.

Support is always welcome and greatly appreciated. There is always a need for new books, sports equipment and general school supplies as well as assistance with capital projects. Should you be able to give any support please make cheques payable to The Mara Rianda Charitable Trust.

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Aris Grammaticas the founder of Governors' Camp. Without his enormous help, support and guidance, as well as that of his wonderful family, the charity could not have achieved what it has in the Mara. Our sincere condolences are with his wife Romi and family.



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. May I conclude with my personal Christmas greetings and thank you once again for your interest and support, it is literally life changing.

Yours sincerely



Handwritten signature of Richard Long

Richard Long
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www.mararianda.com

*And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6 v8 (NIV)*