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“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRACLE”



It's so easy to take things for granted. One morning, on our last trip to the Maasai Mara, we were in our tent and I called out to Pola to look at the hippo in the river. Pola's response was "*Richard it's like telling me there is a pigeon on the lawn! Of course the river is full of hippos!!*" She was quite right you would expect to see a hippo in the river at the Mara, like we here in England would expect water to pour out of a tap, or children to go to school and, of course, to have some sort of lunch.

What is normal for us though is not necessarily so for others. We are delighted to see that more and more children are now going to school in the Mara. When talking to one of the 'mamas' she said that it was her turn for cattle duty the next day, as all the young children from her village are now attending school. When I initially visited Mara Rianda Primary School in 2003 there were less than 250 pupils, now there are over 900.



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The initial borehole at the Mara Rianda School is working but is now insufficient. I was able to meet with a specialist to advise me on the possibility of piping water from the Mara River. Whilst this is possible and the water can be filtered and purified it was advised that it was not easily sustainable as there would be the need of significant maintenance. It has been suggested that we consider a further borehole. This is something we are looking into as we would love all the children in the Mara to take fresh clean water for granted.

We are very grateful to a generous donor who is funding the building of a kitchen at Enkereri Primary School as well as girl's toilets. We met with the school committee to discuss if the community would commit to supplying food for the children. They have agreed to this and the construction of the kitchen has already begun. We have also had a commitment from the same donor to fund Jacqueline, the Head at Enkereri and also one qualified teacher. We are overwhelmed by this generosity, which will make a huge difference to the community.



The school committee at Enkereri



Our twice yearly visits are becoming very normal to us. We love the Mara, the landscape, wildlife and of course the Maasai people.

It always seems to rain when we go to the Mara and this is considered a great blessing.

During our last visit they were very blessed with torrential rain! On our arrival to Nasalie's village the heavens opened. She rushed us into her house and then disappeared. She returned with a handful of cow dung which she put in the doorway to stop the rain water entering her house. And then she wanted to shake my hand!



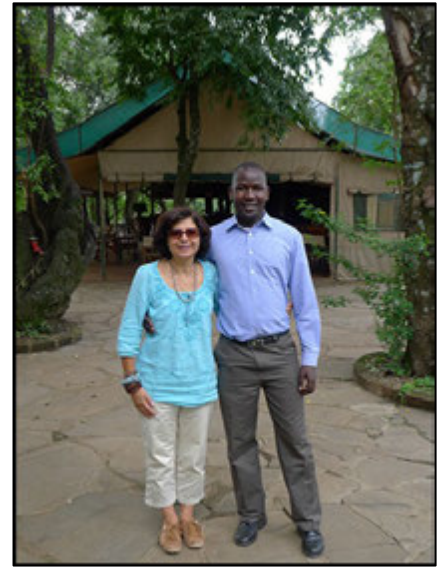
It is a real pleasure when we see some of our pupils who have now graduated from secondary school coming to greet us. Some have managed to go on to further education. Some of our first pupils are now working. Some are married with children of their own!

Francis, who was amongst the very first group, was always a very eloquent spokesman and a good negotiator, is working at Governors' Camp. Many of the young adults have huge burdens and are having to support many family members, Francis is one of them.



Simon works as a driver guide for a nearby camp and is now married with one child.

We are so pleased that Jonathan recently graduated from university. He is looking for work as a secondary school teacher. We were very sad to hear that his brother had been attacked by a hippo and died. He was buried the day before we arrived. We were able to visit Jonathan and his mother and family. The pain of grief is the same wherever you are, we were greatly touched by their sadness.



Francis with Pola



Pola was able to chat with some of the mums who have given birth at the maternity centre. In the past they would give birth in their home assisted by other 'mamas'. Pola was concerned as to how they felt about their baby being delivered by a male medical officer. All spoke very highly of the medical officers' skill, knowledge and gentleness. Pola was happy to hear this!!

We now have solar lighting in the maternity centre and the medical centre is very well used. We are humbled when we visit and see the patients in the waiting room.



We are pleased to say that in January 2015 we will be able to sponsor another 12 students. That will be 92 pupils the Charity, through generous support, has been able to send to secondary school. If you are a UK tax payer a bursary can be funded by monthly standing order of £26 for four 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 I shall let you have a 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 wish to give any support please make cheques payable to The Mara Rianda Charitable Trust.

Should you ever wish to come and join us in the Mara and see first-hand the work we are involved in please let me know. September is normally the best time to join us as this is the time of spectacular migration.

Whatever your faith or belief, Christmas is a very special time of year. We have been blessed with so much. Pola and I are constantly encouraged by your interest and support and this we will never take for granted.

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

Richard Long
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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)