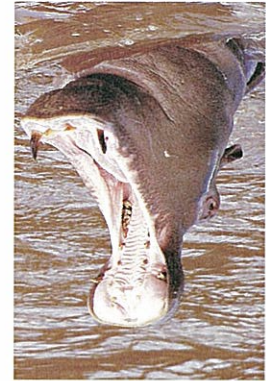


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The school's needs are still great and clean water is a primary aim. Currently the children drink rain water and when that runs out they walk nearly a mile to the Mara River. The river is dirty and brown with crocodiles and hippos living in it.

We take it for granted that we can turn on a tap for fresh clean water and drink, cook, wash, water the lawn and clean the car. Water is life, without it we would die.



I then wrote to various friends telling them about the school and its needs which were great. Nearly £10,000 was raised which last September was used to provide school supplies, text books exercise books, pens, pencils, writing paper, footballs, skipping ropes etc and of course chalk. In addition there was a specific donation to sponsor a teacher for two years. A fence, which was needed to prevent wildlife from coming too close, has now been completed.

It was over a year ago that I first wrote about the Mara Rianda School in the Maasai Mara, 100 miles west of Nairobi. When I first met the head teacher early last year I asked what the school needed. He looked at me, pondered and then said "If you mean by a miracle we need chalk, white and coloured, pens and pencils again coloured, exercise books", and so he went on. His simple request shocked me: "Chalk would be a miracle". Those words have become the by-line for my fundraising letters.

“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRACLE”

Dear

14 August 2004

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In February this year I returned again to the school taking some further supplies and met with a water engineer, who flew out from Nairobi especially to see me. The cost of providing fresh water to the school is high. From a western person's perspective the school is in the middle of nowhere.



The terrain is rocky and there are no roads to the school and nearby roads are just dirt tracks. In the wet season it is often very difficult to travel along even in 4-wheel drive vehicles and in the dry season it is very pot holed and again difficult to travel along. The engineer, who was advising free of charge and not selling, estimated that it would cost at least £10,000 just to transport drilling machinery etc to the area.



The water table is apparently not too deep it is just the cost of accessing it which is high. I have asked for initial digging to be undertaken.

Since receiving the supplies we have provided the number of children at the school has increased substantially and there are now nearly 400. Whilst more general school supplies are needed to replace those being used, the head teacher Mr Lawrence Ngubo Bosire has asked for more desks as many children are still sitting four to a desk. Surprisingly the children are desperate for school uniform. This, perhaps, seems such a trivial thing but they so very much want to be seen to be part of the school.



Following the success in fund raising it was decided that a UK charitable trust should be formed. This amongst other things would allow tax to be reclaimed where applicable on donations made. The Mara Rianda Charitable Trust (a company limited by way of guarantee) was formed earlier this year and Colin Bird, formerly of PricewaterhouseCoopers, Nigel Hollingsworth formerly of Chesterton and I are the initial directors and Trustees.

It is now my intention to return to Kenya in September and to purchase further school supplies in Nairobi and to see their delivery to the school. By buying the items in Kenya it puts funds into its economy. In addition I shall be evaluating what progress has been made regarding the provision of fresh water and also what else needs to be done.

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