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“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRACLE”



Richard Long, John Sankok (medical director), Peter Diethelm and Dominic Grammaticas

There was great excitement in the Mara when Pola and I visited for the opening of the Mara Rianda medical centre on the 4th October 2013. The community was just so overwhelmed that they were to have their own medical centre; it was truly an answer to their prayers. The centre has three wards of five beds each for women, children and men, three consulting rooms, a dispensary, reception area and storage and sluice rooms. There are connected outside toilets and adjacent staff quarters as well. All of this was funded and built in seven months. Absolutely amazing.

We give thanks to two principal supporters who helped this all happen, Peter Diethelm whose Trust funded the construction of the building and the MacTavish family who paid for much of the medical equipment and furniture and also to the many others who provided support.



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Peter booked a last minute surprise visit for the opening and we were delighted to see him. It would have been lovely if the MacTavish family and Nigel Hollingsworth, the surveyor who oversaw the project from the UK and the rest of our supporters were also able to have been there. Nigel visited the site in the early days and was able to give constructive advice (excuse the pun) to Ambrose, the 'fundi' (builder). Alterations that were needed were quickly undertaken.



The 4th October 2013 will be a very memorable day for the Mara Rianda community and for Pola and myself. There were hundreds of beautifully dressed "Mamas", Maasai elders, Maasai clergy, and of course the obligatory politicians!!



We were entertained with singing and dancing by the children from Mara Rianda School and the ladies from the churches, followed by numerous speeches.



It was Tapenay, the medical officer at the dispensary, who told me his dream for a large medical centre with an in-patient facility for the community. Days after I told Dominic Grammaticas from Governors' Camp about this conversation Peter contacted me saying he may be interested in funding such a project. Peter has a longstanding relationship with Kenya and the Mara and after a recent visit felt that this is just what the community needed.

In his opening speech Peter said *'I did not believe the centre could be built in such a short time'*. When we discussed in February the proposed opening date for October, Peter and I anticipated there would be delays. Dominic said *'God works in mysterious ways'*. Harrison our local community officer said *'nothing is impossible with God'*. Pola and I are just filled with awe and wonder.



The centre was opened at 5pm and at 9am the following day we returned to find it full of patients waiting to be seen. What a fantastic sight.

When the solar lighting was first turned on a few days before the centre opened, most of the community stayed up all night just looking at the lights.



Water for the medical centre was something that needed discussion. There was a bore hole just by the centre that had been paid for by a Canadian charity some years ago. This was never maintained and so not working. We were able to meet with the medical committee the day after the opening and given their permission to repair and maintain this for use at the centre. How amazing that clean, fresh water is available just by the centre. The installation of sinks, taps and drainage is about £7,500 and it will cost a further £5,500 to install filtration and purification. It is proposed that the community will be able to access this water for a small charge towards the ongoing running and maintenance.

So what next? There may be the possibility of building a small minor surgery unit. This will need more discussion and will of course be subject to funding.

We were delighted to visit Mara Rianda and Enkereri Primary Schools and we continue to provide them with ongoing support and school supplies. The problem with the water still needs to be resolved. Whether it is a replacement solar pump or a new windmill it will be costly.



Our sponsored children at five secondary schools in Narok are working well with some beginning to achieve good grades. There is a huge culture adjustment for them when they initially move from their community to a large town and are mixing for the first time with children of other tribes. In January we hope to offer bursaries for a further 12 needy children. Their desire to learn amazes me.

It was wonderful to see a new baby hours after birth and of course Mum and family at the maternity centre. However we still need lighting for this unit. The baby was born in the middle of the night so lighting is vital. Solar lighting and power for this unit is expected to cost over £10,000.





If you are a UK tax payer, with Gift Aid, a bursary for secondary school can be funded by a monthly standing order of £26 for four years. This will effectively be the full amount required to fund one child for their secondary education, including boarding costs and school equipment etc. 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.

Pola is pictured with two of the mums together with their babies who were born at the maternity centre we opened last year. What a privilege to be part of this community.

Support is always welcome and greatly appreciated. There is a constant need at the schools 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.

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

Finally should you ever wish to come and join us in the Mara to 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 usually the time of spectacular migration.

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)*