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Sunrise over Nyandiwa. We can only hope and pray that there is a brighter dawn for Kenya. The political situation is on a knife-edge. We travelled back last Monday and, thankfully, our friend in Kisumu met us and drove us through the city around road blocks of boulders and evidence of burning tyres and looting amidst rumours of several killed. The trip this time seemed to take its toll as we were very tired – the heat was unusually oppressive especially at that altitude. That said, all the boxes were ticked and in a very short period and it was enjoyable. It was 'Customer Services Week'! Would that it were every week! We were greeted in Nairobi airport by a lovely lady who gave us a red rose and we proceeded to be waved through customs with a smile.

The 'demonstrations' the previous day meant that the hire place for our vehicle had been closed and our arrival was lost in the confusion so we waited quite a while at Kisumu airport before taking a taxi. We completed our business then enjoyed our customary tea and samosas at The Imperial – the hotel has good toilets! We had bought our anti-malarials, exchanged money, been to see Duncan at Barclays, called at the new electrical showrooms of Panjani to buy batteries for our solar panels (Ian T will remember that place. The owner gave him a bottle of whisk(e)y!) and called at Skylark for plumbing parts for our sink. We stopped



off at Mega City Nakumatt hypermarket for essentials but they were sadly understocked – going out of business we fear.

The roads up to our place have been widened by the local government in the run-up to elections – a vote-pleaser. There has been rain since our last visit and a small harvest but food was in short supply and expensive. We were quietly asked as we left to bear in mind the **predicted drought next year**. We will no doubt be seeing another food shortage and need to plan for that so will add grain to our gift list. The one night it did rain, and very heavily, meant the maize grew visibly! The field we crossed the next day was at least 6 inches taller – amazing!



Education



Kolweny Kingsway High and Primary Schools are doing well despite the continued enormous challenges. Final exams start after the elections on 26th. Form 1 has been divided into two and in January the same numbers will register with no extra classroom in which to teach nor the extra books or desks. Our school is 'the school of choice' for miles around. We photographed the 70+ sponsored students, handed out 800+ pens and toothbrushes, 600+ pencils and of course, the 200+ pairs of undies. **(That's the end of our store so we're beginning again to collect – any size for boys and girls aged**

4 -18.) We took out football shirts for the primary school and books for their fledgling library. We stocked up the First Aid kits with plasters, bandages and paracetamol and the primary had donations of school dresses. **60 new primary school desks** have been hand-crafted by the carpenter on site. When I asked why some desks were empty and pupils were still sitting four to a desk the reply was "There's only one text book". There's another campaign -**primary school text books**. We'll attempt to reach 100 desks when we have the books so for now we are supplying a **teacher's desk and chair** for each room in both schools so that teachers can stay in the room when they need to mark or help individuals.



I gave a 'sex and health' talk to all the girls, introduced by Steve this time! (Apparently they'll listen more to men! Need to sort that one out.) I taught them to sing the opening line of Aretha Franklin's RESPECT ! The latrine blocks are a joy to behold and attract much attention from visitors. The modesty walls are an innovation which we hope other schools will repeat. We are replacing the girls' tin latrines at the primary with brick walls and eventually hoping to build a new boys' block. A wall is being constructed between the girls' and boys' latrines at the high school – I leave it up to

you to think why – and it will form the back wall of new latrines. Two of the cubicles built only last year by the school have to be demolished as termites have undermined the foundations and no one wants to fall down a pit latrine!

Dinners will again be provided during the exam period for primary pupils, news greeted by loud cheers. Form 4 also cheered when asked if they had enjoyed their trip. They particularly enjoyed seeing wild animals which is a novelty for them, and the boat trip on Lake Victoria. The Eccles Community Choir Cope is taking shape albeit after much munching of new growth by passing donkeys.

What a thrill to meet Nelly Achieng again. She was sponsored through school and university, read Agriculture in Nakuru and is working as a community teacher at our high school. She is a beautiful young woman. There are now four former students working at the schools.





Everline Banda is doing sterling work sensitising primary schools to the use of washable sanitary pads as part of our "Keep the girls in school" project. Headteachers are agreeing to use the capitation for girls and parents will, hopefully, pay the rest. At Kolweny RPs is paying the excess after school and parents have contributed. This means all our girls can come to school all year. The design for the washroom adjacent to the latrines is also being suggested at other schools. It's gratifying to see our schools becoming the 'beacons' we had hoped for and forerunners in keeping the girls at school. Latest idea – to buy a **sewing machine** for the primary school girls with 'special educational needs' so that they can make the pads and not only learn a trade but also sell them cheaply for school funds.

At present Mary has her hands full not only making hundreds of sanitary packs but starting on school uniform for the new year. We provide her with knickers for the packs for Kolweny to keep costs down. She employs two other women in her workshop/home and will teach our girls when we have the machine.



Kennedy, our builder, has concreted the pathways at the high school and installed gutters and drains thus preventing mud being traipsed into the classrooms. He is going to do repairs to one classroom floor, quite excited that he's doing "research"! The quarry dust we intended to use is only available in Nairobi and expensive to purchase and transport so we have agreed with Martin, our local metalwork jua kali (Kiswahili for "git er done" – any local entrepreneur) that he collect iron filings for us and Ken will mix them into



the top skim of concrete. Hopefully this will harden the surface – we shall see next visit. If it works we can effect major repairs to the science lab floor where the benches now sit at table height because the legs have scoured foot-deep holes into the floor.

Ken is an excellent worker, proud of his work and he has been charged with giving an annual report to the schools as to what maintenance should be carried out before it becomes a major expenditure.

Water & Health

Joseph is still making filters, some for sale but most for needy widows which we buy. We are trying to persuade the dispensary to use their filter to exchange dirty water for clean as women pass by from the stream.

It is still served by the young government medic there a couple of days a week. The two nurses are there every day despite the fact that there has been a general nursing strike for the past few months. A few days after we left, a team of Americans was visiting the area, some doing a teaching conference for church leaders and the doctor working in the dispensary. He will have had queues as the treatment is free of charge. It's wonderful to read the treatment log and find no cases of water-borne diseases during the whole of September. We dropped off the usual medication, bandages, gloves etc and also gave two bagsful to Kennedy and his wife Jacqueline at the roadside dispensary. He was about to remove a tooth from an elderly patient who found it difficult to smile for the photo!



Church

It was a treat to see two of our sponsored graduates taking leadership roles at church. Charles led and Rammy and



Mary's husband, Joshua, sang two of Rammy's compositions, very beautiful and moving. Steve preached, as always, and made reference to the fact that the clock was stopped at 2.45 so his timing might reflect that. Some 25 minutes later, as he was summing up, the clock fell off the wall and smashed. He ended the sermon more abruptly than planned.

We handed out the final lot of bootees – they are such a hit. We also decided to give out paracetamol so folk don't need to walk to the dispensary.



Karowley



Steve re-fixed the front door hinge, fitted a new drain on the bathroom basin and attached the new solar batteries. He also sandpapered two spare beds which keep snagging the mosquito nets and I hand-stitched curtains. For the eagle-eyed, that's filtered water in the plastic bottle!

Steve went through accounts with Ayugi and we discussed plans with Ken the Builder.

I've already mentioned road-widening. One particularly hazardous section is now easily navigable although we've yet to test it in the rain.

We have long been complaining about the profligate use of plastic bags, the ubiquitous blue rubbish sprouting like weeds. Well, the government seems to have had the same idea except that with typical lack of planning or foresight, they gave everyone two months and then plastic bags were totally banned with fines for anyone seen carrying them, and putting hundreds of workers out of a job, from the producers and factory workers to the boys who bag items at the supermarkets. Answer – sell flimsy, inadequately-sized fabric bags for .50p, half a day's earnings for a local farmer. Solved! Er...far from it! When we get the sewing machine we can get the girls to make large fabric bags to sell at a few pence – there's a business opportunity there. Until then, if anyone wants to donate a **lightweight, cloth shopping bag**, we'll take them out. Remember the old **string bags**? They'd be perfect. Does anyone have a knitting pattern for them? I could teach the girls to make them.



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