

THE ZIMMERMANN FAMILY VISIT TO TANZANIA IN SUMMER 2014

Preface

During our three-week stay in Tanzania we were overwhelmed by the Christian love and open-hearted generosity of the many Tanzanian people we met. We were particularly cared for by Felix and Naomi Masenge and their family. Our report describes the key features of our visit which relate to the work of Hope for Tanzania (HFT).

Water borehole

HFT gave Tuishime School a donation of approx £10,000 for the drilling of a water borehole to provide fresh, clean water to the school and to the Masenges' home (on the same site). Previously, one person (normally Felix) drove ten miles there and back to collect 1,000 litres of water every day, sometimes having to pay for the water.

Three weeks before we arrived, the borehole became fully operational and now provides a supply of fresh, clean water which everyone hopes will last forever. The water has been laboratory tested and is 97% safe. The main water tank holds 10,000 litres, and the pump is sealed to avoid it being stolen. The school and the Masenges are very appreciative. In addition, some local poor families are given free water.

We enjoyed watching the installation of an additional 5,000 litre tank. The Masenges were concerned that the tank funded by HFT might not be sufficient because of the increasing demand for water due to the ever-increasing number of pupils. Naomi has taken out a loan to fund this.

School fees

Anna (Administrator) continues to handle the income and expenditure for Tuishime School, using Excel and Dick's systems. Naomi has asked Teacher Pancras to oversee the school's finances and to work with Anna, especially in connection with the non-payment of school fees. In such cases, Pancras sees the parents at school. Normally the parents agree to pay small amounts in instalments which Pancras then follows up.

Pre-school fees are 390,000 TSh per annum; for the older children the annual fees are 450,000 TSh. At the end of July 2014, outstanding fees amounted to just over 13 million TSh, over half of which were graduation fees. Many of these debts will 'probably' be settled in September.

We later discovered that all families are asked to make a voluntary contribution of 30,000 TSh towards the Grade 7 graduation ceremony – every year! We asked Pancras about this, and he emphasised the importance of celebration in the Tanzanian culture. However, he agreed that the graduation celebrations had probably become too lavish and might be reduced in the future. This puts additional pressure on already poor families who may feel that they have to make 'voluntary' contributions.

Naomi has clear views that children should not be sent home even if the parents have not paid the fees. She says the school should not penalise the children because of their parents. Naomi and Anna visit perpetual non-payers in their homes. If the parents are judged to be poor (as seen by their home), the fees may be reduced. If they simply cannot afford the fees and are unlikely to pay, Naomi recommends that the child attends a Government school.

Non-payment of fees does not affect the payment of teachers' salaries; teachers are paid on time in full. Some children attend school in the summer school holidays for which the teachers are paid extra. September is normally the most difficult month financially when monies sometimes have to be transferred from other school accounts.

Overall, the collection of fees is improving because of the school's more proactive stance and because, in the words of Anna and Pancras, the school is getting 'better parents.'

We found it difficult to ascertain the precise numbers of children at the school. Everyone we spoke to gave us a different figure!

Sponsored children

We focused on the children whose sponsors had given us gifts and/or cards. It wasn't easy to find the right children at the right time because of the end of term and Eid. Our boys interviewed and took photos of ten children who had received cards and gifts from their sponsors. Janet is sending each of these sponsors a photo, profile and thank you letter from the child.

We also visited our two sponsored children and their families in their homes. We were amazed at how one of the families were thanking and praising God for all He had given them. It is particularly encouraging that two of the sponsored children are often top or 2nd in their class.

We also met Thomas Godfrey, a former Tuishime pupil, now at Arusha Secondary School. He is bright and receives some financial support from HFT.

Research published in the Journal of Political Economy in April 2013 demonstrates that former Compassion sponsored children stay in school longer than their non-sponsored peers, are more likely to have salaried/white-collared jobs and are more likely to be community and church leaders. These positive outcomes should be emphasised to potential sponsors.

Plans for Tuishime School

Building work has started on a new block which will provide a staff room and separate offices for the Head teacher and Administrator. Building was very slow during our visit, little progress being made in three weeks.

Naomi would like the school to continually improve and would like to enlarge the school by building a second storey above the existing buildings. She has already asked an engineer to look at the possibility. She says that additional children mean additional income. (Our comment: This is important for the Masenges as the school is their business and they have no other source of income in their retirement.) Naomi would like to develop a play area, but we observed that there is already little space for the children to play. There is no nearby land which could be used as a play area. Naomi no longer wishes to turn part of the school into a boarding school as she is aware of the high capital and revenue costs.

In the past, the teachers at Tuishime have always been paid below the Government scales which are low.

School and bungalow safety

Shortly before we arrived, the generator and some of the houseboy's personal possessions were stolen from his shed. It appears that the night watchman may have been asleep on duty. He has been told not to sleep on duty (!) and to be more vigilant. The Masenges' bungalow now has fully operational solar panels, providing electricity for all their needs.

Arusha Cathedral Credit Union

HFT has given funding to the Arusha Cathedral Credit Union which provides loans to set up micro-businesses. We had a short meeting with David, (Chair), Joel, (Treasurer) and Reginald (a Committee member). The HFT donation was used to provide loans to develop more businesses. Today the funds available for loans are 32 million TSh compared with 210,000 TSh at the start of the project. Loans now amount to 1.5 to 4 million TSh compared to 250,000 to 500,000 TSh at the

start. Loans are repaid at 10% interest, thus increasing capital to provide further loans. Sometimes the account is empty, so loans can be hard to give until others have repaid their loans. Women are better at repaying the loans than men – this is borne out by evidence in other parts of the world.

There are now three groups operating from the Cathedral, each with a maximum of 30 members. Business capital is now increasing and successful businesses are emerging. Examples include soap-making, cooking oil, batik, animal feeds, selling honey, and a travelling hardware shop. Naomi is part of a small group whose businesses include buying cows for milk and hens to provide eggs.

The Committee has plans to buy a plot of land to cultivate crops and to provide a place for businesses to operate, e.g. batik making. The Committee hope it will be a place where trained people can train others. However, the price of land has risen, so it may be another two years before this can happen. Loans appear to be granted whatever the financial circumstances of the individual applicant, meaning that some loans are given to well-off Tanzanians.

People we met and visited

We had delicious meals and generous hospitality in the homes of these Tuishime staff members: John Bosco (Headteacher), Anna (Administrator), Teacher Renalda and Teachers Peter and Margaret.

We visited Arusha Secondary School and had lunch with Christopher, the Head teacher and his family. His school has a formal partnership with a Nottinghamshire school where our friend Karen is an assistant head. Karen was there on a British Council reciprocal visit at the same time as us and she also visited Tuishime.

We had lunch with Andrew Mathias (formerly academic master at Tuishime) and his family at Ghati School where he is the newly appointed Head teacher. It is a 1,000 pupil English medium primary school in a very poor district of Arusha. The buildings were in a very run-down condition with old-fashioned long desks and bare classroom walls. We also met the founding Director who was very proud of his school. The fees are similar to those charged by Tuishime.

We visited a Government primary school whose Headteacher, Steve Kwaka, is relatively newly appointed. With over 2,300 pupils it is the largest government primary school in Arusha district. 80% of the students are Muslims, reflecting the proportion of Muslims in the neighbouring community. He is a very inspiring and impressive Christian facing a massive challenge.

Moses came to visit us briefly at the Masenges. He is now an Ward Education Officer. He said that Tanzania's education policy is top downwards so there is no input from teachers at the grass roots. Teachers' pay is low and teachers have low status which is why people don't want to be teachers. In his words 'People only want to be accountants to earn lots of money.'

Peter had a very brief meeting with the branch manager of the TIB Development Bank, with which HFT in Tanzania has its account.

Sadly, we did not have time to meet Grace Mbisi and Caroline Shao.

Peter and Maggie Zimmermann
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