

Progress Report on the Boniface and Hamisi Project September 3, 2000

Dear Friends of Boniface and Hamisi,

We had a good week making progress on the project. First of all, after four days of travel, waiting, meetings and a great deal of frustration which I won't go into here, we have succeeded in getting Boniface enrolled into Sekoke Secondary School, to start in the new year beginning January. He will be beginning Form One, which is the equivalent of Grade Nine, which is a form he started for the first time last January, but had to drop out of during the second term because his family could not pay the school fees. He had missed more than six weeks, and we all felt it would be best to just start fresh next year rather than struggle to catch up and probably get poor marks. We toured the school and met the principal, and although it wasn't our first choice, it was the best school we could find for him. It's a boarding school and about 35 kilometres away. The good thing about it is that one of Boniface's older brothers goes there too, and this will save the family \$40 a year in fees for the older brother. We paid close to \$400 for the year's tuition, room and board, but this does not include books, supplies and uniforms which are still required. (In case you are wondering, boarding school is the norm in Kenya for secondary school.)

On Hamisi's side, we have decided, after much deliberation and consultation, to purchase a young milk cow for him and his family. As I've written before, although we would have preferred to use the money which was so kindly donated by readers (totaling \$970) for education, this was not an appropriate choice for Hamisi's family. Yet we did not feel it was correct to ignore Hamisi altogether. So we are focusing on ways the family can increase their income-earning potential.

Earlier, we had invested about \$50 in jewellery-making supplies and marketing supplies (a presentation book, photocopied cards describing the fossils, etc.) for the fossil shark tooth jewellery business we are helping them establish. I'm so pleased to let you know that this small business is turning out to be a big success! The jewellery, especially the earrings, is selling like hot cakes, and within the first week, just from local orders - tourists as well as Africans - all the four sets of earrings sold out and they have taken orders for two more. They have also sold a couple of chains, and thus have earned \$30 in only one week! Yesterday they gave us some of their profits to reinvest in more supplies, which we will buy for them when we are in Mombasa today. We are very pleased they provided the money (we had earlier told them we would buy a few more supplies anyway) because it shows they are taking responsibility for the success of the business and not just going out and spending their profits.

As far as Hamisi's cow, we have had several meetings with Plan International, who are helping us buy the cow and also with advice, since this is the same kind of program they do in villages. According to them, \$400 will buy a heifer calf and enough medicines (vaccinations, tick medicine, etc.) to see it through a few years until it will calf and begin producing milk. They have a veterinarian on staff who will be advising us on this, and

who will also provide follow-up advice to the families. We're going to meet with the veterinarian and hope to purchase the calf this week.

Boniface's family already has a cow and the two families will be working together to help train Hamisi how to care for his cow, and sharing work and expenses. We are planning to buy a knapsack sprayer for the two families to share, for the weekly application of tick insecticide. (Right now, Boniface's family is applying the chemical using their hands, which makes us cringe and we're sure isn't the best for the cow either.) Hamisi's family is delighted and very proud at being able to own a cow. This will permit them, starting in about two years, to make money selling milk, for which there is a very good market here. Of course once the cow has calved, they can also begin building up a herd and eventually this will make a big difference for them. Maybe I was just imagining this, but yesterday when I saw Hamisi and he told me about the success with selling jewellery and talked about the calf, I'm sure he had a new glint of confidence in his eye.

After taking care of the calf, we'll have about \$500 left in the fund. This money we are going to allocate to Boniface's family, for the purpose of education. We've had several meetings with Andrew, the oldest brother, and also went with Mark to a beautician college in Mombasa, to see whether this was a wise investment in time and money for him. Herbert and I were not totally satisfied that it was, and Mark is now giving more thought to that plan. There are nine brothers in this family, of which Boniface is one of the younger ones, so there are many possibilities to put the money to good use. (There are two sisters as well, but they are both already married.) We may use some of the money to outfit Boniface with books and uniforms, etc. for the coming year, or we may put it towards one of the other brothers and his further education. I hope we'll have that part of the plan clarified by the end of this week.

We've been keeping so busy with all these projects that we've not had time to get the boat ready to leave. We had thought that we'd be leaving this week, but we are so far from ready, that we've pushed our departure back to next week! So we'll be meeting with Andrew again next weekend and try to make the final decisions before we go. But the family has agreed that the money will be used to establish a scholarship fund, and whoever uses the fund will have to repay the money back, with interest, so that someone else in the family can use it later. Andrew will be in charge of administering the fund, and we are satisfied with his integrity. ("We have to be accountable and transparent," he told us.) He has, after all, managed to put most of his younger brothers through school from his own small salary, so we know his interests and ours are along the same lines. Our family is assuming the ongoing responsibility of paying Boniface's school fees at least until he's through secondary school.

Boniface and Hamisi are also working on making three small gifts for the three Canadian families who contributed so generously to their welfare. We will be bringing the gifts back with us, and we are hoping you will all agree to join us for dinner at our home when we return next fall, to a "Boniface and Hamisi Party", so we can give you them in person and share with you more of our very rewarding experiences with these families.

That's all for this week, and I'll send you another update next week during our weekly pilgrimage to Mombasa.

Diane Stuemmer