



Boniface & Hamisi Project

Kenya, Africa

Progress Report on the Boniface and Hamisi Project September 8, 2000

Dear Friends of Boniface and Hamisi,

This being our last full week in Kilifi, we worked hard to bring the project as far along as we could.

Except for Boniface's school uniforms and books, we're finished with his part of the project, having got him enrolled and paid for the year at Sekoke Secondary School. Before we leave we're still going to see what else is required to outfit him for the year, and pay for uniforms at least.

As for Hamisi, we finally determined that a milk cow was the very best thing we could do for this family, having investigated all the available alternatives and discussed the matter thoroughly with Plan, which has been just a wonderful resource to us during this whole period. The local head, a wonderful young man from Nairobi named Kenneth Muriithi, who is now working on a long distance master's degree with the University of Illinois and plans to continue on to a PhD, has been wonderfully cooperative and put his staff at our disposal to help with the project. We've had many meetings with the Plan staff veterinarian as well as their project officer, who used to be a professional farm manager, and between the two of them put together a list of supplies, and a description of the ideal mixed-breed cow for the environment. The program officer, Kalimbo, then went all over the countryside in his own free time on his motorcycle to find the ideal cow, which he did, two days ago. Not only is it quite an old calf, 18 months old, but it is an excellent price, 12,000 shillings, or \$240. It will be ready for serving (getting pregnant) anytime now, so Hamisi won't have to wait long to start earning money from it.

Hamisi is very excited about the whole prospect, and we left him and Kalimbo together yesterday to ride over into the countryside on Kalimbo's motorbike to see the calf for the first time. If there had been room for more on the bike, we would have gone too! But Kenneth's driver was off on Sunday and we wanted to move it along as quickly as possible, so we stayed behind and will see the calf when Hamisi brings it on foot in the next day or two. We gave Kalimbo the money to purchase the cow. (We met with Andrew and one of his brothers last night, and when they heard about the price we'd

paid for a mixed breed cow, Andrew got positively jealous, since his family has a cow as well and they paid more for a younger animal.)

Today we're in Mombasa with Dr. Kate's list of veterinary supplies, so we're going to stock Hamisi up with supplies rather than leaving him with money - much safer. We will equip him with the most likely things he will need until the animal starts producing milk and thus income. All together we should be able to come in at or under budget for the cow project, at less than 20,000 shillings, or \$400. The cow should be quite a good investment, since once it is producing it should produce between 15 and 40 litres of milk per day, which the family will be able to sell at between 15 and 30 shillings per litre, between 300 shillings (\$6) and 1200 shillings (\$24) a day, which is a very good income. And, of course, it will produce a calf, which can either be sold, if it is a bull, or which will eventually add to the herd. Hamisi tells us when we next come to visit, he plans to show us a herd of 30 cows!

When we went to his village surprise him yesterday morning with the news that Kalimbo had found a cow, it was early on a Sunday morning. We were pleased to see him awake and working outside his hut with Boniface on making more shark tooth jewellery with the supplies we provided them. Both he and Boniface have been hard at work turning out a variety of earrings and chains to sell, and the next phase in the project is to have enough to present to a resort gift shop to see if they will stock them. Kenneth may be able to help them in this, and also Boniface's older brother Andrew, who works at a resort, may be able to as well. We'll see how that goes. But at a minimum, they have been able to show that they can sell directly to tourists and make some good extra income that way, which pleases us immensely. This extra money is something that may help in the maintenance of the cow, because they do have to buy water (and carry it, of course) and they will have to pay about \$6 to have it serviced by a bull.

So we will have 25,000 shillings, or \$500 left once the cow supplies are all paid for. We have decided that the rest of the fund, and any new money we may be able to raise, will establish a Kitsao family scholarship fund (Boniface's family), since there is so much interest in education in that smart group. We met last night with Andrew, Boniface's oldest brother, and Ngumbau, 26, another of his older brothers, to discuss the plan, and they were enthusiastic, after we explained that it was a much better idea for them than getting another cow (their mouths were watering, hearing about Hamisi's). Ngumbau has a dream to attend mass communications college and become a radio broadcaster - this was the first time we'd really had a chance to talk to him alone.

The cost of a college program is between 60,000 and 100,000 shillings, (\$1200 and \$2000) per year, and most courses are two or three years long. We don't have, of course, enough money at the present to offer that to any of the Kitsao boys. However Mark, who is a particular favourite of ours, is still very keen on going to a beautician school to become a "beauty therapist", which is basically a hairdresser. We went with him before to a school in Mombasa and weren't overly impressed, but he has been persistent and has come forward with another school that is particularly interested in recruiting male students, to service western tourists who come to hotels (and

presumably want their hair braided, or whatever). His ultimate goal is to get a job, save some money, and with it open his own salon. This is a good and realistic dream.

We're going to visit that school today in Mombasa with him and talk to its proprietor. Mark has a cousin who has gone or is going through that same program, so we'll see what it turns out to be. If we are convinced, then the cost of the program may be just a little more than the money we have received, so we will go ahead and enrol him in the course. We do expect that when I write about your generosity, others will be inspired to join in and make up whatever shortfall there may be. The important thing is to invest the money wisely. If we're not convinced this is a good plan for Mark, we'll hold on to the money and the family will submit a plan for another son.

A key part of the plan will be that Mark eventually repay the fund, with interest, out of his expanded post-training earnings, so that another deserving member of the family can have access to it, and so on.

As far as the father, he is doing well and went to Mombasa for scans last week, but there is still no date for surgery. The family is still pursuing accessing this medical fund, but there is no further news on that.

The other good thing that happened is that Kenneth from Plan seems inclined to offer Mark and perhaps others a short term job with Plan. Mark and his girlfriend, a perfectly lovely young woman with whom we are very impressed and who has some computer skills, went in to apply after Kenneth suggested he may need some short term help, and I think he was impressed with both young people.

We also had Kenneth and his fiancée from Nairobi over to dinner on Northern Magic on Saturday night, and invited Andrew and his wife as well, hoping the two men could "click" and the links between the Kitsao family and Kenneth, who can be a powerful resource to them, would solidify. The two smart men, who are the same age, got along famously as we expected they would, and Kenneth really pumped Andrew for information about the challenges of subsistence farmers. Kenneth is quite new in his job and he's trying hard to come up with ideas, and he really enjoyed having someone on his own level to discuss things with. It turns out that Plan often has regional meetings in the hotel where Andrew works, and Kenneth also offered that Andrew come by to visit him whenever he is back in Kilifi, so I think we did a good turn by getting the two together.

So that's all for this week. We hope to sail for Lamu, farther north up the coast, on Thursday or so, so we don't have any idea what the e-mail access will be like from there. But we'll let you know, by hook or by crook, how the project is progressing. Andrew does have some limited access to e-mail, so we have made arrangements to keep in contact.

Diane Stuemmer