



*Northern Magic Fund for
International Development*

A report for the year 2008/2009

By

Andrew Thuva – Kilifi, Kenya

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Dear Friends,

As we come to the end of a seemingly long and unending year, a good many of us will give a sigh of relief. But for different reasons, a good number of us will also wish it didn't have to come so soon. For either reasons it is why we have to take a review of the journey of partnership that we travelled last year. In Kenya, here is why wishes may have been justified either way.

Ominous start

Like everyone else in the world, Kenyans had hoped to start and celebrate the New Year in Style. They had been through a rigorous electioneering period since the previous year that was meant to elect their new political leaders for a five-year term. Each opposing side had hoped their candidates would win. When the verdict was announced – reportedly under pressure from some partisan parties – by the Electoral Commission of Kenya - it marked the start of a defining moment for a country hitherto considered an

island of peace in Africa. What followed were protests, demonstrations and senseless bloodletting pitying the opposing sides of the election process. For one month, there seemed to be no end to the new turn of events.

Silver lining

Yet, even in the midst of all this, we had to carry on with our sacred duty of giving hope to the hopeless. We were giving out application forms to the needy students and taking them back after filling them out. The process was, understandably, slow. Travel was difficult and expensive – even dangerous! Reports were many of passengers being pulled out of vehicles and hacked to death for belonging to the ‘wrong side’ of the political divide.

In February of the same year, the antagonists, through persuasion by our international friends, saw some sense in coming together to form a coalition government. The bloodletting was to be no more. An uneasy peace had come, but at a great price! Even then there didn’t seem to be an agreement on how to share power in the new arrangement.

School renovation projects

Last year, through the help of the Calgary South Rotary Club and Wild Rose Foundation, we were able to finish phase one (3 blocks of 13 classrooms) at Chumani primary school. We were also able to finish phase one of Bahari primary school through the generous donations of Mr. Herbert Brunes and Mr. Dick Willinger. In mid January this year, we started phase 2 of Chumani primary school and similarly, that of Bahari primary school.

Both phases are still going on and should be done by the end of this month.



2 of the finished blocks in phase one at Chumani primary school



pupils next to a renovated block at Chumani primary school



2 new classrooms at Bahari primary school

Student applications

By March 2008 we had received about 400 applications. Most of them were brought in late and because of the reported violence in the country, most students reported late in school. Last year we approved 104 old students in secondary schools for continued support. We also took in 61 new students for sponsorship – 40 of them having graduated from primary (elementary) schools and joining secondary schools in their first year. On top of the 104 old students, we also had 2 students in universities and one pupil in primary school – all under our sponsorship programs. These special students are George Ouma, doing an undergraduate degree course in Medicine at Kampala International University in Uganda. The other is Franklin Kai Mwasambu, doing an undergraduate degree course in Information Technology at Moi University, Kenya. And lastly, Mtawali Saniti, a.k.a. Vinani in Standard (grade) 7.

This year we had 112 old continuing students that re-applied and 204 new applications. This marks a drop in the number of applicants this year. The reason is simple. When

most students realize they do not stand a chance academically and that we are not likely to take a big number in a given year, they do not bother to apply.

After Form 4 (grade 12), what next?

We are encouraged by the fact that most of the students we have been supporting have come out with fairly good grades. Some have joined colleges through government bursaries, while others have been absorbed into different sectors of the economy and are working. Last year alone, we had 39 students that had been under our sponsorship program that finished Form 4. Results of last year's Form 4 students have just been released today and it will be interesting to see how the 39 students performed.

After Form 4, most students hope they would still get support from us in pursuing their post secondary school dreams. It is a pity, we have never been able to do this for obvious reasons; we have not had enough funds to support these successful students and, therefore, we have had to be content with the little we have been able to do. Donations have plummeted and we can only hope that the future will have a turn-around.

An economy under a tight noose

So we all thought it started in America and was going to end there. Not so! The 'epidemic' has been spreading pretty fast and it was only a matter of time before it caught up with us here. In a span of only 3 months, prices of consumer goods had sky – rocketed to incredible levels. Prices of basic food items like maize (corn) flour, which is our staple food, had tripled. Gas prices had also gone up – making travel very expensive. Consequently, school authorities also had to review their school fees structures upwards. Suddenly everybody's salaries were not enough and what followed were industrial actions by different cadres of workers. The most notable here was a strike by teachers. It last 3 weeks before they agreed to go back to the classrooms. During this time, learning stalled and it will be interesting to know how they plan to cover for the lost time.

As a result of the post-election violence, most farms were not tended because most of their owners had either been killed or simply lived in fear in internally displaced persons camps. This, coupled with failed rains thereafter, has led to famine countrywide. Today, most homesteads have had to make do with a single meal a day or none at all. Food being a priority, most parents would rather they found food for their families first before thinking of school fees. The result cannot be over-imagined. Most brains would waste away indefinitely in those homes.

Opportunity at any cost

Well, Kenyans seem to be most vulnerable at their most desperate times. Almost a year after last year's bloodletting, disaster after disaster followed us this year. We had one road accident after another and one fire disaster after another. The most recent fire tragedy after a supermarket one was even more tragic, when the circumstances in which it happened are considered. An oil tanker had overturned and Kenyans seeing an opportunity to get free fuel rushed in droves to scoop the spilt 'gold', only for an irrational person somewhere to light a cigarette and let hell loose. The result was that more than 100 persons died in flames, while hundreds more were rushed to hospitals with severe burns.



FIRESTORM

GREAT ESCAPE

Shoppers and staff fled with their lives when one of Nakumatt's busiest stores burnt to the ground ... but the bungled response by council firefighters means next time they might not be so lucky

Special reports & pictures: Pages 2,3,4 & 5

The supermarket fire disaster

TANKER TRAGEDY

PAIN AND DESPAIR

The sorrow and heartbreak were unbearable as a mourning nation, led by its leaders, laid to rest the victims of the Molo fire tragedy in a mass grave



A mourner is overcome with grief during the mass burial for 78 victims of the oil tanker inferno at Sachang'wan, Molo, last week. They were buried near the site of the tragedy on the Nakuru-Eldoret road. Story and pictures on Pages 4 and 5. Photos/JOSEPH KIHARI

The tanker explosion victims' mass burial

Visitors from Canada

Last March, one of our board members – Diane King and her husband were in Kenya for a week. They arrived in Kenya on 15th March and left on 22nd March 2008. During their stay, they had an opportunity to visit some schools and projects that we have finished in recent times.

ON OTHER PAGES

POLICE OFFICER TAKES GOAT MEAT TO COURT
Police officer caused laughter in court as he brings half-cooked meat in a sufuria as exhibit in theft case
PAGE 6

400 TEACHERS TO GET JOBS IN SA

Kenyan tutors may soon head to South Africa where they will earn ten times their current salaries.
PAGE 9

RUGBY TEAM EYE MAJOR UPSET

Rugby coach Benjamin Ayimba wants to upset the order even more with a better show in San Diego.
PAGE 52

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A smile on Kenyans' faces

Maybe last year was not such a bad year after all. What with Kenya having biologically contributed to the procreation of the first American black president! History, exciting, pride-filling! Such was the mood here when President Barrack Obama won the US race for presidency last November and his subsequent inauguration in January this year. The world celebrated, but Kenya celebrated more.

In the midst of all this, Kenya still has the "Audacity of Hope" to move on.

Thank you. God bless you all.

Andrew Thuva

Kilifi, Kenya.