

# The Enaikishomi School and Community Project, Kenya



## **ENAIKISHOMI SCHOOL, KENYA REPORT ON VISIT 25th – 31st OCTOBER 2015 BY EDWARD AND SANDY ELGAR**

Nine months on from our last visit, we were delighted with the warm welcome from all the staff and children at Enaikishomi School.



The confidence and enthusiasm of both young and old are truly inspiring and the new buildings have set a new standard of excellence for schools in the Laikipia district of Kenya.



Since the first donation by the friends and family of Amy in 2005, the School has grown very rapidly from 18 pupils (aged 3-5) and one teacher to 163 pupils (aged 3-11/12) with an excellent team of nine full time teachers, one cook, one gardener, one security guard and a part time sewing teacher. Enaikishomi has set a new standard for education in the local district of Laikipia and in the words of Wanjiku Kinuthia, the Communications & Marketing Manager at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy “Enaikishomi is a bright gem that stands out amongst all our sponsored schools”.

It is time to reflect on the reasons for this success.

### **The Teaching Staff**

The School has truly excellent young teachers who are very well led by the 25 year old Deputy Head, Linnet Gitonga and the newly appointed Headmaster, Anthony Ndirangu, an older man who has a valuable depth of experience.



Linnet Gitonga and Anthony Ndirangu

All of the teachers benefit from purpose built accommodation on the school grounds which means they become close friends eating together and socialising in the evenings, with some playing chess and poker under the direction of Richard Barrett, an English volunteer! Two teachers namely, Linnet and Rose, are studying part time for a Diploma in Early Childhood Development.

There is now a strong team spirit amongst the teachers who take enormous pride in the children. For example, when the School’s athletics team participated in a competition at a neighbouring school at Lokuseru, all of the teachers went along as well to cheer on the runners. And they could not resist telling us that the Enaikishomi children spoke far better English than the children from the other schools.

In the local examinations several classes at Enaikishomi came third out of twenty-five other schools in the Laikipia region - a great achievement for a relatively new school with a catchment area from a very poor community where many of the parents are illiterate. They are all determined that next year they will come first!

## The School Buildings

The School now has eight classrooms (two have just been completed), a staff/administration room, a purpose built kitchen, nine staff accommodation units and a project room being used by the ladies' sewing group.



Two new classrooms

The newest buildings are constructed with sun dried bricks made on site and using some local labour generating much needed income for the local community. The most recent classrooms have steel roofs and all the rainfall will be stored in large brick built tanks (each of which holds 20,000 litres) which will feed the drip feed irrigation in the adjacent school garden.



A brick water tank under construction

## **The School Garden**

The school has an excellent gardener, Dan who grows a wide variety of crops including passion fruit, cabbage, kale, lettuce, beans, tomatoes, potatoes etc which are used to supplement the children's two free meals a day.

We have major plans for the garden in the coming year. Under the direction of an excellent volunteer, Richard Barrett (who is currently living at the school) we plan to expand the garden and introduce a new form of agriculture namely permaculture which will have the potential for making the School self sufficient in food and saving £5500 per year which is the current cost of the feeding programme. It will also make it possible to harvest and replant seeds which are surprisingly expensive in Kenya. This experiment in permaculture will, we hope, be a learning experience both for the older children and the parents, who as a result of drought and changes in land tenure are finding it increasingly difficult to make a living through keeping livestock.

## **Sports and Extra-curricular Activities**

A newly appointed teacher, Morris Mutwiri has proved to be an excellent games teacher and has provided much needed training and organisation to the many children who love playing football and volleyball.



Volleyball

We are delighted that Morris and the Headteacher, Anthony Ndirangu are arranging for the Enaikishomi teams to take part in competitive events against other schools, enabling the children to visit other communities for the first time.

There is also a school athletics team with some of the older children, and indeed some teachers, training to take part in the Lewa marathon.

At a recent athletics competition we were a bit concerned to hear that the Enaikishomi children ran in their school uniforms as they did not have any sports kit. There are discussions as to whether the sewing group will be able to make suitable sports wear. In any event, we are determined that the school teams will be properly equipped next year.

In his spare time Morris has also started a scout group where the children are instructed in first aid, collecting litter, planting trees and generally in helping in the local community.



The scout group

### **School Fees**

School fees are always a subject for debate. We think that the school should charge fees (albeit set at a very low level) for experience suggests that a totally free service will normally have unintended consequences. In the case of Enaikishomi, the provision of free meals and schooling could well encourage parents to have ever larger families on the assumption that the Amy Elgar Trust will both feed and educate their children. The fees have now been set at 400 Kenyan shillings (about £2.50) per child per term. However, there is a problem in collecting fees particularly in times of drought when we are told the market for livestock declines. Most families will try and stagger payment over several weeks or even months. Sadly, we are told that there some families who are taking advantage of the donors on the assumption that they are compassionate people who would not wish to deny education to a child (which is all too true!) It is very difficult to distinguish these free riders from those many families who are genuinely destitute. Under the direction of our volunteer, Richard Barrett, we are introducing a system whereby parents can do casual work at the School (with a notional payment of 300 Kenyan Shillings a day) in lieu of a cash payment. This fits very well with our plan to develop permaculture in the school garden which will necessitate many hours of digging large new areas of ground.

## **The Kenyan Government**

The School is registered with the Kenyan government primarily to ensure that the children can be enrolled in the national examination system. This has had some pleasing and unexpected results. In February, the government installed eight new solar panels powering an impressive array of batteries which now provide power and lighting in three classrooms and the staff room. We are told that this expensive installation is the first step toward fulfilling an election promise to provide every schoolchild with a computer, something that we are told may not happen for several years.

The government appointed and are paying the salary of the Headmaster, Anthony. Then surprisingly, without informing the parents or the governors, they appointed another new teacher, a young man called Boniface who arrived unannounced. As there was no spare staff accommodation, he took the initiative and has installed himself in the staff kitchen!

We are told that Enaikishomi School has an excellent reputation in the teaching profession with many government teachers seeking to be transferred to the school. Currently, there is an ongoing dispute over pay between the government and the teachers union which caused a two month national strike just before our visit. The teachers at Enaikishomi, being privately employed, continued working with the exception of the Headmaster, Anthony a government employee who stayed away!



The interior of the Project Room

## **The Sewing Group**

This year, for the first time, all the school uniforms were made by the local ladies in the sewing group which continues to expand in number. More and more women want to be trained up to acquire this skill and to earn some money. The sewing group are now tendering to make uniforms for another local school at Lokuseru and possibly the smocks for a flower farm near Nairobi which employs some 500 people. We very much hope that they will get one of these contracts.

Last year the sewing group were working either in the open air or in a small tin shed. They have now moved to a beautiful new purpose built project room.

## **Funding**

We were delighted to hear that Enaikishomi School is to receive 309,000 Kenyan Shillings (about £2,000) as its share of the proceeds from the Lewa marathon. The school governors have decided to use this money, supplemented by school fees, to pay the salaries of the three youngest teachers from January 2016 which is a good step toward the goal of long term sustainability. In addition, the Kenyan government is paying the salaries of the two teachers that it has appointed, namely Anthony and Boniface.

The Amy Elgar Trust is paying the salaries of all the other four teachers as well as Dan, the gardener, Siyaine, the cook, Judith, the sewing instructor and Dokas, the security guard – a total of some 1,370,400 KES or £8,900 per year.

The Trust also pays £5,500 for the feeding programme and around £5000 for school supplies (books, paper, pencils etc) and all the necessary desks and chairs when required. In 2017 (if not before) it will be necessary to build two more classrooms and three new staff accommodation units at an estimated cost of at least £50,000.



Richard Barrett

## **The Internet – a great step forward**

Our volunteer, Richard Barrett, to our great delight, researched and found a local company Mawingu Networks who have provided internet access at Enaikishomi via a solar-powered antenna which connects the school to a large network via unused TV and microwave frequencies. In the coming term, the school will be experimenting with a low tech projector powered by a led light. Combined with one of the teacher's smartphones and internet access, subjects can be brought to life. For example in geography, having high definition videos of lava fields and volcanic eruptions projected onto the classroom wall, will introduce the sheer wonders of the topic. Expanding the children's experience outside of their immediate surroundings through internet-driven multimedia resources, will give added depth to every component of the curriculum and feed their innate curiosity. It will also mean that we, as donors, can keep in close contact with the School through email and skype.

We were also delighted that the Communications & Marketing Officer at Lewa Headquarters, Wanjiku Kinuthia (who has a great affection for the School) very kindly offered to redesign the School's website. She is now in touch with Richard and hopefully the website will now be created in Kenya – another step towards self-sustainability.

### **One World Football Project/Indestructible Ball – The Grommet**

The sponsors of this charity had not reckoned with the power of the Enaikishomi/ Maasai footballers! Two balls that we gave in February this year were destroyed within nine months!! But they still love playing with them despite the holes!



The indestructible football!

With many thanks for your continued support,  
Edward and Sandy



# The Amy Elgar Trust for Education and Community Development in Kenya



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