



ENAIKISHOMI SCHOOL

Edward, Sandy and Emily Elgar Visit Report – January 2011

We would first like to thank all the many sponsors who are so generously supporting the developments at the Enaikishomi School. There are many people and organisations (included in the list of donors at the back of this report) whose combined contributions have raised a significant amount of money over the years. We would like to make special mention of the very generous donations received from the Simon Gibson Charitable Trust, the Waterloo Foundation, the Wychwood Charitable Trust, the R J Shaw Trust and the Peter Moores Foundation. More recently, we would like to thank James Peach, Claire Dixey, Guy Burton and Nick Cook, friends of Amy Elgar from Uppingham School, for the substantial funds they raised through the “Britain in Tandem” sponsorship event and fundraising dinner. Having such funds available made us realise that we should discuss and agree on future developments both with the teacher and members of the local Enaikishomi community during our visit. This strategy has proved successful as we were able to identify and agree on some ambitious plans for developing the school.





2nd classroom to be added to present building (on the left)

Proposed Future Developments

We received a proposal from the teacher, Evalyne that we should construct a second classroom at the school so that the children could remain at Enaikishomi until the age of 10 years. This proposal was subsequently discussed and agreed with the local community. It is a very important development for a number of reasons:-

(a) At present children leave Enaikishomi at the age of 7 and then have to go to the primary school at Ethi which is at least 4 miles away entailing a two hour round walk every day.

(b) Evalyne has expressed doubts about the quality of education at Ethi. She worries that she is spending a lot of time and effort on giving the children a good foundation only for this to be lost when they start at Ethi School. We visited Ethi School and spoke to the headmaster and a number of his teachers. We were concerned to learn that the kitchen at Ethi was not working; the water supply has been disrupted; there was a shortage of teachers and very large classes. The results at examination level have apparently been very disappointing. We did consider carefully whether we should not try and support Ethi School but the task would be enormous and would spread our resources too thinly. After much thought, we have concluded that the best way we could support Ethi would be by building a second classroom at Enaikishomi thereby reducing the intake of new pupils to Ethi which would hopefully improve the staff/student ratio at that school.

(c) The visit to Ethi School confirmed our view that thanks to the generosity of our donors, the Enaikishomi School enjoys by Kenyan standards an absolutely excellent infrastructure: clean running water, an up to date kitchen with excellent cooking facilities, a well maintained and clean new classroom, an electric fence that protects the school compound both from domestic and wild animals. At present we feel that this infrastructure, which serves just 30 pupils (since our visit the number of pupils has increased to 41), is being seriously underused. In order to maximize the investment that we and the donors have made creating this superb infrastructure, we think it makes great sense to increase the number of pupils to 60 or even 70.

(d) There would also be advantages to the Enaikishomi School in retaining the services of children aged 7 to 10/11 who would be able to help Evalyne with simple tasks such as watering the garden and the trees.

(e) We think that by keeping the children at Enaikishomi until the age of 10/11, we can ensure that the high quality education that they are receiving at the school will provide an important and lasting foundation that will be of benefit throughout their lives.

The proposal to construct a second classroom was enthusiastically endorsed at our meeting with the members of the local community.



Evalyne, the teacher

The second proposal from Evalyne was slightly more controversial in that she advocated the construction of staff accommodation. We gave careful thought to this idea and rapidly became convinced that there would be important advantages in constructing three rooms – one room for Evalyne, one for a second teacher and one for visitors or gap year students. This accommodation will be provided with a separate toilet, shower and kitchen for all to share. We considered this proposal carefully and recognised that it has a number of major advantages:

- (a) Evalyne would be living within the school compound and would not have to spend two hours each day walking to and from her rented room in Ethi. She would have much more time to oversee and manage the various projects at the school including the vegetable garden, adult education and the water project.
- (b) We also think that the provision of a visitor's room could be very important to the future development of the school. We know that Evalyne would welcome help from Amy's friends or gap year students to assist with the teaching especially of the English language. Visitors could also help with the tree plantation and with the school vegetable garden. It is also our intention that any visitors to the school should be encouraged to assist the headmaster and staff at Ethi School who are under great pressure. In brief, we would probably propose an arrangement whereby the visitors would divide their time between Ethi and Enaikishomi.

We were slightly concerned that the local community might consider that Evalyne was receiving more favourable treatment than themselves. However, at the community meeting this concern appeared to be unfounded. Evalyne is clearly now a respected member of the community and the proposal to build teacher accommodation was unanimously agreed.



Morning porridge

The Education of the Children

We continue to be delighted and impressed with our teacher Evalyne who is, I think, a source of inspiration both to the pupils as well as to the Enaikishomi community. Evalyne successfully exerts a kindly discipline over the children, who all appear to be very lively and happy.

Evalyne is teaching the children, in both English and Swahili, reading and writing and elementary mathematics.

Evalyne has instituted an excellent school rule whereby each child must bring a stick with him or her to class. These sticks are used to fire the wood burning cookers that cook their breakfast and lunch.

We discussed with Evalyne how the children might help with the watering of the trees which will become increasingly important given the tree planting programme (see below). Evalyne will try to institute a system whereby each child is responsible for watering four trees each day. In order to do this, we will have to provide small watering cans for the children. However, we think that this could be an important initiative in teaching the children how to care for their environment.

We also discussed with Evalyne the idea for the children being taken on a game drive in the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Many of these children will not have seen the wonderful wildlife of their own country and Evalyne thought that a game drive would be highly enjoyable as well as instructive for the children.

Unfortunately, the adult education programme is now poorly supported with only three ladies attending on a regular basis. We hope that matters will improve when Evalyne moves to her new accommodation within the school compound when she will be available full-time.

The Kitchen and Feeding Programme

This has been a major success. The cook, Siyaine Kisio, takes great pride in his work and keeps the kitchen very clean. He is now an expert at using the wood burning stoves and can cook very large meals with just a few sticks.

Siyaine is very committed to his job and on his own initiative he arranged in August of last year to spend a month with the cooks at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to improve his culinary skills! In brief, the kitchen is clean, well organized and the food programme is much appreciated by both the children and their parents.



Solar panels and bore hole



Header Tank

Bore Hole and Solar Power System

There was a crisis in June 2010 when the solar pump in the bore hole burnt out and had to be replaced at a cost of \$3,000. This was a serious blow as the pump was only just over 12 months old and out of warranty. However, we had to move quickly to replace it given that all members of the community now rely upon clean fresh water at the roadside water kiosk. We discussed this problem with the Lewa Logistics Manager, Harry Hanegraaf, who explained that experience had shown that solar pumps are put under enormous strain if they are used at those times of the day when there is no bright sunlight and consequently a relatively small electric charge.

We also have the continuing problem of water being wasted from the overflow pipe when the 40,000 litre header tank is full. One way round this problem would be to introduce a flow switch, which might be very expensive. Harry Hanegraaf's very able assistant, Richard, visited the school subsequently when we took meter readings at the borehole. Richard calculated that to maintain a good level of water in the header tank, the pump would have to operate from just 10.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. on two sunny days out of three. This rule will help to preserve the pump and should also solve the problem of water being wasted through the overflow. We have decided to give this new system a try before going to the considerable expense of introducing a flow switch. Richard gave the guard, Dokas, clear instructions about the future operation of the solar pump.

We are pleased to note that Dokas has taken on board the instruction to clean the solar panels on a regular basis. This is essential to maintain sufficient power. We are also delighted to note that (at least during our visit!) no mobile phones were being charged from the battery that services the electric fence around the school compound.

We asked Dokas to check the voltage on the perimeter electric fence and this appeared to be quite satisfactory.



Terrain leading to the waterhole at the bottom of the ravine



Water source that was used before the bore hole

The Water Project

In order to help us understand the significance of the water project, we asked the cook, Siyaine, to show us the water supply that the community was using before the construction of the water kiosk. This was an absolute eye opener! Just across the road from the school there is a very steep ravine with a rocky path which twists and turns down to a small dam holding a small amount of very muddy brackish water. Personally, I found this path both tiring and treacherous and found it hard to imagine how the women used to carry 20 litre water containers up such a steep and rocky path. The descent and return climb took us a full 30 minutes.

We were delighted to note that the water kiosk is a hive of activity with women coming with their donkeys from far and wide to queue for water. There is absolutely no doubt that the water kiosk has dramatically improved the quality of life for women in Enaikishomi and other local communities.

During our visit to the school, we also visited the nearby township of Ethi and discovered that the water from the water kiosk at Ethi is priced at 6 KES per 20 litres. In contrast, the Enaikishomi water kiosk is charging the local people just 3 KES for 20 litres. On our return journey from Ethi, we came across a number of women with donkeys who upon enquiry turned out to be inhabitants of Ethi. These ladies are walking 4 to 6 miles each day to save 3 KES per 20 litres by buying water at the kiosk at Enaikishomi. The current exchange rate is one pound sterling to 126 KES.

A further important development of the water project is the re-instatement of a 10,000 litre holding tank immediately behind the school kitchen. This enables us to store a lot more water and has significantly improved the water pressure in the kitchen, wash basins and in the newly installed toilets which include a European loo in addition to an Asian style squatter!

Water from the school borehole is used by a local European family, the Thoulesses. They are paying 500 KES per cubic meter of water which is the equivalent of 10 KES for 20 litres, a significant source of revenue for the school.

However, we are disappointed that payments being made by local people buying water at the kiosk have consistently been lower than the salary being earned by the water lady! On our last visit, we had agreed that Lewa would install a money box in the kiosk that would be locked and emptied on a regular basis. It turns out that the local community thought that the kiosk would be broken into and consequently the water lady has been keeping the money box in her own house! When we asked to see the money box, we were astonished that it is not being used – and is in fact useless as the key has snapped off in the lock and it cannot be opened!! The sums of water money remitted by the water lady never tally with the amount registered on the meter in the kiosk.



Walking to the water kiosk



Queuing at the water kiosk

There is also some confusion as to whether the water lady has been charging 2 or 3 KES per 20 litres of water – and the ladies we met from Ethi said that they had been charged 4 KES for 20 litres. We raised these problems with Evalyne and members of the local community and someone suggested that the kiosk should be open for only one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon so that it could be supervised by a member of the school staff. However, it became apparent that this would be impracticable as well as unfair to those families who rely upon the water supply.

We did agree that there would be a clear sign erected alongside the water kiosk stating precisely the prices for 20, 10 and 5 litres of water. This will make it impossible for the water lady to charge a higher price. At Sandy's suggestion there will be a second sign placed at the water kiosk that will read "Proceeds from the sale of this water are donated to the Enaikishomi School".

Shortly after our visit, Emily Elgar suggested an ingenious way of solving this problem. She believes that we could fix a water meter that would be operated by tokens that the consumers could buy from the school. This would immediately give us much more control over the distribution of the water and would also overcome the risk of people breaking into the kiosk as tokens would be less attractive to a prospective thief than money. The major advantage is that the water kiosk could then remain open throughout the day. We will be making enquiries as to the practicability of fixing a token water meter to the kiosk.

In order to test the feasibility of this idea, we are hoping to introduce an interim measure whereby the school will purchase 200/300 tokens – which could either be plastic or metal (and impossible to copy) – which will be kept in the school building. Each token would be priced at one and a half KES such that one token would purchase 10 litres of water, two tokens would purchase 20 litres of water and three tokens would purchase 30 litres of water. Members of the community who require water would first go to the school and purchase either from Siyaine or from Evalyne a sufficient number of tokens. The school would be supplied with a firm strong cash box where the money would be deposited and kept under lock and key. The local people would then use the tokens to pay the water lady for their water. At the end of every week – or other period that would be convenient – the water lady would return the tokens to the school, at which point Evalyne would take a reading of the metre to ensure that the amount of water supplied corresponded with the number of tokens used. This system would have the advantage of removing any temptations from the water lady and would also ensure that the money paid for the water is kept in a safe and secure environment.



Faith Riunga, Lewa Education Officer

The Vegetable Garden

This is a source of great disappointment. We understood from our main contact at Lewa, Faith Riunga, that the school garden had in fact been subcontracted to a local women's group, some of whom were parents at the school whilst others were from a different community. It appears that there were disputes within the women's group between those who were working hard and those who were working less hard with the result that the rewards were unevenly distributed. There was also a problem of access to the school garden bearing in mind that the school was sometimes closed in the afternoon and only one member of the women's group had a key to the gate. As a result of these internal divisions, little or no work has been done recently in the garden which is a great pity as the women's group had begun with great enthusiasm tilling all the soil and erecting large nets over the garden to protect the produce from the birds.

Faith has now agreed with the women's group that ownership of the garden will immediately revert to the school for a 12 month period. We will be asking Evalyne to direct the garden project and she will find this much easier after she has moved into the teacher accommodation that we will be building. We are increasing the salary of the cook, Siyaine Kisio, on the understanding that he will work with Evalyne on the garden. There is a proposal for introducing a drip feed water system in the school garden which we strongly support.

The temporary failure of the main garden is all the more frustrating as Evalyne has successfully cultivated a small garden adjacent to the kitchen where she has grown local kale and other vegetables.

The Tree Plantation

During a visit to a flower farm at Kisima we met with Charlie Dyer who is one of the sons of Rose and Tony Dyer, the original owners of the nearby Borana Conservancy. Charlie Dyer very kindly gave us 86 saplings of the local indigenous cedar tree. Subsequently, we were pleased that Emily invited Rose Dyer to visit the school and advise us on the planting of local indigenous trees. Rose Dyer is an inspirational leader in this part of Africa and we were delighted when she offered us support for the tree growing project. She has taken the 86 cedar saplings back to her farm where they will be re-potted to allow them to develop more quickly. In April she will return to the school to organise the planting of the 86 cedars as well as some local varieties of fig, olive and chestnut that will be used to create a mixed wood. We agreed with the local community that they would take responsibility for digging the 200 holes – 2 feet square by 3 feet deep – that will be necessary. We further agreed to pay 20 KES per hole to give some incentive to have the work completed as soon as possible. Edward worked with the guard Dokas to place stones at 4 metre intervals in a large plot at the front of the school to indicate precisely where each hole should be dug.

We are very grateful for the support of Rose Dyer and are confident that under her direction the tree planting will be a success.



The Internal Funding of the School

The school currently benefits from the following funding:

- the Thouless family for water
- water paid by the locals at the water kiosk
- school fees which are fixed at 100 KES per child per month.

Unfortunately, this revenue is not sufficient for the school to be self-sustaining. The local people are simply too poor to pay higher school fees or higher charges for the water. This will clearly not improve when we employ a second teacher.

We were impressed that Evalyne keeps a day book detailing the fees paid or owed by parents as well as payments made. There is some concern about loans being made to members of the community and also the lending of school equipment – forks and spades – to local people. This must be discouraged. We are concerned that implements being lent to local people may be damaged and only returned to the school when they are in a state beyond repair. We may ask Evalyne to take some training in the accounts department at Lewa headquarters to help her prepare the school accounts using an excel spreadsheet.

Looking further ahead, it is going to be important that the school has projects to generate funds from outside the immediate Enaikishomi community. We have considered selling vegetables if and when the garden project is working successfully, and we have had some extravagant ideas for a rabbit farm! However, in the immediate future, we believe that all our efforts should be concentrated on making the garden project work successfully.

We were very gratified that the local community agreed to contribute 50,000 KES from the school funds to the cost of the two new toilets.



Ladies giving us a welcome



Comittee meeting

Community Meeting

On the last day of our visit, there was a meeting of the local community at the school which was very well attended both by the women and significantly by the men. The meeting with the community began with some songs that were very well sung by the school children under Evalyne's direction. It was followed by some dancing and further songs from the mothers. This welcome was deeply moving and a heartfelt expression of gratitude toward the many donors who have given so generously to the development of the school.

It is enormously encouraging that members of the community are taking a close interest in the development of the school. We are also delighted that our teacher, Evalyne is now accepted as a member of the community and is providing leadership. We were pleased that the community strongly supported the proposals for a second classroom and teacher and visitor accommodation. One of the men present asked if members of the local community could be hired as labourers to work on the new buildings, something that we asked Richard from Lewa to consider. It was also explained to us that since they do not wish to have their children walking as far as Ethi School they supported the construction of further classrooms in the future. The Chairman of the Governors, James, asked if sometime in the future the classroom could be fitted with a solar panel that would be used to power a school computer – something that we will certainly consider in the longer term. In the meantime, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd has donated to the school a portable Apple computer which will be for the use of the teacher. This is something of a pilot study to see if the introduction of new technology will be of significant benefit to the school.



Giving of the laptop

At the end of the meeting, our administrator Faith Riunga gave the community a long lecture on the importance of education. This was followed by a long and moving prayer in Maasai before the lunch of rice and local sheep was served.

Future Projects

In the next 12 months we face the major challenges of building a second classroom and staff and visitor accommodation. We also face the challenge of managing the water kiosk more effectively through installing a water meter that would be fed by tokens. We also need to re-start the kitchen garden. When these objectives have been achieved, we might then consider a number of new projects including:-

1. The installation of a giant underground water tank. This was a suggestion made by Richard, the engineer from Lewa, who explained that in the rainy season the water tanks located alongside the buildings can fill up very quickly – literally within 2/3 hours. It would be very simple to install a large underground water tank that would provide long term storage for water collected during the rainy season. The water in this underground tank would be powered by solar pump to a header tank within the school compound. This idea has a number of attractions as it would preserve water from the borehole and provide a significant alternative source of water for the school.
2. In the longer term we would certainly like to consider the Chairman's suggestion that we should install a solar panel to power a computer in the classroom.
3. There are also suggestions that we should buy a milking goat to provide fresh milk for the children. This sounds like it could be slightly problematic as these goats have to be housed in a special shed !
4. Another idea which is on hold is the creation of a rabbit farm which might be relatively easy to manage and provide a source of income in the future.

We believe that when the building works have been completed, the school will benefit enormously from visits by friends and family of Amy as well as gap year students. So should any donors be aware of people interested in working at the Enaikishomi School, please let us know. Whilst the school is located in a very remote area, it has marvellous views of Mount Kenya and is close to major game reserves, namely the Borana Lodge and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

Thank you for your support for the Enaikishomi School.

We are preparing a DVD on our recent visit and anyone who would like to receive a copy should contact Sandy Elgar (email: sandy@e-elgar.co.uk or telephone: 01242 226934). It will also be added to the Enaikishomi website:

www.enaikishomi.org

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