

Osiligi Charity Projects Newsletter September 2010

Hello,

The charity tries to visit Kenya every 3 months. However our Kenyan project manager Tajeu is in the UK touring with the Maasai Warriors so we are not making our usual visit to Kenya. We still have some interesting news.

Water

Our well has been a victim of its own success. As the Olepolos community enters the dry season Tajeu tells us it is being pumped dry. Many of the other water sources are only available during the wet season so are now empty. 150 families arrive at the well soon after daybreak and by 11am it is empty. We are amazed to hear many are walking 20 miles. This is their only source of free clean water. We are hoping the well will supply more water with time as it takes a while for a well to bed in and reach its maximum capacity. If not, we may have to dig it deeper next year.

Roger has been planning to dig further bore holes so people won't have to walk so far and is excited to find a cheap, simple method using hand tools. To use a borehole machine would cost about £10,000. Using hand tools will take two men three weeks and as local people are desperate for work, it's the right solution for Kenya. Now comes the hard part: finding or making the tools in Kenya. Roger is confident.

Later this year we will be tapping two springs by adding a pipe into the source of the water. This way, people will be able to draw clean water from the pipe before it runs into the filthy watering hole used by animals.

We have some good news. We have just received a generous donation for our water projects - it couldn't have come at a better time.

The Warriors

The two women and six men are now on tour in Scotland and moving to East Anglia for October. The new narrator, Simon, here for the first time, has a few observations about the UK:

Your cows are fat.

Children's school uniforms are not dusty. (Maasai schools have dirt floors. This makes dust and it's impossible for children to keep clean. And of course, they don't have washing machines or water on tap)

Scottish children have much curiosity and are bold. (Maasai children are shy and obedient.)

British greetings are very short. People just say "hello" and move on. (Maasai greetings involve mandatory questions about the whole, extended family)

Drivers are obedient and roads well ordered. This is good. (Kenyan drivers go as fast as they like, roads are full of huge holes and have no markings)

Your sheep and cows are left in fields at night. Don't they get eaten by wild animals or stolen? (The biggest threat is from hyenas. Any theft is not by other Maasai. As a tribe they have a reputation for honesty)

We have enjoyed watching the Warriors perform in schools. Some of the highlights include:

Teachers' faces when realisation dawns they are expected to attempt Maasai jumping (to the great amusement of their pupils.) They deserve a medal for being such good sports. Maasai, whose jumping is legendary, jump high, on the spot, arms by their side and with great control. Try it - it's not easy!

The question by a small child, which obviously shocked Tajeu: "Have you ever killed anyone?" His reply, incredulous, gentle and serious: "Maasai don't kill." It's not a surprising question though. The Warriors look fierce. They carry swords and knives. What is surprising is that they can carry them with ease through UK Customs. The Warriors have been known to burst into song in Immigration - partly in fun but also just in case officialdom is in any doubt as to why they are here!

Even the police in Nairobi will not challenge the Maasai for carrying weapons. Maasai are known for being peaceful.

Osiligi Charities has been showing a slide show of cultural differences and similarities at the Warriors' performances. We feel guilty at the reaction our slide of a mother and baby provoked. Lydia, the mother, is one of the two female Osiligi Warriors. This reminder of her child made her burst into

tears. All the warriors are very homesick but still manage to give a stunning performance - true professionals.

Walk with the Maasai - Sunday 31st October

The Maasai Warriors are looking forward to a sponsored walk in and around scenic and historic Ely. John Curtin, who first brought the Warriors to the UK, will be joining them to walk 10 miles, the longest of three circular routes. The Warriors would love you to join them and promise to leave their spears behind. Money raised will go towards the new school building. Details at www.osiligi.org/walk.html

New School build

This is progressing slowly. Tajeu has been trying to prepare the paperwork with lawyers but the legal jargon is proving difficult for him - after all, English is his third language. We are now plodding through the documents. As expected, much patience is needed and we must allow for "Kenyan time". If there are any legal experts who can advise on the general process (not the detail) involved in the UK for land transfer and registering a school we would love to hear from you. Fortunately, Kenyan law is based on UK law.



The end of term assembly outside the existing school

Sponsored children

The charity is sponsoring 12 children at the existing local school. The children have posted letters to their sponsors - the first of 2 batches took a month to arrive. They are all keen to point out just how hard they are working and what grades they got in the end of term exams. Peninah, the sponsor administrator, is a real gem. She goes the extra mile by looking after them and helping them keep in touch.

Fundraising

Although we are not out in Kenya we are busy trying to raise money for the school. We have had some fantastic support, especially from junior schools who organise sponsored events, coffee mornings and non-uniform days. It all adds up! We try to do our bit in return by giving them information on the Olepolos children and their school.

Sophisticated UK

A bemused Tajeu:

"The Maasai keep tea hot in a thermos flask. You British put a woolly hat on tea pots"

Thanks to all our supporters. We hope you will take the opportunity to meet the Maasai Warriors at one of their UK events or at their sponsored walk in Ely. Much more on the website www.osiligi.org

Helen Pannell