

Supporting Tanzanian
STOW
Orphans and Widows

STOW NEWS

Summer 2015

Issue number 17



Thumbs up for school!

www.stowcharity.org
Charity registration no 1112424

Dear members,

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer. We have just come back from a muddy but enjoyable WOMAD festival where we saw lots of groups from all over the world singing and dancing. It was very moving to hear a group from Soweto singing “asante Tanzania” (thank you Tanzania) for helping them in the struggle against apartheid.

When I was in Tanzania back in 1998 to 2000 on my VSO placement, many of the small local charities were a bit sceptical about how long any of the European charities would stay working in the Tanga area. I was told that so many just stayed around for a few years and then gave up. Well STOW hasn't! **10 years later** we are still supporting vulnerable children to have a different and more positive outcome



to their lives. Much of this success is thanks to all you 190 members who keep on supporting STOW in so many ways – more about this later!

Of course we also owe huge thanks to Schola and Esther who are TUMAINI – our Tanzanian Partner NGO. Schola not only buys all the school materials, gets the children measured up and the uniforms made, and buys school shoes for all 143 children but also ensures that all their school fees are paid and helps the older ones choose their

further education courses and then gets them into the appropriate institutions! She is effectively “den mother” to all our secondary school children. If they get a problem, they go to her and she invariably sorts things out for them, whether it is a problem at home, at school or in their rented accommodation.

Esther never has a cross word to say to anyone – the children love her. She has taken one of our sponsored children into her house as he has nowhere else to live. When Schola was indisposed a while ago, she cheerfully took me on all the school and home visits. It was plain that she knew all the families, children, teachers and Heads at all the schools we went to. She was liked and respected by all.





Schola and Esther in the field—nothing is too much trouble for these wonderful ladies!

February Monitoring Trip

Pam has written a great article about her 3rd visit to Tanga to help with the distribution of school materials and make home and school visits. I'll try not to repeat what she has said!

It is always dry and hot in February but this year it was even hotter and the winds blew all the time sending dry dust everywhere. I noticed that many of the children had dry coughs, caused by the dust. We managed to visit all 9 primary schools where we sponsor children, 10 out of the 13 secondary schools and 5 vocational training colleges. We visited 84 homes and met with those caretakers who are getting start-up loans. Let me tell you some stories about what we saw and heard.

Home visits

When we visited Mleni Primary school where we sponsor 9 children, the Head told us that William was not at school and he didn't know why. After giving all the other children their school materials, we set off to see if we could find William at home.

We arrived to find him lying on a mat, wrapped in a cloth outside his home. He told us he had malaria and hadn't had anything to eat or drink that morning. His cousin Rehema was despatched immediately with some money I gave her to buy some water and something to eat. Sitting with William



William not feeling too good

was a young lad of around 8 years feeding a wood fire with sticks and stirring uji, a staple



meal that is a bit like porridge. He told us that he had gone into school that morning but had come home to make some food for his friend William. That's what I call friendship!!

One day, our driver, Mnyalu, decided that he would risk the bush and take us on a home visit to Ally's house. Ally is a plucky little boy, quite small for a 13-year-old. He was quite chatty on the long drive to his home and told me he leaves home at 6 am and arrives at school at 7 – he runs all the way, otherwise he is late for school, which he doesn't want to be!

Like most of STOW's supported children, Ally does not have anything to eat before he leaves home. The Tanzanian Government has decreed that all school children should have a meal at school. But the parents have to contribute maize or money for this, so STOW now pays all the schools to provide uji (porridge) to our children.

After a long drive down a track that seemed to be going nowhere, we finally arrived. Ally's father works on a smallholding which is owned by an absent landlord. There



are cows, goats and chickens but Ally's father was quick to tell me that they don't own any of these and are not allowed to eat or drink anything from the smallholding. They have to go miles by bike to buy water. The father also travels far to sell the milk they get from the cows. He earns 30,000/- per month (about £11).

He said he gets discouraged with how difficult life is and would like to leave the farm but he wants Ally to complete his primary school education and have a chance to go on to secondary school. As he could only do this if STOW continues to support him, they are staying on. I am once again humbled by young folk who struggle with their daily existence but who have aspirations to improve their lives by getting an education.

School Visits

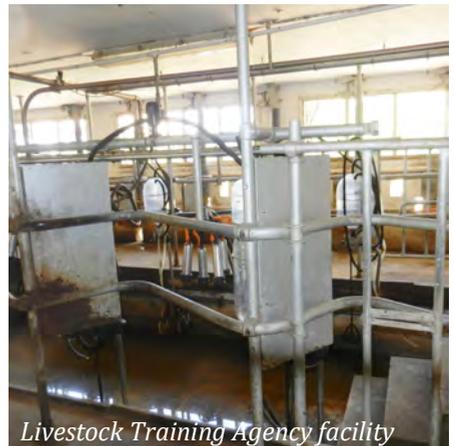
Pam mentions seeing improvements in secondary schools (p6). We saw some new ideas in primary schools too. Mwang'ombe Primary (twinned with Saxmundham Primary School) is – as put by the Head Teacher – “trying to teach the children citizenship”. There was a big cardboard box hanging from a tree into which all the pupils had to put their “takataka” (rubbish). I must say the school grounds were very neat and tidy. Mwang'ombe wasn't the only primary school where I saw boxes hanging from trees.

Mleni Primary School is in a very poor village miles out of town going towards the Kenyan border. Mleni is twinned with Springfield Junior School in Ipswich. The Rotary Club of Tanga has been liaising with other Rotary Clubs in the UK and Mleni Primary has benefitted from getting massive water tanks to collect water when the long rains come. This means the children won't have to walk miles to collect water for the teachers' tea! Hence they will spend more time in the classroom!!



Vocational Training:

STOW has been sponsoring Amiri since he was in Primary School. His grandmother (the indomitable, garrulous café owner you may have seen videos of during my talks!) is his carer and always encourages him to work hard. He used to show me his exercise books all neatly kept on a desk in his room at home. This all paid off as he is now at a prestigious government agriculture college, just outside Tanga town, studying livestock management. The Head told me that when Amiri passes his diploma course (which he is confident he will) he will be guaranteed to get a government job. Knowing Amiri, as I have over the last 10 years, he will then become his grandmother's carer! *Marie*



Fundraising

STOW is lucky to have had over the 10 years so many generous sponsors. Ben-hall Church has been very generous to STOW at their Harvest Festivals, as have the Film Festivals at Bryan's Barn, which, since 2005, have raised over £4,000. The Rotary Club of Saxmundham and District has supported STOW for some years. The list goes on and I tell every person what a difference they have made to the lives of so many vulnerable children.

Over the years, we have had some amazing fundraising events by members. We need to raise around £36,000 every year and I have told you about many of them in our newsletters. This year, as I am writing this article, a young man – Jono Dunnett – is raising money for STOW (and for Pancreatic Cancer research) in a bid to become the first person to solo windsurf (no water-based support) around Britain. He started out from Clacton beach on June 7th and STOW was there to see him off and wish him well.



He expects the expedition to take around 3 months and is currently on the west shores of Scotland in Mallaig doing some running repairs to his board, having crossed the Irish Sea, windsurfed up the Irish coast and re-

crossed back from Northern Ireland. If you haven't already done so, do sponsor him! By the time you read this he will have got much further!

Go to www.windsurfroundbritain.co.uk and track his progress and support him by sponsoring him - click on "charities/donate". You can also read his blog and see for yourselves what an amazing feat this is and how courageous he has been in some trying times.



We said farewell to Thurstons Barn in our newsletter last summer after what we thought was our last event there. BUT we were there again this summer, celebrating our 10th anniversary, courtesy of the new owners John and Amy - thank you! A very good time was had by all thanks to beautiful singing and guitar playing by Lucy Sampson and a highly entertaining talk by Shakespeare expert Simon Bridge with much audience participation! We raised just over £1800.



Thanks again to Saxmundham Primary School – as a result of two fundraising events – a coffee morning and a sponsored book read – pupils, families and teachers this year raised the amazing amount of £806.61.



As most members will know, Saxmundham Primary has supported STOW since 2007 and over the years has raised over £3,000.



I give a talk at the school about STOW most terms and the children always ask such searching questions. They are always amazed to see how many children sit in one classroom. Quite a different experience from their light and airy rooms.



STOW: Ten Years Old - Looking Back, Looking Forward

STOW was founded in June 2005 making this year our 10th anniversary.

This has prompted me to take a curious peek at past newsletters and finance statements. The newsletters have gone from single-sheet flyers promoting forthcoming fundraising events to what we have now, a newsletter in large part showing how your donations translate into individual, educationally based life-changing opportunities for what still remain some of the most deprived children in the world. The national Tanzanian economy may have moved forward in leaps and bounds over recent years but our STOW children from the poor rural north have yet to benefit to anything like the extent of some of their urban contemporaries.

Looking at early STOW donation sheets I am struck by how many of the names of early supporters are still appearing (of course along with many more recent additions) 10 years later when we balance the STOW books each month. Again, when I look at the money going out each month it remains clear that STOW continues to run as STOW began, still on half a shoestring with regards to expenses. Almost all money coming in continues to be spent directly in supporting and actively monitoring our known and sponsored individually named and seen children in Tanga region, Tanzania.

Over the past ten years STOW has continued to keep its promise that a child once on the STOW books will continue to be supported for as long as he/she remains in education. This stance by example (and intention) over time has greatly helped our credibility in Tanzania, with local communities, our local partners (Tumaini), and not least with the school and educational powers that be.

In reality this means that when problems arise, as they invariably do with such a vulnerable group of children, STOW and Tumaini are listened to and solutions often ‘found’ and implemented which would not otherwise have happened. In the UK this continues I believe to be reflected by the ongoing generosity of our members and many supporters.

So what has changed? Well from my perspective, email has greatly sped up information going between, and decision making by, trustees in between meetings. Internet banking is a lot less ‘clunky’ and money transfers to Tanzania are simpler and now free (thanks HSBC). Submissions to the Charity Commissioners and HMRC (Gift Aid reclaim) are now online.



We’ve seen Kassimu all the way through school and college to full-time employment as an electrician

Online donations by way of the ‘My Donate’ website from sponsored events have also become increasingly important.

The Trustees have made the difficult but pragmatic decision not to take on any new children at this time. This is because an increasing number of our students are successfully entering higher and technical education, which as in the UK, has seen a dramatic increase in fees.

So, building on our 10 years’ experience of raising funds, being accountable to members, and actively monitoring how the money is spent, we propose with your generous help to **‘Stay Calm, Raise Cash, and Carry On’**.

Martin Stevens Hon. Treasurer July 2015

Impressions of a serial volunteer

This was my third monitoring visit to Tanzania with STOW and many of the people and places we visited have become familiar to me. It was five years since my first visit and many changes were soon apparent. The enormous increase in traffic in Dar es Salaam was evident with lengthy traffic jams at peak times. The standard of driving has improved. However, the condition of the pavements has not! and I still needed to watch my every step.

It was great to meet several of our college students. All were highly motivated and rightly proud of their progress. The colleges are all introducing compulsory fieldwork as part of their courses and require additional fees, often with little notice, causing Schola (and STOW!) budgeting headaches. We gave one of our college students a lift to the hospital because he had an eye infection, and we had to pay for hospital parking – some things are becoming universal!

I found the major change in the villages we visited was the arrival of electricity. We saw the poles and rolls of cable awaiting connection. To be eligible for supply, houses have to have tin roofs instead of thatched palm leaf panels. Many families are striving to make this change.

One of our students, Kassimu, a ‘soon-to-be-electrician-graduate’, had already secured employment following his fieldwork placement and others are hopeful of finding similar employment.

There is increasing awareness in secondary schools that improved English skills are required and many are offering additional tuition. Also some teachers offer private tuition to supplement their salaries.

STOW’s long-standing policy of closely monitoring our students’ welfare and financial



circumstances is acknowledged and accepted by the schools and assists Tumaini in getting receipts for all payments made.

I found the atmosphere in the schools I visited to be a little less formal, making it easier for us to get a better picture of both the improvements made and the difficulties which teachers and our children experience, for example, issues with the availability of water and ‘porridge’ at break times. Some issues are all too familiar, with one head complaining about the lack of science and maths teachers!

Although supporting some children at boarding schools is relatively expensive, we had several reports to say that vulnerable girls especially benefited from the supportive and protective environment that they provide.

Once our orphans reach 14/15 years of age they appear to receive little support from their previous caregivers and increasingly look to Schola and Esther to provide advice, guidance



and sometimes basic material assistance. As more of our children successfully move into secondary and further education, their roles are increasingly essential.

It was good to see the improved facilities at several of the schools. Our supported orphans are benefiting from the ongoing development as education is making progress in Tanzania.

I feel privileged to have again had this opportunity to see at first hand the positive outcomes for STOW-sponsored children and students, and to confirm that the money so generously donated is being well targeted and effectively spent and achieving the aims of STOW. *Pam Stevens*

Dates for your Diary

NOTICE of STOW Annual General Meeting

This will be held at 4 pm on

Sunday 6th September 2015

at

Dennys Farm, East Green, Kelsale,
Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 2PH

The AGM will be followed by a bring-and-share afternoon tea
(please let us know what you are bringing on 01728 603348)

Tanzania—a brief guide

Geography

Area: 7 × England, 4 × UK,

Area of National Parks etc:

5 × Wales

Pop: 48m, 44% under 14, growth
2.8% (so 80m projected by 2035)

Literacy rate: 69%

Politics

Stable multi-party democracy
since 1992.

Founder Nyerere resigned in 1985.

Successor Mwinyi dismantled govt
control of economy. Mkapa

(elected 1995) and Kikwete

(elected 2005) have continued this
policy. Presidents can only serve a
max of two 5-year terms.

Economics

GDP growth since 2006: 6.7% -
one of the best in sub-Saharan
Africa

Inflation: 6.5%

Population below poverty line:
36%.

Av annual income: £300 per
person

Religions

Christian 30%

Muslim 35%

Indigenous beliefs 35%

Official Languages

Swahili and English

Since STOW's founding in June 2005 we have provided 2,000 annual school places, helping well over 300 individual children get an education.



Team meeting



We are on the BT MyDonate website to help our fundraisers and to enable people to use a debit or credit card to donate to us.

Every penny of the money donated (excluding minimal card charges) comes to STOW including any Gift Aid due. We like to thank our donors so, if you use this service and want us to know who you are, please email us separately.

To register as a fundraiser or donor, go to www.btplc.com/mydonate and click on the 'Log-in/Register' button found near the top right of the screen, choose the 'Personal' tab and follow the on-screen instructions. Once you have created your personal account, you will then be able to log in and start fundraising, or sponsor a fundraiser, or donate directly to STOW.