

The Banana Tree Project

Registered with the England & Wales Charity Commission (1116669)

Newsletter: January 2007

The Banana Tree Project:

The Banana Tree Project was established and registered with the England & Wales Charity Commission in November 2006. The aim of the project is to raise funds to help educate orphans and street children in Mwanza, Tanzania. The hope is that the project will take and keep street children off the streets and allow for them to be educated through primary and secondary schools and through vocational qualifications to enable them to get jobs and become self-sufficient. Examples of organisations which may gain assistance are Fonelisco, an orphanage in the Ilemela district of Mwanza, and Wovesot, an organisation established by a former teacher in Mwanza which provides free schooling and lunch for orphans who are unable to afford primary school.

Activities so far...

I started working with street children in Mwanza in December 2005. Some friends and I established a food & activities club once a week where children could come to eat, drink and receive basic first aid, as well as draw pictures, play football and have fun. I was keen to get some of the children off the streets and therefore met the staff of an orphanage on the outskirts of Mwanza that targeted street children. I have worked closely with this orphanage, Fonelisco, since February 2006. A friend and I ran the Kilimanjaro Marathon in March 2006 to raise funds for street kid projects and the 3 million shillings raised (about £1500) has been used to:

- Buy school uniforms, books and other materials for children at Wovesot and Fonelisco to enable them to attend school
- Clean and paint an outbuilding at Fonelisco to provide an extra dormitory that allowed another 12 children to leave the streets
- Build 6 new double bunk beds and repair broken beds at Fonelisco, as well as provide mattresses and mosquito nets
- Buy reading books in both English and Kiswahili for children at various projects in Mwanza to improve their reading
- Provide water tanks for a leprosy project
- Provide First Aid treatment for street kids
- Provide clothes & footballs etc for street kids

Projects for 2007:

The main focus of Banana Tree Project funds in 2007 will be on education for the children at Fonelisco. Five children (William Daud, Paul Matundo, Esther Emmanuel, Donard Mussa & Maduhu Nindwa) have now finished their free primary schooling and have passed their end of school exams enabling them to continue to secondary school, if funding is available. Once school fees, registration fees, transport costs and uniform costs have been taken into account, this will cost over 300 000 Tsh (£150) per child per year. Three other boys (Yakobo Willison, Matendo Msafiri & Dotto Daudi) have also finished primary school, and would prefer to take a vocational course (in welding & mechanics) giving them a trade and hopefully a job, rather than continuing into secondary school. Two children (Jamila Juma & Amine Ramathan) have struggled with primary school and, as they are getting too old, would prefer to take a vocational course in Tailoring. This lasts two years and costs 150 000 Tsh (£75) each year.

Other funds are needed to buy new primary school uniforms and school materials for many of the other children at Fonelisco and, if possible, school shoes.

Schools in Tanzania:

Primary education in Tanzania is advertised as free, although children can only attend if they can buy a school uniform (4000 Tsh), exercise books for the year (2000 Tsh), stationary (2000 Tsh) and transport to the nearest school. For many children, especially those without working parents, this is impossible. Children enter school aged 7, or older if funds were not initially available, and only progress to the next year group (standard) if they pass the exams. Hence there is generally a significant age range in each classroom. Children are taught in Kiswahili at primary school, but can only attend secondary school if their English is good enough, as instruction here is in English only. Secondary schools cost between 250 000 Tsh – 500 000 Tsh depending on the school, with uniforms, books and transport being extra. Many children do not complete primary school. Few complete secondary school. Resources are very limited, classes are up to 60 children and some of the teachers have a limited education themselves.

Ed Beavington