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Quarterly Newsletter: October 2010

In July 2010, thirty-six UK sixth form students from St Albans School travelled to Mwanza as part of a three week journey across Tanzania. They saw for themselves the conditions in which many orphans and former street children live and are educated. After nine months of fundraising for *The BTP* and with help from local craftsmen, builders and orphanage staff, they completed their projects and helped transform the lives of many young people. This newsletter gives an overview of the work completed. A more detailed account is available from the students and staff who took part in the trip.

Watoto Wa Africa orphanage



This orphanage is home to 78 children aged between 2 and 18. Run by Josephat and Rosemary Kirutu, the orphanage takes in children who have lost their parents to AIDS, malaria, typhoid or a myriad of other diseases and conditions. The effort by Josephat and Rosemary to house, feed and school the children is a constant struggle of asking for assistance and trying to get through to the start of the next month. The orphanage receives no government funding and relies entirely on donations of food and funds from the local community and international organisations. *Kids Aid Tanzania* makes regular contributions and, in conjunction with *The Banana Tree Project*, funded the sixth formers' renovation work.



While the students got on with plastering the outside walls of the girls' dormitory and painting both the boys' and girls' dormitories and the classroom, teams of local craftsmen completed



the carpentry. This included making new window frames, storage cabinets, tables, ceilings, bunk beds and water stands. An extra solar panel was bought and installed to provide electricity for remaining parts of the complex, while new mattresses, mosquito nets and two 5000 litre water tanks were bought and delivered. Bridge2Aid, a Mwanza based dental charity, helped check the teeth of over 70 children (some ran away and couldn't be found!!!). 15 children went on to receive dental treatment. While further work remains to be done, Josephat offered his generous thanks for the help provided.

Ilemela Primary School



Ilemela Primary School educates over 1000 children in 11 classrooms with 15 teachers. The facilities are dilapidated concrete rooms with tin roofs and desks for about a third of the children.

There are no textbooks, computers or libraries. The children are responsible for cleaning the site by turning up at 7am each morning to sweep the rooms and grounds. In four days, the UK sixth formers had transformed the school. They painted every classroom, provided another forty school desks, funded the emptying of the toilet pits and provided a selection of textbooks and stationery for the Headmaster to allocate to the poorer children. At the end of the renovation, the Headmaster made a speech in which he thanked the St Albans School sixth formers, *The Banana Tree Project* and *Hazel's Footprints Trust* (who helped fund this renovation) for their work. The primary school children then sang the national anthem and Tanzania! Tanzania! A number of children at the primary school from local orphanages have been sponsored through their secondary education by *The Banana Tree Project*. One student took on the sponsorship of the school's Head Boy ensuring that he goes to secondary school in 2011.



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Mt Zion Orphanage



The biggest project embarked on by the UK students was the construction of a new dormitory block for Mt Zion Kids' Centre. The orphanage is home to 23 young boys, all of whom had previously spent time on the streets of

Mwanza but now live in the care of Dr Andrew Kasambala and his staff.

However, the children were due to be evicted from their rented building near the centre of town and hence needed a new home.

The sixth formers funded construction of the new site in Kiseke on the outskirts of Mwanza. This is made of of new twin bedrooms, three showers and three toilets, a communal room, a staff room and plenty of space outside



to play football (using the goals provided). As the students started their painting duties, local builders were busy finishing the roof, walls and washrooms. The end result is an exceptional



new home for the 23 children who showed their gratitude with a song and dance routine and the presentation of a



booklet including every boy's handprint with individual messages. There remains further work to be done but the children hope to move into their new large, bright and airy home before the end of 2010.

Final help given



The sixth formers provided new mattresses, mosquito nets, school uniforms, school shoes and a new water tank for Hands of Mercy orphanage. The 200kg of donated clothes carried across to Mwanza by the students were presented to the children at

Mt Zion, Watoto Wa Africa, Hands of Mercy and Forever Angels Baby Home. Further to this, eight of the UK students have taken on the sponsorship of children at orphanages in Mwanza and they took the opportunity to meet their child both in their orphanage and their school.

A great deal of work remains possible in terms of sponsoring children at Mwanza's orphanages through secondary school, funding stationery and uniforms for the primary school aged children and developing the very basic facilities at the orphanages themselves. *The BTP* is also keen to maintain its relationship with Ilemela Primary School. *The Banana Tree Project* hopes to support 45 children through secondary school in 2011.

Overall, the UK students made a tremendous difference to many children's lives and gained a good understanding of how far UK donations can go in Tanzania. St Albans School hopes to continue supporting *The BTP* throughout the new academic year. Their nine month fundraising campaign saw enormous benefits to a large number of Tanzania's most underprivileged children. On behalf of *The Banana Tree Project* I would like thank to all UK and Tanzanian students and staff involved in the projects.

Ed Beavington

