

# Heshima Newsletter

## January 2016

A tale from 2 volunteers:

### Pat and Tony

It is hard to believe that it is now a month since we said goodbye to Mwamvita, Constantine and all the children at Heshima.

We were staying with our very good friends Minesh and Tanuja Patel and after a few very relaxing days visiting places of local interest we went to Heshima - how our lives then changed!



Tony painting the ceiling in Constantine's classroom

The first day Tony and I painted the ceiling in Constantine's classroom. Then whilst Tony sieved almost 3 tons of sand for the sandpit, previously

constructed by the Taiwanese friends from Ming Dao, I helped sort and arrange the resources in Constantine's classroom.

All ready to welcome the children!



Mwamvita's classroom was the next to be decorated; the children loved it especially with all the freshly washed soft toys donated by the friends of Heshima, the classroom floor however looked more like a Jackson Pollock painting!



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The children enjoyed learning how to play Dominoes and Duck Duck Goose. I have taken this game back to the school where I work in Burton on Trent, and we now play Tembo, Tembo Simba! The arrival of a few hundred Unifix cubes that I had ordered arrived with the next group of friends at Hotel Patel (!) and were eagerly used as construction toys as well as aiding counting. I hope to bring more next time!



I found paper plates in one cupboard so we decided to consolidate face vocabulary by

painting faces and thinking of the best colours to use. All went reasonably to plan, I was speaking in English all the time with a few Swahili words interspersed here and there - pole pole mainly when the paint brushes seemed to move from the paper into the air! At the end of our session, I asked a boy whose English seemed quite good, he lived close to the school and always greeted Tony and I when we arrived in the morning, to throw the water onto the plants near the acacia bushes that surround the school grounds. (You quickly learn the value of recycling and as we were still in the dry season, water was a valued commodity.) I turned around to collect the painted faces and then back only to see the water, pot and brushes disappear over the thorny acacia bushes into the adjacent farmer's field! He knew from my expression that something wasn't quite right .... Luckily Mwamvita came to the rescue and told him in Swahili what to do; he ran out of the school gates, up the field, retrieved the pot and brushes and then back home to a big hug from me!

I learnt a valuable lesson: never underestimate the power of the word!



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Discussions with Mwamvita and Constantine about the English and Tanzanian Early Years Curriculum were fascinating. Ideas were shared and lessons planned; good practice, observed by Mwamvita and Constantine on Mondays whilst working alongside Braeburn Primary School teachers was embedded. Reading books now go home on a weekly basis and are being returned!



The memory of these two enthusiastic and dedicated teachers will always remain with me - I just wish I could remember all the songs we sang throughout the morning sessions too!

The hard work of Zak looking after the school grounds and watering his many trees and shrubs and the industry of all the women making the really

wonderful clothes and gifts are again indelibly printed.

My beach bag - used for carrying school books(!) has been much admired as has the black tunic I often wear. Maja has worked wonders in teaching these skills - I really hope word will travel and others can see and appreciate their work. I have recently taken another order for some aprons used in the teaching of Read Write Inc (RWInc) and hope that this will be the beginning of something big!

We were lucky enough to travel to Zanzibar and stayed in Stone Town and then in the north near Nungwi village. I took beach bags, shorts, bunting, stockings, coffee bags and scrunchies with me to show to all and sundry! We are hoping that orders may be placed in the New Year by Swahili House and the Mnanwari Beach Cottages - fingers crossed!



A beautiful throw made by Naomi if only I had enough room in my



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suitcase to take it back to the UK!

It only leaves me to wish all the staff, Alison, Steve, Patrick, Maja, Minesh and Tanuja a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2016. Many, many thanks from us both for a real life changing experience. Talking to others has made us realise how fortunate we are to have had this opportunity to share and be a part of Heshima. We will be back!



### Alan Cram

This was my 8<sup>th</sup> visit to Tanzania in 5 years, and it has been a pleasure to see how Heshima has developed over that time. 5 years ago, there was just one building: or rather the shell of one building. This now hosts the caretaker's store room and a classroom for the youngest nursery class, ably led by Mwamvita, for whom Heshima paid her teacher training fees: an

investment that is already paying dividends! Now, there is also an additional classroom, where the older nursery children meet under the supervision of Constantine. Also, the main building has two rooms up and running: downstairs, the ladies are busy everyday making a wonderful variety of clothes, bags etc. and upstairs their wares are on display. Hopefully, the roof to the remaining section of the building will be completed in the near future, so more rooms will be available for the next stage of the project.



A big thanks to Steve and Alison for their vision, faith in the project, and hard work, and to all the others—those "on the ground" in Tanzania such as Maja who supervises the ladies, and the many volunteers and supporters in Tanzania and elsewhere.



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On this visit, I was not involved in concreting floors or other hard manual labour: just bits and pieces of painting. This allowed time for me to attend Yakini Primary School's Open Day, where a variety of organisations which serve the local community had been invited to put on displays. Heshima was included, and so a classroom was provided where Heshima could showcase its various projects to a variety of local dignitaries (including the local education officer) and parents. Zac (the Heshima manager), together with some of the textile ladies, displayed their products, and Mwamvita brought some of the nursery children and demonstrated her teaching skills. The fact that Heshima was invited shows that its profile in the area is increasing. I was made most welcome at Yakini, the only mzungu (white person) there, and thoroughly enjoyed the traditional dancing and singing by both the schoolchildren and the Maasai parents.



Later in the week, I "chaired" with Zac a meeting of the parents of the nursery children. 8 mothers came to Heshima to see for themselves the facilities, and watch their children being "taught" through play. The mothers asked some very perceptive questions, but were clear that they were very happy with the educational experience being provided by Constantine and Mwamvita. Indeed, they want Heshima to open a primary school for their children!



Finally, I spent some time with Moses, a young Tanzanian who has set up his own primary school in Kisongo. Heshima, as part of its "outreach" into the local community, has been able to



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provide some support for him and his school. It was good to see his school developing and thriving.



I left Kisongo on General Election day, and it was interesting to see the patient queues of people waiting to vote; and even better to report that the whole election process was, with a few minor exceptions, peaceful. Sadly, this good news from an African country was almost completely ignored by the Western media.

### Textiles

With the shop now operational, our next challenge is to get regular visitors in to the shop. We have already had one visit from one specialist Safari Company.

Maja also spent a lot of work preparing for the Arusha Christmas Fair, where she ran a stall with 5 other NGOs under the name wanawake wanaweza (roughly translated as 'women

can'). Heshima did excellently over the 2 days and actually almost ran out of stock on the last day. Maja raised 2 million shillings over the weekend, which she is intending to spend on some heavy duty sewing machines.



Best Wishes,  
*All of us at Heshima*



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