

December 2012

Dear Supporters,

We have finally managed to get our Christmas letter - out before the New Year! Not due to our organisation, of course, but because one of our trustees, Alan visited us in November along with his son Nigel, and he has written about his visit:

"This was my fourth visit to Tanzania in 2 years, and it was good to see how Heshima is progressing. For Alison and Steve, the progress must seem *pole pole* (slowly, slowly) because the main building is far from complete, but having watched the two *fundis* (builders) at work, it is easy to see why: they are armed with only simple building tools! The foundations have to be dug by shovel; cement has to be mixed by hand; water has to be collected from a tank by bucket;



be cut to size by hand-saw; the wooden roof supports have to be positioned one by one using a home-made ladder, and so on. Nevertheless, one room in the new building should be in service by February. This will enable the textile training centre to move from its cramped quarters in the existing building to much more spacious accommodation. It was hoped that the building would have been ready for a lick of paint by the time I arrived. This was not to be: however, I was put to work smartening up the present building inside and out. I still have the paint behind my fingernails to prove it!



But Heshima is much more than a building, of course. In addition to the now well-established textiles project, at present employing six



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Maasai ladies, one trainer (George) and one marketing manager (Rosemary), there is the children's club, ably run by local lady, Fina. At present, this meets once a week at the Heshima site, where anything up to 60 children come to improve their English (and have fun!) through games, songs and stories. It was great fun assisting Fina on two consecutive Wednesdays. During the next year, it is hoped that the club will be able to meet daily, using the new building when the weather is wet (yes, it does rain in Tanzania!). Incidentally, the textile centre not only pays the women for their work, but is also now operating at a profit (just!).



Heshima's influence also extends beyond the boundaries of the site. It was a privilege once again to meet up with Moses, whom my wife first encountered last year. Moses is a young man, living with

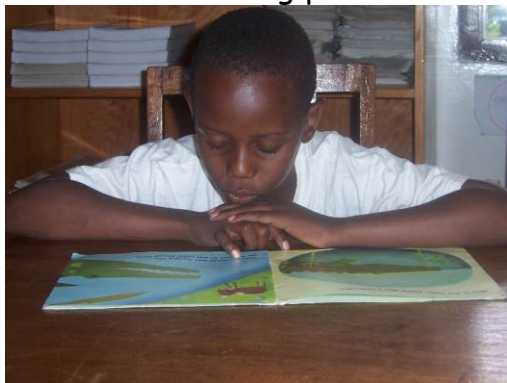
his wife and two year old son (Goodluck) in a small one-roomed "house" on the edge of Kisongo, 10 minutes walk from Braeburn. He has set up his own "school", the "Highland Centre", initially to improve the English of "pre-form seven" pupils: those who have finished primary school and who are waiting to begin at secondary school. These pupils—around 12 of them at present, aged anything from 11 to 15—meet every morning for lessons in a whole variety of subjects in one small room of a two roomed building, rented by Moses. At the same time, a group of 4 year-olds, learning how to count and read in English, meet next door in the second room. Frequently, Moses teaches both classes simultaneously! Heshima has been able to help by providing resources—books, writing materials, chalk, balls and so on. My son Nigel, who came out for a week, met up with Moses and the children everyday and taught ball skills: football and netball for the older children, and "catch" with the younger ones. I continued Nigel's good work the following week after he had returned home to the UK. However, I have to confess that my ball-handling



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skills were put to shame by some of the children and by Moses himself! Many of these older children also attend the Saturday school held at Braeburn, organised and run by Heshima trustee and Braeburn teacher Minesh Patel. Here again, they are helped to improve their English and maths skills, as well as having fun using the hard-court and swimming pool.



The climax of these Saturday schools was the annual "Christmas Party" on November 24th, held at Braeburn, and hosted by Braeburn students, staff and Heshima trustees and sympathisers.



This year, 150 children were expected: in fact, 275 children attended! These additional "fringe" activities enable firm relationships to be developed with the local community: relationships which Heshima is able to build on, developing trust and confidence in its work now and in the future.



One final example of how Heshima impacts on the local community. There is an *askari* (caretaker) living on site: his name is Alex, and he is only 14 years old! Alex is (was) a street-child who turned up one day on Steve's doorstep, asking for help. His persistence and honesty resulted in his being "housed" at Heshima, where he has responsibility for looking after the site. He is a delightful young man, who is popular with the ladies next door in the textile centre, and with the *fundis* on site. This arrangement means



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that not only is Alex helped, but Heshima has a reliable *askari*. It is hoped that sponsors will be found to enable Alex to attend a good secondary school in the area from January.

It was again a privilege to see how Alison's and Steve's vision is taking shape, and how Heshima is working positively in the community and, for just over two weeks, being a part of that work. Will I be back next year? You bet!"

Once again -o a big thank you goes to Alan for all his support, energy and encouragement. He left with a suitcase full of Heshima products to sell in the UK.

We have also been busy selling Heshima produce here. Steve Siaka, from Kisumu came up for



the weekend and helped many other volunteers with the sales. The bunting, reversible aprons and bags continue to be popular. Once more, we got a large order of Christmas Stockings from a local lodge.

In addition, Braeburn School's 'Roots and Shoots' club is promoting the Heshima made shopping bags encouraging people in our local community to stop using plastic bags. For every bag bought, £1.00 is spent on buying seedlings to plant in the Kisongo area.



So that's all for now. We look forward to bringing you more news in the New Year. Have a very Happy Christmas and thanks so much for all your fantastic support this year.

Best Wishes,

*Steve and Alison*



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