

Heshima Newsletter

April 2019



Here's the latest from Heshima. I hope you find the newsletters informative. If you have any questions about the project, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me!

I was lucky enough to visit Tanzania again in March for a couple of weeks, and once again it was great to see the project developing: *pole pole* (slowly slowly) perhaps, but moving forward, definitely!

Solar Electricity

I mentioned in the last newsletter that solar panels were in the process of being installed in November.



That work was quickly completed, and we now have a DC supply throughout the main building, providing lighting inside (and out, for security), as well as a number of sockets in the large "community room" to power lap-tops etc.



Lighting in the textile room

There are at present 5 lap-tops available for use, served by a "Raspberry Pi" which is pre-loaded with a variety of educational resources: these "wireless" resources can therefore be accessed independently by each lap-top.

The Day-Care Centre

Due to transport issues (for various reasons, the minibus which was shared with another local project is no longer available), at present only a handful of children attend the day-care centre, but there are new business developments in the vicinity of Heshima, so it is likely that the local population will increase, and that consequently more children will start attending in the near future.



....and in the classroom with Mwamvita



....Children at play....



The playground



The Textile Centre

You may remember that Mwamvita is also in charge of the textile project: purchasing the colourful material (kangha), receiving orders, doing the accounts, and generally ensuring the smooth running of the project. Local lady Adelfina trains the ladies and oversees the manufacture of

the products, insisting on the highest standards of work. The ladies are a mix of new trainees and fully trained, skilled workers. I mentioned in the previous newsletter that Adelfina, one of the first ladies to receive training at Heshima, has now set up her own dress-making business in her village, and she was very pleased to show me her rented “shop”: a success story for both her and Heshima!



Adelfina showing off her beautiful dresses

So, the textile ladies: learning textile skills, and therefore earning money, (and empowering them in their male-dominated Masai society), setting up their own business as a result of their training, and..... playing net-ball! Yes, Mwamvita has organised the younger trainees into a net-ball team, so at the end of their morning session, they develop and practise their net-ball skills for an hour or so.



The netball team!

Again, this is empowering these ladies to do things that women in their society would not normally do, increasing their confidence, as well as encouraging them to maintain healthy lifestyles. When I was there in November, they had played one match against another women’s team. Yes, they lost, but it’s the playing that’s important, not the winning (tell that to any Premier League manager).....but next time!!

So, making high quality textiles, playing netball, and now..... doing crochet! On my visit in November, I arranged for a mid-wife, Celine, from the recently opened “Maternity Africa” charity hospital to come and speak to the ladies (see last newsletter) about the free services the hospital offers (especially fistula treatment). Celine’s stepmother, Dominique, and husband visited Heshima in February and, amongst other things, taught the women how to crochet. They can now make blankets for babies!



Dominique with the nursery children

Here is Dominique’s account of her visit. As a native French speaker, she should be

congratulated on the quality of her English!

"Heshima" experience :

Coming to Tanzania as a Musungu" tourist is one thing. Coming to Tanzania as a foreigner, willing to meet some local realities, as respectfully as possible ... is another thing. Vincent and I came to Tanzania in "that" kind of spirit. Vincent's daughter (Celine) had been working as a volunteer midwife in Maternity Africa, Arusha, for one year. In accordance with my wish, she connected me with Heshima project in Arusha.

I first met the children and teacher Mwamvita of the kindergarten. Six adorable little children full of life.

I then met the ladies of the textile workshop. Most of these ladies had never held a crochet hook in their life. I was bringing them patterns, crochet hooks and yarn to crochet a "granny" blanket. It was really important for me to offer them a collective project.



The ladies (and one child !) crocheting

A "granny square" doesn't need a long time to make, nor a lot of material, and above all can be designed in many colors. After a somewhat hesitant beginning, the ladies finally found their cruise speed, with the help of teacher Adelfina, who knew a bit

about crochet.

What a surprise for me, coming back after one week, to realize that the girls had gone on practising crochet on their own ! Wonderfull girls !



How could I summarise that "Heshima Experience" ? MEETING REAL PEOPLE. Meeting children and ladies willing to get a better life, through education. Girls and women's empowerment has been, for years, so Important. As teacher Mwamvita and me agree : an educated mother makes a better life for the family and for the whole society. In Heshima, I found a unique opportunity of adding my little stone to this essential cause.

Dominique



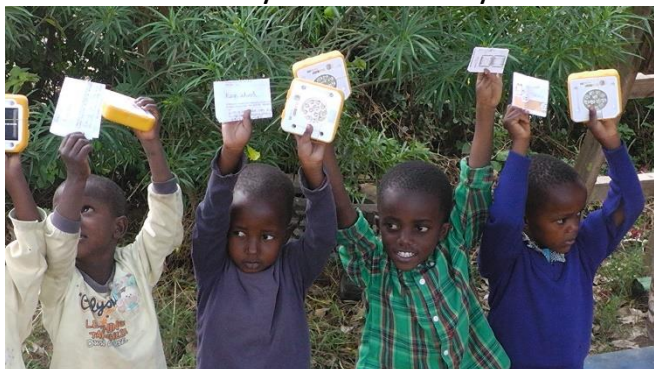
The finished baby blanket !

So a big thank you to Dominique for introducing the ladies to this new skill!

Solar Lights



A belated thank you to the children of King's School in S.W England, and to parent Wendy Pennington-Ridge, for providing solar lights for the day-care children and their families to use at home. Each light came with a card individually written by the school children. These bright self-charging lights are produced by Australian Charity « Solar Buddy ».



Children and the textile ladies (below) showing their appreciation for the gift of a solar light



Other News

The end of March saw the departure of Zac who, over the past few years has lived with his family on site, working as caretaker, groundsman and minibus driver. Thanks to Zac for his valuable contribution to Heshima. So we say hello to the new caretaker, a young man called Kasyoki, who will live on site. Incidentally, as a result of the contact with mid-wife Celine from the Maternity Africa charity hospital, Zac's wife was able to give birth, at the beginning of the year, at the hospital to a beautiful girl called Eviana.



Our three paid employees, Zac (now Kasyoki), Adelfina and Mwamvita now contribute to the national (ie government) pension and healthcare schemes, and Heshima pays the employer contributions (including back-payment).

The Heshima site and buildings have been valued, enabling the property, and all users of the facilities, to be fully insured.

A safeguarding document has been produced for volunteers to sign up to: it will be posted on the Heshima website. A similar document will be produced for Heshima employees, and all who use the Heshima site.

The future

We are still looking for a suitable person to run the youth centre in the main building, providing after-school help with homework. The children will, of course, have access to the resources on the laptops.

Finally, the Heshima project has come a long way in 10 years, thanks to the vision and hard work of Steve and Alison, and to all of you who have supported, or continue to support, Heshima in many different ways.

If you are able to visit Tanzania, please do pay Heshima a call (and if you have any DIY/painting/general skills.....!).

Also if you would like any textile items to sell, please order them on the Heshima website (www.heshima.org.uk), and we'll endeavour to get them to you in time for Christmas!

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