



Miriam Kanana Mubichi FOUNDATION

Equipping communities through sustainable development

Jan. 1, 2012

Happy New Year!

Over the years, I have made a habit to draw assumptions on what the new year will bring by simply looking through the window. A bright and sunny day is assumed to represent not only new beginning but opportunity and joy. Over the years, I have often reflected on this simple assumption. Why do I base a whole 365 days on a single morning while I know there will be rainy days, grey days and depending on which part of world I maybe, the temperatures may vary. Am I simply practicing an old African ritual in which decisions to plant or travel were based on the sky or am I simply an optimist? Whichever I maybe, I would like to pass it on.

In the last year (2011) MKMF has continued serving the people of Meru. Generous donations have allowed us to continue providing scholarship opportunities to children with disabilities and youth to pursue education through special schools and various colleges. The few and prized scholarships are awarded to children who are bright and often being under the care of relatives or guardians. As a result, we have been able to see young kids like Andrew (at St. Lucy School for the Blind) not only learn but gain confidence which has enabled him to not only rise in his class performance but also rise to a nationally competitive athlete. Hilda (nursing student) has been able to complete her nursing education at Kenya Methodist University. Josepeter "Joskim" (Miriam Kanana Mubichi Memorial Library community librarian) completed his diploma in business administration and is now pursuing bachelors in the same while Raphael continues his pharmacy degree at Nairobi University.

Having overseen the construction of a fish pond at the Meru School for the Mentally Challenged, students and the institution were able to harvest their own fish as supplementary source of food. Working with the Kenya Fisheries department in Meru, it is our hope that this fish pond will not only

provide the school with the much needed teaching instrument but also continue providing a vital source of protein important for brain development for children with mental retardation.

We continue to prioritize improved sanitation realizing that sustainable development would not be possible with only literacy improvement. Wilson and Stephen (MKMF Board members) have continued overseeing toilet construction across various schools. Based on an environmentally friendly design, the toilets have not only been cheap to construct but also provided communities with a model to imitate.

Kenya also suffered under the East African drought. Serving as the refuge center, Kenya not only took in more than her share of refugees in the Daadab camps but also recorded some of the worst malnutrition cases in over 60 years. The Meru District hospital serving the greater Meru district was able to provide baby formula to infants admitted with severe malnutrition along with those whose mothers could not feed their newborns. MKMF has been supplying the district (public) hospital with baby formula over the last four years. Having noticed an increasing number of malnourished cases, MKMF sought to establish the cause of the same.

Having met Gwen (a 5th year International Relations student at Northeastern University, Boston) seeking an international internship opportunity in public health earlier on the year, we started exploring ways in which we could conduct a feasibility study that would enable us to establish the need of a fully fledged malnutrition research project. Awarded the Global Presidential Scholarship and a Provost Research Grant, Gwen traveled to Meru and served as the MKMF volunteer at the Meru District hospital for a period of 3 months. Working alongside the nutritionist, doctors and nurses at the pediatric ward, she was able assist the nutritionist in developing a questionnaire that would allow the collection of vital socio-economic information. Equally, facilitating the school feeding program and delivering Uji mix (supplement feeding material); Gwen along with Dorcas (MKMF project administrator) came face to face with aid mismanagement. Few institutions provided with feeding rations failed to provide clear records on usage. Realizing that discontinuing some of the ration supply such as the baby formula would exacerbate the situation, it has been recommended nutritional and management training both at the grassroots level and administrative level be considered and pursued to promote transparency and better management of aid.

2010 March marked a painful period for not just the Mubichi family but MKMF. Losing Florence Mubichi who served as both the beacon and source of inspiration for MKMF and later on, my taking study leave to pursue graduate studies in Sociology at Boston led to a major transition.

As the New Year begins, we are excited and humbled by a prayer answered. We have been praying for the means through which MKMF will continue a vision so dear to the Mubichi family. Sandi, Dale and Riley Troup have expressed a deep commitment and desire to carry on this vision. Seeking an opportunity to serve as missionaries, Sandi (RN & Veteran), Dale (math high school teacher in Oklahoma) along with their young son Riley are currently planning and working on their relocation.

Dale brings with him an extensive knowledge and passion for science and math while Sandi that of science, palliative care and research. Sandi is a survivor and Co-Founder of SHOUT (cancer support organization in Oklahoma) whose knowledge we believe will help us facilitate the setting up of a palliative care information and training program. This being one of mum's (Florence) final wishes would not only allow us to continue work she started years ago by supporting the founding of the Meru Hospice society in Meru. With the increasing number of cancer diagnosis, many caring for the terminally ill do not know how to provide their loved ones with care that would ensure improved quality of life in their final days let alone protect them from opportunistic infections. It is our hope that you will partner with us on this mission and others aimed at improving overall community nutrition and leadership as we continue to pursue means through which sustainable development may be achieved.

There is much to report, much to celebrate and much to hope for. As this New Year begins, may we remember to "open our eyes and see the many blessings around us" (Kanana Mubichi, 2003) and give of ourselves selflessly. May we provide not just a hot cup of porridge, clean toilet and water to a preschool child but a sunflower that signifies hope, love and loyalty. May we sow seeds of hope and enable a stronger generation to arise.

Happy New Year and God's blessings.



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