

Friends of Londiani Harambee 2011 Report

Harambee 2011 was very successful with 10 volunteers travelling to Kenya to partake in FOL's ongoing health and community development projects. The volunteers signed up with FOL by June 2011 and trained and prepared for the project over two training events. The Harambee ran from 29th October to 19th November.

Volunteers

6 volunteers flew out to Kenya on 29th October, joining the advanced party of three who were already in country. The following Saturday, 3 more Volunteers joined the group. The initial group had 5 new volunteers on their first (but hopefully not last) visit to Kenya. The volunteers came for all walks of life, and the diverse range of ages, backgrounds, experiences and careers worked very well together. We were joined and ably supported by Friends of Londiani's local staff and other support staff, bringing our team up to over 25 people at times.



Project Site

After arrival in Kenya and after a night's stop over at Lake Elementaita, where the volunteers recovered from their overnight flight, and completed the 'In Country' training, the group settled into the project site in Kipkelion. This was Friends of Londiani's first Harambee based in the Kipkelion area of the District. Kipkelion is about an hour's drive from Londiani. Our site was in the grounds of the Mercy Church, and our hosts were Fr David and Sr Peter. The site was only a few moments' walk from 'downtown' Kipkelion and proved an ideal site for the Harambee.

Community

In basing the Harambee in Kipkelion, the goal of the project was to work more closely with the communities in this area, some for the first time. During our three weeks in Kipkelion we worked with and supported the Ministry of Health, District Medical Teams, the District Water Office, The District Officers, District commissioner, Divisional Officers, Chiefs, Public Health Officers, Community Health Workers, local volunteers, self-help groups and Schools, teachers and students amongst others. The overall guiding ambition of Friends of Londiani is Community Development and our close interaction with so many stakeholders in this area helped build a solid foundation for continuing projects.

The communities of Kipkelion were also very pleased to have us based in their area and we were welcomed by a most beautiful and warm welcome from local community groups, town representatives, teachers and pupils from the Mercy School and by Sr Peter and Fr Peter, our Hosts.



Harambee

Two and a half busy weeks followed our arrival and tasks completed included Healthy Environment Children Alliance (HECA) Clubs, Maternal Health Courses, Outreach Clinics, assisting with House to House Polio Campaign, Healthy Schools Programme, Sustainable Tourism, Bursary Interviews, Business Training, visits to Self Help Groups, Girls for Girls and Wilderness First Aid Training. These are outlined on the following page.

HECA Club

HECA is a global initiative for schools to become healthy places. HECA stands for the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance. Six schools, all previously having had teachers attend a training course run by FOL and having set up a HECA club committee of 20 kids, were visited by FOL volunteers and staff. The volunteers worked with each school over two days. The initial day involved identifying what is a healthy school, the steps of HECA, responsibilities of a HECA committee, germs and how they spread and demonstrated proper handwashing, in addition the HECA committee completed an Environmental Review and from that prepared an action plan.



On the second day, FOL gave the schools a Hygiene Kit and T-shirts, demonstrated how to build a simple tippy tappy (for hand washing) and the team along with the Heca team and teachers cleaned the latrines, demonstrated Sodis (sunlight treatment of water in clear plastic bottles), cleared rubbish and generally started making their way through the action plan. Long term FOL will continue to work with these schools, to help them achieve a healthier environment which may include improving water facilities on site, building pit latrine blocks, improving existing facilities etc. The Hygiene Kits provided by FOL to the schools included brushes, mops, buckets, wash basins etc and help the schools set new hygiene standards and also the kids who are wholeheartedly embracing the HECA approach will bring new ideas and practices home with them.



The enthusiasm of the kids and staff, combined with the amount achieved by the Harambee Team made this a very satisfying project.

EONC

Two courses of Essential Obstetric & Neonatal Care (EONC) were undertaken. The volunteers involved included 3 midwives and a doctor. Two local facilitators were also involved. These courses were held in Fort Ternan Sub District Hospital and in the Youth Centre in Kipkelion. Verbal evaluation from the groups was that the course was very beneficial and relevant to their clinical practice, in particular use of the skill stations using mannequins. The participants voiced many challenges that they face, e.g. triaging care for late referrals in from the community, transportation and accessing remote communities



Maternal Health Courses

Two courses on Maternal Health was also held at Fort Ternan Sub District Hospital and at the Youth Centre in Kipkelion and 87 participated. This course was primarily directed towards Community Health Workers and Community Referral Assistants. The team learnt about the challenges the Community Health Workers and Community Referral Assistants are faced with on a daily basis. The program covered ante-natal risk factors, intra-partum, post-natal and newborn care. There was great interaction between the group of participants and the Irish and Kenyan facilitators.



Outreach Clinics

Volunteers assisted the Mercy Clinic and Sr Albina of the clinic with a number of outreach clinics in rural areas. These areas are very remote with difficult access and so mothers have to travel long distances to reach vaccination clinics. Several of the clinics (which are sometimes located in churches or other similar buildings), had not been visited for many months.

Very large numbers turned up and vaccinations, distribution of Vitamin A and deworming tablets was carried out. Medical assessments were carried out and appropriate plan of care was made but all felt so much more was needed. What the inspirational Sr Albina is achieving is very worthwhile but with planning, transport and extra staff there is room for much greater support. 'Albina is only one person "lighting the light" where there is huge darkness'.



House to House Polio Campaign

This was a national campaign run by the Ministry of Health in Kenya. In this District it was rolled out by the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation Division of Disease Surveillance and Response. The location which Friends of Londiani assisted in vaccinating was Lesirwo in the Kipkelion District, Kipkelion Division and approximately 1,250 children under 5 were vaccinated which equates to 25% of the population of the under 5s. Parts of this location were sparsely populated necessitating climbing hills and down glens for up to 1-2 kilometres to vaccinate one child. The terrain was difficult and challenging.

However the Volunteers had the opportunity to visit families in their homestead and really see a remote community and the challenges faced.

Business Training

A three day Business Training Course was held in Kipkelion and with an attendance of 34 people from every community in the area we hope to have put in a foundation that will help these communities build on the training received. Kipkelion has a number of interesting developments in the area that should positively benefit business and part of the training was identifying these opportunities and identify how best to use. These developments include a new road currently under construction which will link Nakuru to Kisumu, and passes within 3 km of Kipkelion and also Rural Electrification is being rolled out in area. Areas covered on the course included marketing, competition, finance and business planning.



School Bursary

During October and November all 264 students receiving a bursary were met by FOL staff and volunteers for an informal interview. The purpose of this meeting is to see how the students are getting on with their schooling, and what, if any, additional support FOL can give them to assist them.



It is indeed a humbling experience to meet students from different villages, different families while they describe everyday life as it is for them. Each student has ambition and drive and all want to have a career when they leave school – careers such as Lawyers, Engineers, Doctors and Teachers. Each of them is aiming high and working as hard as they can to get there. Certainly there is hope amidst the uncertainty of village life which they experience.

There is a marked difference between the education of girls and boys in the communities where bursary students live. It is clearly seen that the girls' results for day schools are

not as high as the boys. When delved into there are many reasons for this including the girl being the sole female in her family, and so her household chores prevent studying; girls lacking access to money for sanitary items prevent them attending for 1 week a month, hence the low results. These results are very stark and an indication of how the girl child is treated throughout the District. The issue of girls missing schools due to lack of sanitary products is very real.

Students' needs include text books, calculators and revision books. In many schools the textbooks are shared amongst groups of up to 8 students which makes learning a challenge. For some students, who have no electricity, finding enough kerosene for their lamps in the evenings was difficult.

The students all showed great determination to overcome life's challenges. The students' hunger for education was displayed by the fact that many students walk several kilometres (up to 20) to school each day, but none complained.



Each of the students interviewed are working hard, despite their challenges, to be the best they can be. It was inspiring to meet the students on the bursary scheme.

Fuel Efficient Stoves



FOL is working with the Public Health Office in Londiani and during our Harambee also in Kipkelion, to introducing a new fuel efficient stove to the District. This new stove has been built in almost 200 homes in the Londiani Area but not to date in the Kipkelion Area. Meetings were held and Community Health Workers were trained in building the stoves. Volunteers got a chance to visit a new stove at one of the homes. They got there in time to join the party that was going on celebrating the 'new arrival'. These stoves will have a major impact on health of the entire family but especially on the mother (typical the cook in the household) and small children, either strapped to the mothers back or

playing around near the old open fire. However the main point of delight for the new proud owners of these stoves is the fuel efficiency, the stoves need only one third of the fuel used by open fires. It costs about €12 to build one of these stoves, much of the cost is in the chimney but the benefits are huge.

Local Community Health Workers are being trained on the construction of new smokeless stove. The stove will be displayed at Field Days going forward.

Sustainable Tourism

Anyone who has visited the Londiani Area and particularly areas like Ndubusat knows the beauty of the area. Trekking from village to village, as many volunteers have done is a delight and no one can come to the area and not wonder about its potential as a tourist magnet. However with no tourism infrastructure, the area is not in a position to attract tourism. FOL would love to help to change that and towards that goal, in September, a team from Australia and New Zealand were based in Ndubusat for a fortnight. Barazas were held with local villages, walking surveys and GPS surveys were carried out, questionnaires filled out, training held. 12 villages were included in this project, all now are actively pursuing Healthy Village Status. As part of our Harambee, another 3 villages were visited and in parallel with the visits a Village Health Committee Training course was run. This is a very exciting project but much still has to be done but keep those trekking boots handy for a trekking holiday in Londiani.



Girls for Girls Programme

Girls in Londiani often miss school one week of every month when they have their period as they do not have access to affordable sanitary products. Additionally, the conditions of some of the toilets at school are very basic, unhygienic and without doors. This means girls do not go to school when they have their period due to the lack of facilities and embarrassment. FOL has together with members of WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) devised a training programme that culminates in the provision of reusable sanitary wear for girls.

Volunteers visited 2 schools in Londiani during the Harambee. These schools are part of the pilot for this programme, and so an evaluation was done on how effective the programme has been to date. The girls in each school were given reusable sanitary towel kits as part of the programme to see if these could be part of the solution. This will be evaluated in 2012. This project was agreed by all who attended to be most worthwhile and indeed during the bursary interviews the challenges that lack of access to affordable sanitary wear was referred to on many occasions, most young girls have absolutely no access to any money and have no ways to buy essential items.



Wilderness First Aid

24 Participants, comprising Community Health Workers, Community Groups, Public Health Officers and FOL staff attended a 2 day Wilderness First Aid Course, held in St Kizitos in Londiani. The course provided basic emergency first aid and health training to support people working in very remote areas, where calling emergency services just is not an option. Feedback from this course was very positive. All participants were given a first aid pack so that they could have vital materials to hand. It is planned to continue rolling out this course in 2012.

Self Help Groups

Volunteers visited two local self help groups, Red Net and Kulianna.

Red Net (Rural Education & Development Network) - The group is a training centre for young girls, aged 17 – 22, the girls generally have some life setbacks. The group learn dressmaking, cooking, knitting, handwork and life skills. They are also hoping to add an English language module to their programme. We saw samples of works completed by the group. The volunteers enjoyed their visit here, appreciated the great work being done and the benefits and confidence that the girls were getting from attending the training. The group presented each of the volunteers with a lovely red scarf knitted by the group.



Kulianna Group - This group run a number of activities, primary of which is a child care centre, where mothers, many on daily wages of equivalent of a euro a day, can leave their children for the day allowing them an opportunity to earn income. They also help each other by contributing a fixed amount monthly to the group and monthly the collected money goes to one member of the group, this gives them a chance to kick start a business, pay off debts etc. They also are training members to make hand crafts.

Again each of the volunteers was given a lovely gift, this time a beautiful woven basket.

Mercy School

Being based in the grounds of the Mercy complex, meant we had close interaction with the girls from the school. They were there to welcome us on arrival and they past alongside our camp site on their way to and fro from the Church most days. We also had an opportunity to attend Church with them (their mass was in English), a most moving and beautiful ceremony, made more memorable by the amazing 'dancing girls'. On receipt of an invite from the girls some of the volunteers visited the school. We were entertained by singing, dancing and by the girls staging short plays. We got a tour of the school, of the dormitories, of the dining hall. We were a bit shocked though to learn

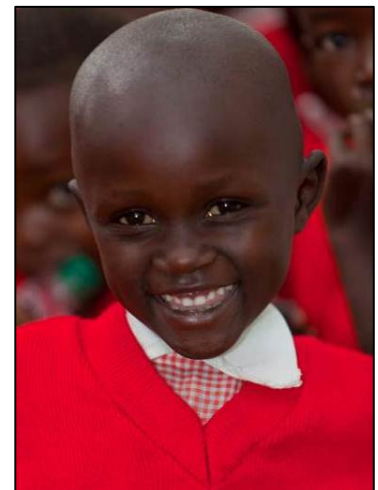


that they rise at 4:30am for study. These girls really work hard. The girls were delightful, confident, articulate, a credit to their families and the school. This school would be the top school for girls in the area and for many of the volunteers who had visited other schools, it was lovely to see such a well run establishment.

At the end of the Project FOL presented a number of tree seedlings to the Rednet and Kulianna Community Groups and also to the Mercy School. During our time in Kipkelion we also had the opportunity to go to the local chai shop, feel part of the society, shop locally, buy shoes, meet with community leader and our neighbours and generally get to know the local area and feel part of the community.

Thank you Friends of Londiani would like to thank each volunteer for giving up their time and energy for the communities around Londiani. It is deeply appreciated by the people and the two-way cultural interaction is a special opportunity for all concerned.

Secondly we would like to thank the supporters and sponsors who have given generously to enable the projects to occur. Through your continued support FOL can strive to achieve its mission of enabling people to become the authors of their own development.



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