

Patron: Dame Judi Dench CH



PROJECT'S PROGRESS

SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER **SUMMER 2013**

This has been another excellent year for our Whole School Development Programme, where we are working in primary schools with teachers, and with education officials to improve primary education. However, it has not been such a good year for Tanzania's education system: Jipu limepasuka! The boil has burst! The national examination results at the end of 2012 for Standard VII (end of primary school) and Form IV (O' level year) were appalling. In the Standard VII examinations the pass mark was reduced to 28 out of 100. Even so there were not enough children who had passed to fill the secondary school places available. In the Form IV examinations over 60% of candidates failed despite the pass mark being about 20 out of 100. The newspapers have had a field day. The jolting of the nation into utter concern about their education system has given us great opportunities. We have met MPs and a specially formed Commission to give our advice on how some of the shortcomings in primary education can be rectified and how the curriculum can be reconsidered for the primary education sector in order to give a much stronger foundation to the pupils. This is an exciting time as it seems that major reforms in education could be underway and VEPK is now known in the primary education sector and our experience of working in the schools with the teachers is valued.

parliament office in Dar es Salaam. The Committee is chaired by Margaret Sitta who is a well-known and very respected politician, and an ex-teacher. Katy and Dilly were presenting the NOEC books for teaching English in the primary schools. The books are an amended version of the very successful New Oxford English Course books which were in use in all Tanzanian primary schools in the late 1950s until 1970. Those who were taught from the books still have some of the best English in Tanzania. The new title, New Original English Course, preserves the well-known NOEC acronym.



Katy and Dilly on Channel 10

ON TANZANIAN TELEVISION

On January 15th 2013 Katy Allen, the director, and Dilly Mtui, the overall coordinator of all our projects, were permitted to give a presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Social Services, which is responsible for education. This took place in the

Since meeting His Excellency the President over a year ago slow but mostly encouraging progress has been made: meetings with zonal chief inspectors of schools for the Northern zone, Dar es Salaam and Arusha zones gave rise to great support for the books; two opposition MPs gave emphatic support; visits to heads of department of Linguistics and Education at the

University of Dar es Salaam resulted in an open letter of support. The next step was to present the books formally to the Parliamentary Committee. Members of the Committee were very interested and saw the need for a proper course that constantly builds on what has gone before. None of the approved books in use now, which are available from different publishers, forms part of a course and none gives sufficient guidance for the teachers who are struggling with the language and how to teach it.

As a result of that presentation Katy and Dilly were introduced to a government press officer who then helped to organise a press conference which was held in Dar es Salaam on 11th February. This was attended by 36 journalists. Immediate coverage was given on radio, and in Mwananchi, The Daily News and The African newspapers among others. The day following the press conference Katy and Dilly appeared live on East African television for an interview in Swahili. Katy, after 19 years in Tanzania speaks the language fluently. This was followed a week later by interviews on early morning live shows on TBC's *Jambo Tanzania*, Channel Ten's *Mapambazuko* and Katy appeared on her own on ITV's *Kumekucha*. All are Swahili programmes which begin at 6.30am and are very popular.

Just before returning to the UK in April 2013 Katy was telephoned by the ex Minister for Education, who has supported the NOEC project since 2008. He told Katy that the books are known about in all circles and that there is great interest and that he expects a positive result soon. Nothing is ever certain and there is no guarantee but we think the politicians are now very much aware of the great necessity to do something to help the teachers and to start to address the declining standards.



Dilly and Katy hosting a press conference

The Honourable Prime Minister constituted a Commission which started work in March, to look into why the examination results in Form IV were so bad. Katy Allen and Barbara Kerr, one of our mathematics specialists but also a primary teacher and head teacher with more than 30 years of experience, had a two-hour meeting with three members of the Commission at the end of March. Katy and Barbara gave their views that the problems stem from the primary education system which does not provide a strong enough foundation, and also from the lack of skills development anywhere in the curriculum. The Commission members went away with a file containing three detailed papers and some notes on necessary skills.

There is no doubt that Village Education Project Kilimanjaro has a strong reputation in education circles, and we are hopeful of being able to provide more assistance to the government.

Back in the UK in April 2013, Katy met the Rt Hon Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development. Katy informed the Secretary of State of the need for the NOEC books and has been assured that this will be followed-up with the Department for International Development in Dar es Salaam.



Rt Hon Justine Greening and Katy Allen

DEVELOPMENTS IN MATHEMATICS

Barbara Kerr is a wonderful addition to our team. After a 33 year career in primary education in Australia, Barbara worked in Eritrea for two years and for a school in Tanzania for two years. She has detailed knowledge and experience of the Tanzanian primary system and especially the mathematics syllabus. Barbara's work in middle and upper primary is a perfect complement to Jane Firth's continued work in pre-primary and the first two years of primary school.

Barbara has been working in the primary schools in Mabogini ward. She shares her work with David Jones

who is our Project Operations Manager. Together with Mr Msuya, the ward education officer, Barbara and David are working closely with four schools, which have been geographically chosen so that each one of the pair of schools is near to each other. On a regular basis Barbara and David conduct classroom observations giving support to the teachers of pre-primary, Standard I, II and III pupils (aged 5 to 9), and helping them to match activities to the abilities of the pupils. Also they focus on the development of the pupils' mathematical skills. Mr Msuya is an important link between VEPK and the teachers, and he will continue this work when Barbara and David move to focus on other pairs of schools. Every week in-service training sessions are held with all mathematics teachers from each pair of schools. These sessions help the teachers to see how and why the basic mathematical concepts are so important, and what future concepts they influence. They also highlight the fundamental knowledge that pupils must have before they embark on new topics and concepts. In this way the teachers are realising the importance of each other's lessons, and there is new respect for teachers teaching in the early years.



Barbara Kerr

Jane Firth continues her work with us and in June 2012, September 2012 and March 2013 she conducted seminars for teachers who teach mathematics to pre-primary, Standard I and Standard II pupils (aged 5 to 8). Before joining us officially in August 2012, Barbara came to attend Jane's seminars in June so that she could start to assess the knowledge and teaching ability of the teachers before commencing her work in the upper primary years.

In September 2012 Barbara and David visited the annual conference in Arusha of the Mathematical Association of Tanzania (MAT). The MAT members showed great interest in VEPK's work in basic mathematics. This introduction led to Jane giving a

workshop at the regional meeting of MAT in February 2013. In this, Jane showed primary and secondary school teachers the importance of children understanding the basic concepts in mathematics in order for all future mathematical concepts to be understood, and demonstrated this with examples and activities. In March Barbara and Jane attended MAT's pre-Pi day conference in Dar es Salaam. Pi-day is on the 14th March – to marry with 3.14! Barbara gave a presentation to a hall packed with secondary school students and teachers on the 'real square in pi-squared'. This demonstrated most clearly how three-and-a-bit squares fit into a circle, and within ten minutes of the session the students were guessing the area of circles to within a few decimal points of the correct answer. Jane and Barbara were invited to present at the annual MAT conference in September 2013.

Jane and Barbara had spent time in September 2012 planning the seminars to be given in March 2103 to teachers of Standard III pupils. These seminars were spread over three consecutive Mondays so that the teachers had time to experiment with activities and resources between sessions. Jane and Barbara ran the seminars together as it was important to link the necessary knowledge and concepts that pupils must have before they can start the new work in Standard III. Jane and Barbara showed ways of assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding, and ways of teaching slower pupils so that they might catch up with the necessary skills. The work in Standard III is hindered greatly by the syllabus which introduces topics out of sequence to the great detriment of pupils' understanding.



Standard III maths teachers practise 'place value'

An article written by Jane and Barbara was printed prominently in The Guardian in Tanzania, a well-read national English-language newspaper.

(www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=52329).

This highlighted the deficiencies of the primary maths syllabus and showed how the resultant lack of

understanding by pupils contributed to the poor results in the end-of-primary school examinations. The article also demonstrated how rewriting the syllabus and introducing activities into maths lessons would bring enormous benefits and changes.

With all her experience in the schools and knowing what was needed, Jane Firth wrote three maths books. These are books to guide teachers step-by-step to teach pupils of pre-primary, Standard I and Standard II. The books are now in Swahili with illustrations, charts and diagrams, and several appendices detailing how to make and use the materials for activities and games. The books cover the Tanzanian syllabus and complement it with explanations, activities and the inclusion of essential basic demonstrations so that key, core concepts are grasped. They have now been printed and are being sent to Tanzania to be distributed. They are called, Wasaidie Wanafunzi Wafahamu Hisabati (Let's Help the Pupils to Understand Maths).

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Jane Firth's expertise is not just in mathematics but in all early childhood development.

One of the important aspects of that is the role of parents in talking to and stimulating their children from birth, so that they develop skills and confidence before they enter into formal education. Jane saw the very great need for some training along these lines as very few parents in rural areas talk to their children. For example, parents with professional backgrounds in the UK on average speak 2,000 words per hour to their child, whereas in Tanzania the average is 100 words per hour. With the help of Mr Msuya, the ward education officer, Jane started Chatter Matters sessions in September 2012 for parents in the primary school catchment areas of Mabogini. These sessions were continued in March 2013 and were very animated with parents practising talking to a doll whilst they bathed it, fed it, took it on the bus etc.



Young parents are very keen to give their children opportunities and advantages that perhaps they themselves did not have. Parents had not realised that they have a key part to play in their children's education. Jane is in

demand to give more of these sessions.

In March 2013 Jane introduced teachers of Standard I to the benefits of using story-telling in their lessons. The teachers are encouraged to use stories they know and to practise acting them out so that they are lively and memorable for their pupils. Story-telling has mental, social and educational benefits which foster creativity, imagination, memory, vocabulary and, importantly, develop an understanding of culture and its associated values.

Jill Nash, originally from England but who has lived in Australia for many years, joined VEPK for three months from September 2012 and again for three months from February 2013. Jill worked in one primary school in Mabogini ward helping the teachers with their English lessons. Jill also held extra training sessions for the teachers to improve their own English ability and to expand their teaching methods.



Jill Nash during a training session

Throughout her two assignments Jill was concerned about the current English syllabus and the textbooks which give the teachers no support. At the end of March 2013 Jill concluded that another assignment would not be worthwhile until the syllabus and textbooks are changed. Having seen the NOEC books and worked with them in her in-service sessions with the teachers, Jill is adamant that they would dramatically improve English teaching across the country.

All of VEPK's work in the primary schools, the seminars, workshops and the meetings with district, regional and zonal officials are organised by David who also deals with the budgets and the accounts for this work.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE TRAINING

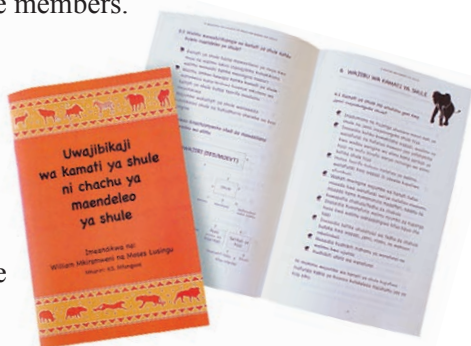
School Committees are akin to Boards of Governors. Each primary school has to have a School Committee and the membership is prescribed. However, many

members do not understand the extent of their duties or how their meetings should be run etc.

The government has provided some training for School Committees but that ceased some time ago. VEPK has held several training workshops which were very successful, given by two tutors from Singa Chini Teacher Training College, Mr Lusingu and Mr Mkiramweni. It was obvious that School Committee training would be a never-ending need as the membership changes. VEPK commissioned Mr Lusingu and Mr Mkiramweni to write a handbook for School Committee members.

The booklet has been printed and distributed. It is short and easy to use. School Committee members are volunteers and

many are not keen on reading and so the book uses bullet points and short explanations to guide the members in their obligations and duties.



WORK WITH DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS WITHIN THE REGION

In past years VEPK embarked on a programme to help District Education Officers and District Inspectors of Schools. The aim was to boost their confidence, enable them to improve the running of their offices, and to create a forum focused on discussing and exploring solutions to general problems they face. Through this forum it was hoped they could develop a mechanism of communicating their recommendations to higher-level authorities. VEPK's last work in this area was in 2011 and we have been seeking suitable facilitators to extend this programme.

At present the Tanzanian central government seems more inclined to take advice from foreign consultants than from their own cadre of experienced education officers. We have now liaised with Kazi Services in Dar es Salaam, which is headed by Zuhura Muro, a renowned consultant who has worked extensively with the government. After discussions with all parties, Zuhura has prepared an ambitious and impressive programme. The programme is in four main 'steps' taking 62 days (though not consecutive) and involves education officers from across Kilimanjaro region. We

are consulting the Regional Commissioner, Mr Gama, and the Zonal Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr Tamamu, in order to gain commitment to the programme and some cost-sharing, as VEPK's share would be in excess of US\$50,000 without the out-of-pocket expenses of the education officials.

TEACHING METHODS AND THE SCOPE OF OUR WORK

Anne Samson, who oversees and researches for the Whole School Development (WSD) Programme, visited in July/August 2012 and again in March 2013. In July 2012 Anne joined with a member of the Zonal Chief Inspector of Schools' office and met the District Inspectors of Moshi Rural district and the tutors of Singa Chini Teacher Training College. Following previous meetings in 2011, it is clear that 'participatory' teaching is not yet fully understood or practised by primary school teachers. Without sufficient training or guidance they continue with their 'chalk and talk' lessons and merely try to organise some group work. On top of this the inspectors and tutors have differing views on how to assess the level of understanding of the pupils, and that is hampering the very process. The inspectors restrict assessment to written work and tests, and those assessments do not fit in with the desired 'participatory' teaching techniques and methods. In other words, children need to be more involved in their learning and made to think, and assessment needs to find out if they really understand what they have learned. The session in July was filled with much animated and interesting discussion. All the participants realised that the issues of 'participatory' teaching and assessment are huge, and that there is much work to be done before the teachers understand them fully and can put them into practice, and before the inspectors can support and guide the teachers. Our professional development work with the teachers gives us important indicators of the methods and skills which the teachers can learn, and this dictates how we can guide the inspectors.

Anne was able to obtain agreement that, in principle, continuous assessment could take place provided evidence is recorded by the teachers. With this agreed, Anne has been working with the Zonal Chief Inspectorate office to hold another meeting in September 2013. Evidence of assessment and records from our work in Mabogini ward primary schools will be used as the basis for the tutors and inspectors to discuss how they can guide pre-service teachers and those in service to participatory teaching and worthwhile assessment.

In August 2012 Anne joined the Mabogini ward education officer, Mr Msuya, the Teacher Resource Centre coordinator, Mr Tillya, and the head-teachers of the eleven primary schools with which the WSD programme is concerned, to assess our work in Mabogini ward. The views of everyone present were very positive, and it seems that the WSD programme has given the schools and their staff great encouragement, support and new skills. Not only that but it emerged that many teachers are now keen to teach in the early years which was certainly not the case before our work started.

THE GUERBA COMMUNITY & COMPUTER CENTRE

Craig Collier, our computer ‘techie’ has transformed the computer centre into a thriving hub for young people. He held a relaunch party last May and the centre is now called a community centre and is used as one.

Craig has worked hard on the internet café and it now has the fastest connection speed in the area. There are discounts offered for users, and secure storage of personal files ‘in the cloud’. Many students come to learn to use computers, and in addition to the mainstream courses Craig is helping individuals with music composition, creating videos, and digital photography on computers.

Craig has trained two aspiring young villagers in running the internet café and maintaining the systems. One left to pursue other studies, but Michael Adams continues as Craig’s right-hand man. Doreen Mzava still takes charge of photocopying, lamination and printing.



Michael Adams helps David Jones in the computer centre

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Last year’s fiasco over the new motor-mechanics building and the proposed route of the East African Highway to run through it, continues. The Ministry for East African Cooperation concluded that the highway could not be realigned and that we would be eligible for compensation. We were sent an official letter last May to that effect. For nearly a year we have harassed the Ministry of Works and the head office of TanRoads to get our compensation payment. We expect to receive the payment in July 2013 when the Tanzanian budget allocations are made. From our many visits to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Works and the Director of TanRoads we are assured of being the first to be paid once the money comes through.

In the meantime we have been lucky to obtain another plot. This may well be even better than the original plot. It is larger and flatter, and has easy access to and from the main road. It has electricity and water supplies on the doorstep. We have 11 acres, and have started to build a watchman’s house and store, as well as a workshop. Proper work on the motor-mechanics school will have to wait until the compensation payment is received. Clearing the site of sisal, bush and scrub took many weeks, and a tree-planting programme is now underway. We are fortunate to have formed a link with Remit Group in the UK, an established provider of vocational training, and they visited with volunteers in April 2013. (<http://www.remit.co.uk/events?id=202>)



Volunteers from Remit help on the new site

The existing training school continues to operate from its site in Mshiri. Although it had very few students last year as it was assumed it would move to the new site, enrolment has increased this year. Peter Mbowe, the principal, has filled places on the existing carpentry and masonry training courses, and he has received many enquiries for the new motor-mechanics course.

The Village Crafts shop and café at Marangu Mtoni still flourishes. Mama Mlay and Regina run the shop and café, and Gisella works in her craft area producing greeting cards, jewellery, decorations, bags, batiks and dyed cloth. The shop is very popular with local people as a quiet haven to sit and read newspapers which we provide, and for meetings, and is visited by the many tourists who wander through Marangu Mtoni.

ADMINISTRATION

Our accounting year ends on 30th September. In the year 2011/2012 our total income was just over £118,000. That income runs all activities in the UK and 97% of our work in Tanzania. The other 3% comes to our Tanzanian bank account from donors in America.

Tanzania does not necessarily need large amounts of overseas aid for education. Much better a long-term presence and commitment, as ours, to gain experience, develop relations and work properly in the system to activate lasting improvements.

This year we feel that our reputation in Tanzania has been cemented. Our work is popular and wanted in Mabogini ward, and we are working closely with the district, regional and zonal officials to plan and implement that work. On the national level we are well-known with our recent publicity in newspapers and on television, and many MPs and central government officials know of, appreciate and respect what we do.

Although we manage to budget our funds well we still rely on and need donations. To help boost our funds John Douglas is organising another climb of Kilimanjaro in September 2013. John is also organising folk concerts as fundraising events. These are publicised on the charity's Facebook page and Twitter.

We are indebted to our volunteers in the UK who help with fundraising, as above, keeping accounting records, maintaining our website, and dealing with office administration when Katy is in Tanzania. Also the Independent Examiner who examines the charity's annual accounts for the Charity Commission does so for no fee. The work of these volunteers would otherwise be a considerable annual expense.

THANK YOU

We thank every one of our donors for your continued interest in and support of our projects. Our work is not visually explained by appealing photographs of vulnerable children. Our work is not easily portrayed in any pictures, but it is people's minds that we are developing. It is by its very nature long-term, and so year-by-year our news might not seem dynamic, but, helped by your generosity, we are steadily making a noticeable contribution to the improvement in the quality of education in Tanzania's primary schools. We value every pound from every one, and thank all our donors very much indeed.



A pupil works out fractions, $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ Jane Firth displays her maths books

Katy Allen on national ITV

Change in education happens successfully when those involved understand the reasons for it and the benefits that will come from it. What to change and how to do it starts by being with teachers in the schools (ground level), and progresses to cooperation with officials which leads to changes to curriculum, syllabuses, textbooks, etc. (upper levels). The aim of VEPK is to bring the ground level and upper levels together so that lasting improvements take hold. This is ambitious for a small charity, but VEPK is steadily fulfilling that aim.

Our overall aim is to enhance the quality of education, especially for village children, in order for future generations to become confident and responsible citizens

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There are rules to help charities reclaim tax on donations of any amount from donors who are taxpayers. If you would like Village Education Project Kilimanjaro to be able to reclaim the tax on your donation, or future donations, please complete the following declaration:-

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- ◆ If you would like to give again please make your cheque payable to ‘**Village Education Project Kilimanjaro**’ and send it to **Mint Cottage, Prospect Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UA.**

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