

## Teachers in Tanzania February 2017

For some years now, we have been seeking to establish links with schools in the Mara region of Tanzania. The project has not been without its failures and false starts and at times it has seemed beyond reality.

In February 2015 we took a small group out to Tanzania with the specific aim of developing school links and seeking to overcome some of the challenges we had been facing. The group was an eclectic mix of ten folk, five of whom were hoping to be directly involved in the schools' link project. From that visit only two links thrived and we learned much.

February 2017 saw a group of twelve participants directly representing nine schools (primary and secondary) and bearing gifts and messages from several more. The Diocese of Mara, like the Diocese of Leeds, has undergone challenging and difficult times over the past 18 months and so it was particularly good to meet Bishop George at the Diocesan offices. He is a strong believer in '*meeting people where they are*' and '*faith in action*'. Like his predecessor, Bishop Hilkiyah, he is a visionary man.



The group with  
Bishop George Okuth at the  
Diocesan Headquarters in Mara

The absolute 'given' was that every link school represented by the participants on this trip should be visited. Whilst that might sound simple, we arrived amid severe drought and famine in the rural areas and the rains began – which was wonderful news for the region but made travelling more of a challenge as mud roads disappeared beneath the much needed deluges. The daily blog (followed by up to 700 people on one day) bore testimony to all this and much more.

What I had not foreseen was the evidence of the stages of development of the linking project. One of the first links established through the joint diocesan offices was with Buhemba Primary School in Darrington. It is practice in this link to join two Yorkshire schools to one Mara school, and accordingly, All Saints Infant and Nursery School in Normanton joined with Darrington. A representative from Normanton travelled with us in 2015 and subsequently sent 'hands of friendship' and various other hand made educational support items to Buhemba. We could not have envisaged the profound effect this contact would create. Not only did they serve as teaching aids, they cemented a friendship and gave sense of hope and personal worth to both staff and pupils at Buhemba. They had photographs of our previous visit on the walls and the whole effect was overwhelming for our two representatives from Normanton. 'Humbling' is often an overused word and can sound trite, but the effect was truly 'humbling'.



Teachers from Normanton All Saints School find the cherished work at Buhemba Primary School that had come as the result of a previous visit.



Revd Cindy Sheard works at Gomersal St Mary's CE Primary School who are linking with Nyanza Primary School. Until now, each school has simply been a name on paper for the other.

After formal introductions she saw for herself the lack of resource and facility in the school. The students in the picture are 'standard 7'. This is the top of the school. Pupils cannot go 'up a grade' until they reach an academic standard, hence it is not unusual to have students of 16 or 17 years of age in this class. By the time we left, due to a generous donation from the school in Gomersal, all these students had a desk to sit and work at. This is not charity – this is offering a chance to pass those national tests and look to a future.



Pastor I am 76 years old  
and I want to see England  
before I die. How can I do  
that?

*Question asked of Gill by a  
village elder*

Paskaria and Margaret are  
students at Bunda Girls School.  
They are sponsored by  
Trinity Academy Halifax.



One of the things our teachers had to come to terms with was the lack of vision of the school staff wherever we went. There is very little vision – simply the reality. Usually no food, often no access to water and certainly no electricity. There are few books and not enough desks. Classes take place in shifts of up to 150 at a time because there is not enough space. How can this teacher have vision? And yet the students are aspirational. Nurses and doctors abound, a young man who wants to join the army, not to kill people but to make a better life for his country, two prospective presidents (one female) and many prospective teachers.

At each school we visited we left a small polished stone with the word HOPE engraved on it. A small token with a huge vision.

One of the earliest links to be made was between Mmazami Primary School and Horbury Bridge Academy and St Peter's Primary School in Horbury. Mmazami has 1,700 children, 350 being in the nursery with just the one teacher. She says it takes most of the year to learn the names of her class. The picture at the bottom of this page shows a small section of the students at Mmazami Primary School.



It has not been possible to mention all the schools participating in this trip or to show all the schools visited. There are many other schools already linked and, at the moment, the scheme is as full as it can be given the capacity in both Mara and Leeds. Following the recent visit both diocesan education departments will be reviewing practice and seeking to cement firm foundations.

The scheme would not be possible without the phenomenal amount of work put in by Lay Canon Arthur Mauya (Director of Education in Mara and also the Diocesan Link Officer) and his wonderful assistant Ms Melina Galibona. They offer the expertise and the infrastructure alongside a tireless enthusiasm for the project despite all else they are required to do in their diocesan roles.

We leave you with some of the images from Mara, February 2017.

Revd Gill Johnson  
Diocesan Education Team

