

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit Happy Home in Kenya with three other trustees. I have only been to Mozambique in Africa before so had some pre-conceptions but no real idea of what to expect in Kenya. We arrived in Kisumu after an uneventful flight from London via Nairobi and were met by the Trustee body of Happy Home Kenya, who had come to meet us in a mini-bus. From there our adventure began. We had been given a very comprehensive itinerary by our hosts, which allowed us to visit not only the orphanage itself, but also the local primary school that most of the children attended and some of the local secondary schools, where other children of the orphanage received their secondary education. In Kenya, children go to local primary schools, but at secondary school level, they go to schools which tend to be further away and usually as boarders, which is different to the UK approach. At each location, we became used to the formal introductions and the speeches, which were carried out according to the local etiquette for speech making. However, it was obvious in all the interactions that the trustees in Kenya regarded education as being of the highest priority for the children in their care. To quote James the chairman, "the two priorities are food and education". We were also able to meet with the local Rotary club in Kisumu, through the connections that our chairman has with Rotary clubs. They were able to offer some support and advice on the way to approach the future provision of clean water at Happy Home. We also met with the local chamber of commerce in Kisumu to get their take on what business support for the region and how we might be able to establish more microbusinesses.

At different times during the trip we spent time at Happy Home. We met the staff who managed the orphanage on a day to day basis, the matron who looked after the children, the cooks and the people who looked after the poly-tunnels. There, too, we saw the people who were running microbusinesses. Jaclyn teaches computing and so far has trained 70 local people in the use of computers and applications. This is essential for the likes of nurses and teachers who might have missed out on this kind of training and need the qualifications for their career progression. She also provides a photocopying and printing service for local businesses and schools. We met Vitaliis who is planning to teach young people carpentry and also make items for sale in the local market place. He had made tables and chairs before we arrived and, during the visit, he made and sold a bed. It was really encouraging to see these beginnings of businesses that could grow to become a source of income for Happy Home and go toward the original vision of making the orphanage be self-sustaining

The highlight was the time spent with the children themselves. They put on a show for us, with lots of singing and spontaneous harmonies sung in such a beautiful way. The best event of all was when they used the footballs that we had brought to play football with local teams at Roseate School. This was football played with a passion! It was played on a surface that looked more like a car park and in many cases with only one trainer or none! The girls were every bit as athletic and keen to score goals as the boys were.

Overall, I was very grateful and privileged to be able to make the trip and to see Happy Home in action. It was great to see the children being looked after and cared for by the trustees in Kenya and the staff at Happy Home. I will take away lasting memories of smiling faces, fantastic singing and being able to meet and spend time with a dedicated team of staff and trustees in Kenya.

## **Water project update.**

While in Kenya, one of the things that became apparent is the lack of consistent access to clean water. Unlike other African countries where water is in short supply, Kenya has a lot of rainfall. Here the issue is the lack of infrastructure to provide clean water to communities that need it. So quite often you will see people going to rivers to get water for washing or women going to small ponds to wash clothes; the problem is not the lack of water, it is one of getting the infrastructure in place to make it available.

Happy Home is no exception to this. Some time ago a borehole was drilled using financial Support from the Belper Rotary Club. This well worked for a time, but then stopped producing water. Consequently, Happy Home relies on two main sources of water for daily use. Rainwater is harvested from the roofs and stored in large plastic tanks on site. Additional water is carried from the nearby river (about a quarter of a mile away) and used for irrigation and washing. The rain water is treated by chlorination to make it safe to drink, which creates an unpleasant taste. Water can also be boiled to kill any bugs, but this means expense as wood is needed to provide the fire. During our visit to Happy Home in Kenya we discussed options that were available to improve the situation and since returning to the UK, we have been able to take some actions to help in the short term and then to plan out a programme of work to provide a more longer term solution.

So far we have been able to do the following;

1. Secure funding to purchase additional rainwater storage tanks and get them commissioned for use at Happy Home before the rainy season began.
2. Engaged with an international American charity called Aqua Clara International which has local teams in Kenya. They have developed membrane and bio sand filters which can be used to purify water and make it suitable for drinking. The filters have no moving parts and just require maintenance to keep them in good working order. We have bought two of their school filters for use at Happy Home and at Roseate school and had the staff trained in how to maintain them. We are hoping that these filters will reduce the amount of water borne contaminants and provide clean drinking water without the need for chlorination
3. For a long term solution we are working with another organisation based in the UK called Groundwater Relief which also has local contacts in Kenya. We are working with them to develop a plan to provide more long term solutions which will most likely mean the need to drill two new boreholes - one at Happy Home and one at Roseate. We are using their expertise to provide as much guidance as we can get about where and how to drill, so that we minimise the risk of not getting successful boreholes in the future. So far the Groundwater Relief team have produced a report based on desk research using geological data from UK surveys and from Kenya, which we are using to form the basis of the plan as we move forward. This solution will be the most expensive of all and will require special funding to make happen.

These are ongoing projects and we look forward to a day in the near future when we have a long term solution to providing clean water in the region and hopefully we will be able to extend this out to provide clean water solutions for the community over time.

William Millar.