

# Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

Autumn 2018

## From the Co-ordinator

It is a pleasure to be able to report the good news that this summer saw a bumper harvest in the Oyugis area and although late, the October rainy season now seems to be underway. We are therefore hoping that the harvest early next year will also be a good one. Life in this area of Kenya is deeply dependent on the vagaries of the weather and through Upendo Foundation, our partner in Kenya, Amani UK remains committed to enabling the community groups which are members of the Imani and Kirongo CBOs to become self sufficient and supporting them in their farming activities is absolutely key. Consequently this issue of the newsletter has a predominance of agricultural stories written by the staff in Kenya.

One of our current challenges is that many more new community groups have asked for support and I believe that providing this extra support should be the priority goal for 2019. Amani UK's next trustees and advisers meeting will be on November 17<sup>th</sup> and we will be discussing how to raise extra funds for this. We really appreciate the magnificent support we have continued to receive in 2018 but we want to be more ambitious and build on the many thousands of people who are benefitting from your generosity. So, please "watch this space"!

If you follow our weekly Facebook posts you will be aware of the sad news that Jane Ojwang died a few weeks ago. Jane was one of the ladies who have served us faithfully during our visits for many years and also during the time of the original Amani project. Her family and all the children in her care are in our thoughts and prayers.

Website: [www.amaniuk.org.uk](http://www.amaniuk.org.uk)

Facebook: search for 'Amani UK'



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## Bumper Harvest

The Western Kenya region normally has two planting seasons, the first starting from mid-March to July while the second season starts from September to November. The first season is nearly always reliable and more productive but sometimes it's vice versa.

This year right from May the countryside was very beautiful especially along the lake region, all the farms were green with colourful flowers of various crops. In August it was smiles all over wherever you go, households were busy harvesting and sun drying their produce mainly maize, sorghum, groundnuts and beans. Coffee and banana farmers were not left out and as they were also smiling all the way to the bank after selling their produce. The bumper harvest was attributed to the good rainfall throughout the season, use of good agronomic practices and availability of improved seed varieties.



The landless were equally happy since maize price dropped from Ksh 120 to 40 (£0.92 to £0.31) per 2kg tin which is affordable to all.

Grain storage is a challenge in the fight against food insecurity due to pest infestation and aflatoxin. Upendo Foundation is training farmer groups in value addition on various commodities, utilisation and preservation of food and nutritional security throughout the year. As part of this drive we promote the use of the super grain bag for grain storage. This system doesn't require any chemicals, it prevents insect infestation, preserves grain quality, prevents aflatoxin build up and can be re-used many times.



**Priscila Surtan -  
Imani staff**



## About Amani UK

The origins of Amani UK go back to 1986, when a project was established by Elizabeth Feilden to bring relief to the poor of rural Kenya. Through the late 1990s awareness of HIV/AIDS grew and the devastating impact on families and communities became a reality. By the year 2000 widows and orphans were forming into community groups to cope better with the consequences. Amani UK made itself part of this changing environment by re-shaping the central project focus into one of guiding and directing the community groups into membership of Projects through which Amani UK was able to channel resources and expertise. Amani UK is UK registered charity No. 1073357 and operates on a totally voluntary basis with the trustees meeting ALL expenses. Overheads are nil and 100% of money donated goes to help the people of Kenya.

See the front page for how to contact Amani UK by phone or email or alternatively write to us at:

Amani UK, 14 Maxwell Drive, Hazlemere, Bucks HP15 7BX, UK

## Measuring Progress



It is essential that we are able to measure the progress of all of the community groups supported by the Kirongo and Imani CBOs under the umbrella of the Upendo Foundation. Amani UK therefore funds Upendo Foundation to carry an annual group rating exercise. This is a key fundamental activity which involves participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. It covers all 38 affiliate groups across the whole organisation.

The exercise is conducted by the Upendo Management Information Team (UMIT) which comprises of field staff both from the Kirongo and Imani organisations as well as Upendo's Program Manager, Leonard Odongo. It's conducted in honesty and integrity by staff to bring a clear picture of the groups. Staff from Kirongo rate Imani groups and vice versa and the moderation and final analysis is done jointly by UMIT.



Groups are rated and awarded marks in the following 6 key sectors: Food Security, Health, Water & Sanitation, Education, Shelter and Governance. The rating exercise helps the organisation in a number of areas: Identifying training gaps in groups; Evaluating the progression of every individual group; Getting feedback on areas where assistance and training have been given; Rating the performance of individual staff assigned to each group; Identifying where funding resources are needed; Deciding which groups can "graduate" so that they can act as mentors of new groups and make way for new groups; Motivating and challenging groups to adopt the training they are given; Identifying which groups should receive donations from the Buy a Gift scheme; Creating an annual plan for each group.



**Erick Ogwang-**  
Imani staff

Each year all the information is recorded alongside previous years' results so that it is easy to assess those groups which are struggling or those which, as we hope, are progressing well.

## Agricultural Field Day

Two agricultural field days are organised each year coinciding with the two planting seasons which are between mid-March and July and between September and November. They are delivered through Upendo Foundation for the Imani and Kirongo community based organisations (CBOs) and the local community. Each year has a theme, and this year's theme is "Sustainable Economic Development through Agriculture".

The two main objectives of these field days are::

1/ To bring farmers together across the whole organisation to come and share and learn from each other about existing and new agricultural techniques

(continued on page 3.....)



(.....Agricultural Field Day, continued from page 2)



2/ To bring together partners and interested parties involved in various food commodities, supply chain and marketing to attend, participate and introduce new strategies, all with the overriding aim of eliminating hunger and poverty.

The field day is funded by Amani UK via Upendo Foundation and it is a mobilisation and training tool that always attracts 250 to 400 participants at each event. It is a platform in which farmers meet experts from various sectors, interact freely and consult free of charge. It's an opening avenue for creating network contacts and market linkages.

Field day preparation takes about 3 months before the actual day to allow demonstration crops to come to their maturity. Most farmers are results oriented and they cannot try anything new unless they see a successful example somewhere. Farmers get the opportunity to see new technologies, advanced animal breeds and early maturing/high yielding crop varieties that are drought, pest and disease tolerant and which are suitable for climate change.



**Priscila Surtan - Imani staff**

## A Life Changed - BaG & Community Group Membership

Pauline is a member of the Wedewo widows group which is part of the Kirongo Christian Integrated Community Project. The group has been working with the project since 2004 and Pauline has been a member since that time. The group has existed since the inception of Buy a Gift (BaG) and Pauline was one of the first beneficiaries. She was widowed in the late 90s and was left with her 7 children to take care of by herself. She lived in a home with just 2 rooms and no windows and had a grass thatched roof which leaked when it rained.



Her first three children (two boys and a girl) could only stay at school up to class 8 and then had to drop out due to lack of fees. But with the help of the group members who collected money through the "merry go round" system, she was able to send her daughter for salon beauty training and having qualified she is now able to earn a living.

The Buy a Gift cow which Pauline received calved down and her life changed as she had received a fairly good productive heifer which produced approximately 10litres of milk a day. She sold the milk and sent her children to school and returned the cow's first offspring to the project via the "pass back" system so that other groups could benefit from receiving the heifer. She passed the second calf on to another member of her group under the "pass on" system as she continued to sell milk to educate her children. Under these systems she is allowed to keep any further offspring and this has enabled her to send her 2 younger sons to high school. She now has 5 animals and her children have gone through high school. As of now she has a son in university doing education studies to be a high school

teacher and another child at TTC training to be a primary school teacher. She is now able to live in a tin roofed house and is one of the examples of people who have succeeded through BaG.

Having joined the Widewo group so many years ago she now enjoys living as an independent widow rather than having to beg to survive. This is a testimony of the importance of Buy a Gift and the benefit of forming community groups such as Wedewo.



**Bernard Auma - Kirongo Manager**

## Drip Irrigation in Double Dug Raised Beds – New to BaG

This year we have introduced 3 new items to the Buy a Gift catalogue – A batch of 10 poultry, a water pump for watering crops and a drip irrigation system. Drip



irrigation is a method where 16mm diameter synthetic pipes are perforated at the spacing of the crop intended to be irrigated. The length of the pipes are usually around 15m and match the length of the raised beds prepared for planting.

The pipes are fed with water from a 20litre water container mounted on a 3-legged wooden stand constructed so that the container is 1m-1.5m above the planting surface. There are a number of advantages in using this irrigation and planting method. 20 litres of water can irrigate 100-150 plants per day. The watering is focused directly on the crop and the close planted crop canopy conserves moisture as well as reducing weeds. The double dug soil depth reduces competition for the soil nutrients and lastly, one complete kit costing £50 can irrigate 5 beds (500-750 plants) to supply nutritious food and extra income to a family of 6 throughout the year.

**Priscilla Surtan**

## Websites -Time for a Change

For the past year or two we have been struggling to maintain the Amani UK and Upendo websites because the software used to build them is very complex and has now been largely superseded by more user-friendly programmes. Updates of the old software have to be installed regularly and a recent update has stopped the important Buy a Gift pages from working properly. We have therefore taken the decision to move both the Amani UK and Upendo websites onto a new software platform.

This work is being carried out in 3 stages. Firstly there will be a temporary BaG website which will be linked to from the old Amani UK website. This will enable BaG purchases to be made on-line during the very important Christmas period. This feature will become functional during the first half of November. Secondly, the old Amani UK website will be redesigned and moved to its new platform where it will be integrated with the BaG pages. This work should be finished by early 2019. Lastly, the Upendo website will be redesigned and moved to the new software platform by Spring 2019.

Sorry for any inconvenience you experience during these changes. There is no easy way of carrying them out but it is important that the websites are fit for purpose for the foreseeable future so that maintenance of them is as quick and easy as possible and also that visitors experience a modern, well-designed website.



*In this newsletter we are continuing the series on the Kenyan organisations we are working with.*

## Kirongo Integrated Christian Community Project

The Kirongo community project was formed in 1986 under the original Amani C.C.D.P. In 2003 it was given autonomy but still with Amani UK as the main sponsors. Kirongo started with 12 groups each with around 15-20 households per group. This number of groups has now doubled and with an average of 5-10 members per household it means that 3000-4000 people benefit directly from the support which is given, not to mention those who benefit indirectly.

The Kirongo project is located in an area with great agricultural potential and the area usually receives ample rain during the rainy seasons. We have served the groups well by supplying them with support of livestock which we give. The offspring are either given back to us for distribution to other groups or they are passed on to other members of the group. The groups also benefit from help with farm input, shelter, education, health, water sanitation and micro enterprise start-ups. The project serves both Kojwach East and Kojwach locations in the Rachuonyo East district, Homa Bay County. The project serves as a demonstration centre for agriculture and education. Kirongo has a total of 16 employees of which 12 are paid with funds from Amani UK and 4 are paid by the community. Kirongo enjoys the benefits of its development as it has its own facilities and a compound with room for extension. The Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic is an outstanding feature and a blessing to the community as all the community's health needs are attended to here and advance cases only are referred to other facilities for further action.



**Bernard Auma –  
Kirongo Manager**