

# Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

Spring 2019

## From the Coordinator

Life has its ups and downs. In the last newsletter we were able to report a second bumper harvest during 2018 in the Oyugis area in Western Kenya but now it is looking very much as though, unless there is an immediate dramatic change, the long rains which are mostly in March and April, have failed. Life in Kenya is dictated by the two rainy seasons and it is going to be even harder in the next few months for the communities we support. Since the last newsletter we have lost our dear friend Rhoda Simmons (see separate article) who died in January. With Peggy Bannister, Rhoda was one of the fundraising dynamic duo for Keep a Girl in School (KAGIS).

Looking at some positive areas, since the last famine in early 2017 Amani UK has funded the planting of food security crops (sweet potato and cassava) to try and mitigate against the effects of future famines. These crops have been expanded as quickly as possible but we were hoping that the food security programme would not be tested so soon. Also, we can welcome Janie Hopwood and Pat Bartle who have joined Peggy in the KAGIS fundraising efforts. Amani UK is stronger than ever before thanks to our supporters and hardworking trustees. 2018 was a good year financially and will enable us to expand substantially the number of community groups we support. This is our main purpose as it enables the Kenyan people to help one another and achieve long term sustainability.



*Peter Fish is International Coordinator of Amani UK*

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## Buy a Gift for Kenya— some feedback from Winnie in Kenya



The Buy a Gift (BaG) for Kenya scheme showers the people of Oyugis with blessings mostly in the early months of the year. The U.K. community buys special gifts for the Kenyan community and most of this happens as Christmas approaches although the scheme is open all the year round. In this year, 2019, group members, individuals from the community and the schools were lucky enough to benefit from this scheme having received various gifts like a house, farm tools, household starter packs, domestic animals, blankets, school uniforms and school chairs.

New groups which have joined the projects are usually amongst the main beneficiaries and this year they



received two goats per group. They are so much happy with the gifts and desire to work extra hard to raise these animals. This will improve their living standards and when the animals sire they will pass on to each member of the group until everyone shall have one. In the next ten years each and every member will be having a goat. Some who lacked shelter can now smile and they can now mark themselves safe. We are so much grateful for the gifts and hope that it continues to shine the life of the people of the Oyugis community.



**Winnie Ouma -  
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 reshaping the central project focus into one of guiding and directing the community groups into membership of Projects through which Amani UK is able to channel resources and expertise. Amani UK funds the Upendo Foundation which is one of the 3 projects we are associated with in Kenya. Upendo is a Kenyan Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and funds are channelled through Upendo to Kirongo and Imani which are community based organisations in different areas around Oyugis, Western Kenya. Amani UK is a 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



## A Heartening Journey

It's said that "a journey of a thousand miles starts with a step". Accessing quality health services or affording access to quality health care is beyond the reach of many poor and vulnerable families here in Kenya. Often when Amani UK teams visit in Kenya, we arrange visits to people with such needs.

The journey to link with the Jaipur Foot Trust charity started when a UK team visited amputee Philip, a member of the Kirongo community, who has the misfortune to suffer from diabetes and had had to have his lower left leg amputated. The visit had an instant benefit as the team supplied food for the family, school fees for Philip's daughter and other items. However Philip, whose family lives near the top of a hill was unable to provide for his family. He needed to be fitted with a prosthetic limb to have a chance to do this but the cost of this was between about KES70,000 to KES150,000 (£550 to £1,150) depending on various factors and what materials are used.

As the plans were underway to see how Philip could be helped, Elizabeth, one of the Amani UK team, formed a link that she felt we should try to help us get the assistance of free limb fixing. The link was successful and the first beneficiary was Philip. Philip didn't believe it until he was in Nairobi at the Jaipur Foot Trust and had his limb fixed. Being something very expensive and beyond the reach of many in the locality, Philip saw a miracle happen to him and couldn't hide his happiness. He was grateful beyond words as he was to start walking again without crutches. Even though the Jaipur Foot Trust does this for free, the cost of transport to Nairobi and accommodation is still a challenge as it takes good amount of money which is still unaffordable to many. This was funded via Amani UK.



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In February 2019, the Upendo Foundation was able to identify 4 more new cases that were taken for the prosthetic limb fixing. The three got the limb but one was unfortunate as he had a dry knee joint and had to seek physiotherapy support before he is fixed with the limb. The amputees were very happy and are still happy to return to a normal life and to be back to their daily activities. The causes of amputations are of various reasons such as diabetes, cancer and motor accidents. Lifestyle diseases are a threat and may cause more amputations, but motor accidents are still leading in life loss and causes for many amputations and might even be worse in future if discipline and professionalism isn't adhered to in the transport industry.

Amani UK, the Upendo Foundation and the Jaipur Foot Trust are a successful partnership that's life changing for those who had lost hope of walking on two limbs again.

There is a list of amputees now waiting for their transport and accommodation costs to be available so that they too can have their lives changed.



**Melkio Otieno - Kirongo staff**

## Boosting Business and Employment

The Business Community Loan Fund (BCLF) is funded by the UK charity Trade Relief with whom Amani UK works closely. Trade Relief's purpose is to enable local businesses to take out low interest loans in order to boost the local economy and employment. The funding to BCLF is circulated many times once it is in Kenya because loan repayments are used to make further loans. BCLF is run by a team in Kenya under the oversight of Upendo, one of the 3 projects Amani UK supports. Here's an example of what is going on in the local business community, written by Seline and William who are part of the team running BCLF.



The Kobong'o Fuel Pump business started from a humble background with owner Joshua vending petrol for motor bike riders on a busy feeder road linking Oyugis market with remote Gamba market in Kisii County. Joshua would fill a 20litre jerrycan and then decant the fuel into 500ml water bottles. This was not only hectic but risky. Joshua later learnt about the availability of BCLF loans from Tobias who runs another fuel business called Toads as he had already benefitted from the scheme. Joshua applied for a KES 250,000 (£1,925) loan and was successful, receiving his loan in June 2018 to purchase a fuel pump. Joshua has been one of the most successful companies in the BCLF scheme. He makes his loan repayments promptly and has employed 3 people permanently and has an additional 2 casual workers supplying petrol, diesel and kerosene.

Joshua's story is just an example among other successful companies. BCLF clientele engage in a variety of businesses including energy supply, manufacturing, hospitality and retail. However, despite the progress, there are always challenges for BCLF such as:

- Low business volume for borrowers due to low economic growth. This can cause inconsistency in repayments
- Current road construction works going on along the busy Kisii-Kisumu highway have badly affected businesses along the road namely Kalily Juice Parlour, Kazungu Motors, Kawich shoes and Mang'ang'a carpentry all of whom have had to relocate to new sites
- And a good challenge – lots of loan applications streaming in!



**William Dondi and Seline Ndinya**  
– Upendo Foundation staff

## A Tribute to Rhoda Simmons from Peggy Bannister

Very sadly, in early January this year **Keep a Girl in School** lost one of its founders - Rhoda Simmons. From its modest beginnings, Rhoda worked tirelessly to drive the project forward. We will all miss her quiet determination, humour and generous spirit. We send our love and heartfelt condolences to her family.

Rhoda was passionate about Keep a Girl in School (KAGIS) from its inception in 2011 when on a visit to Kenya with Amani, she saw that girls were missing school just because they were unable to afford sanitary towels. She, and co-founder Peggy, set out to find a way to improve the life chances of as many girls as they could by supplying essential sanitary pads - something largely taken for granted in the UK.

Rhoda would be pleased to know that KAGIS will be including another school in the area served by Amani, from the beginning of next term and will be reaching almost 2,000 girls in total. In addition, the project will be continuing to support the Healthy Choices programme which delivers health, sex and relationship education to both girls and boys with a view to informing and changing attitudes.

All this has been achieved in no small way due to Rhoda's enthusiasm and unrelenting commitment to the project and in her honour, we will do our best to continue to grow KAGIS.

Note from Peter Fish: During our February team visit as part of a very moving ceremony we planted a jackfruit tree seedling in memory of Rhoda. Known as a Fenesi tree in Kenya, the seedling has been planted in the Kirongo compound and when it has matured, a single fruit from the tree will feed up to 20 people.



## Bruce and Paul—The Reality of Life in Rural Kenya

After a long, dusty and very bumpy drive from our accommodation we reached a small house on the fringe of a community where the orphans Paul and Bruce live.

The grounds were well tended, tidy and sparse. The house was a usual Kenyan house with mud walls, tin roof, two rooms and kitchen outside. Bruce, now 13 years, came to meet the van as we pulled up. A tall boy with a gentle face and huge smile. His little brother Paul (7 yrs) appeared shortly afterwards, shy, quite skinny and found it difficult to give any eye contact and stayed very close to Bruce.



We entered their house: two chairs without any cushions just flat springs, one wooden table - coffee table size with a soft Eeyore toy lying on it and in the corner of the main room a large case covered in dust. Nothing on the walls, no windows, no floor covering, just bare but clean.

We said a prayer on entering and then Bruce started telling us their "story". Their mother died in 2015 from Aids. Bruce explained how he held his mothers hand when she died and it was like holding a bundle of sticks for the fire. As he continued, Paul wept - hard not to. Their father also had Aids and he passed away in

2017. Before he died, he managed to enlist an uncle to help with the boys. This uncle lived in the next village (several miles away) but a year ago he also died and his widow has now left that village to go back to her own family with her 3 children. Although both parents died of Aids, both of the boys have been tested and are clear.

This has left the boys totally on their own. Some widows from the community have given them food and advice and last year gave them some maize seed to grow but the land is in poor shape and they were only able to harvest four sacks to last them the year.

Bruce has a good work ethic and has planned what they must do to survive; collect wood for the fire before the rains come, water and weed every day and plough very soon. Bruce also talked about wanting some vegetable seeds. He was adamant that Paul should have a proper diet. Pretty impressive for a 13 year old!

They had been absent from school recently because they have both grown out of their shoes. Schools insist that children don't come to school in bare feet for obvious reasons. So, the boys have been at home, trying to survive until the rains come again (due end of March) when they hope they will be given more maize seed by the local widows group.

Before we left them we gave them some clothes; shorts, T shirts and shirt (as in photo), soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, nail scissors, haribo sweets, a tennis ball and for Paul, a new teddy.

The day before I left the UK for my trip to Kenya an amazing donation was given to me to "help make somebody's life better". I'm excited to say that Bruce and Paul have been the beneficiaries of that and now have:

- fertilizers and seed
- new school uniforms
- new shoes and socks
- a small solar lamp

Vegetable seeds, rush matting for the floor to avoid the "jiggers" - a nasty parasite that will burrow into the foot, probably new mattresses and mosquito nets are still needed so I'm hoping that somebody might think that these boys deserve some help and will open their hearts and purse. I was hugely impressed by Bruce, now bringing up his brother, responsible for their lives. I wonder how many UK teens would cope with such a mammoth task.

**Pauline Prince - School link Co-ordinator—written after returning from this February's trip**