

Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

Spring 2023

From the Coordinator

This newsletter marks the completion of my 7th year as International Coordinator and what a seven years it has been! In that time we have encountered a myriad of challenges such as a pandemic, organisational changes with our partners in Kenya, droughts, financial pressures and many, many more. For the first time in my experience we had to deal with a 24hr delay to the start of a trip when we were stranded at Heathrow in March due to a technical fault with the plane. This threw our plans into disarray, but we managed to delay our return by 24 hours and the staff in Kenya did an excellent job of rescheduling things so that we still managed to achieve everything we had hoped to (see later reports).



Peter Fish is International Coordinator of Amani UK

It is a privilege to serve Amani UK and the work this entails is put into perspective when, during our trips, we visit the community groups, schools, clinics and individuals benefitting from our support. Our Upendo Foundation, Kirongo and Hope for the Future partners through whom our financial support is channelled, are growing in capability and effectiveness. Our trustees and advisers have been sharing their expertise with our partners for many years and we are now seeing the benefits of this, particularly when the Kenyan team works together.

To give you a few examples of how things are moving forward, we are currently seeing expansions in the Keep a Girl in School and Healthy Choices programmes, acceleration in the community group development programme enabled by the Shalom Trust grant, widening of healthcare availability due to the building of the new Sino Grace Health Clinic, developments in many schools through our school links programme and individual donors, not to mention unexpected opportunities such as working with the Sikri Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hub.

To sustain this development we are, of course, always looking for increasing financial support from individuals and funding organisations. We really appreciate the support we already receive, but with greater funding we can do so much more. Unfortunately, none of us is getting any younger and so we are also looking for volunteers to join our team of trustees and advisers so that Amani UK can continue its amazing work for many years to come.

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Thank you Queen

Yes - a "royal" connection during this coronation season! We're very pleased to confirm that we are receiving a grant from the Mercury Phoenix Trust (MPT) which was set up by band members of Queen in memory of Freddie Mercury. The MPT funds work which combats the effects of HIV / AIDS - a key focus of our Healthy Choices programme which reaches out to young people, offering education, 1:1 advice and testing. The MPT grant follows on from the funding by the Souter Trust and will enable the Upendo Foundation to continue with training mentors, running outreach events and visiting schools.

Unfortunately, cases of HIV and other STIs are on the increase amongst younger people and everything possible needs to be done to prevent a repeat of the devastating situation we encountered 20 years or so ago.



Netball and football tournaments are a way to get young people together at the Healthy Choices outreach events.

Kasimba Lwala School

In our last newsletter we reported in detail about the building work at the Kasimba Lwala Primary School and in March it was wonderful for the visiting team to walk around the school, seeing all the changes and to watch the children sing and dance in appreciation of the tremendous progress the school has made.



What a difference! The old "kitchen" vs the new one..

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 our Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) partner in W. Kenya. Upendo delivers direct support and via two community based organisations (CBO). These are Hope for the Future based in the area around the town of Oyugis and Kirongo which is located approx. 15km from Oyugis. 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.

The Sikri ICT Hub



The Sikri Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hub was set up as part of the Kenyan government's drive to improve IT technology skills. Situated in the Sikri chief's compound on the road between Oyugis and Kirongo, it is strategically placed to help young people in the area gain skills which can help them get employment working remotely in jobs such as customer services, software development etc. Many of the computers at the hub had stopped working, but thanks to an Amani UK supporter and with the help of one of Leonard Odongo's (Upendo Foundation Programme Manager) sons, five of the computers are now back in service.

Community Group Sponsorship?

Amani UK's focus is to help the poorest people in Western Kenya to help themselves. There are many approaches which can be taken to achieve this and we are actively involved in many of them. However, we believe that one of the key approaches is to help communities form community groups and then to train and equip them to grow in prosperity so that they eventually become self-supporting. As reported on page 4 we are seeing some very encouraging results from using the Shalom Trust grant which we received last year to equip 10 groups more intensively than would usually be the case. We need to assess this project over a longer period, but it is leading us to consider a larger scheme to ask our supporters to think about "adopting" one of the 50 community groups, currently cared for by Kirongo and Hope for the Future, through a small monthly donation. So, look out for more news about this in the coming months.



The Nguono Farmers group which has benefitted from beekeeping resources funded by the Shalom Trust

News in Brief

Amani UK's **Instagram** account is now up and running. It is styled differently from our Facebook account so please take a look "@amaniuk_".

Thank you for a great response to our appeal to support the **Buy a Gift for Kenya (BaG)** programme. 2022 income for BaG was up by around 20% compared with 2021. All the gifts have now been distributed.



We're happy to report that the preliminary **2022 accounts**, which are subject to approval from our independent examiner and by the trustees, show a balanced year end position. Behind the numbers, though, was a very challenging end to 2022 when we had to cut back expenditure to achieve this balance. A tough 2023 budget has been agreed with the Upendo Foundation and as usual, we hope in faith for some unexpected donations to meet this budget. So far this year these hopes have been met, thanks to our generous donors.

No **safeguarding** issues were registered in 2022, but there is a current concern, not directly related to Amani UK, which we have raised with the Upendo board and is being followed up by them. Both Amani UK and the Upendo Foundation have safeguarding policies and procedures.

During the March visit we spent some time with the **Hope for the Future and Kirongo field staff** to get a better understanding about their daily work. Each staff member is responsible for 8 or 9 community groups and each group is visited every 2-3 weeks to check up on progress, give advice and training etc. The importance of this work can't be over-stressed and Amani UK would like to thank the field staff and managers for their commitment delivering the support we fund.



Health—The Story of Two Clinics

During the first half of 2022 we were contacted by a potential donor who was interested in funding the building of a new clinic. Leonard Odongo (Upendo Foundation Programme Manager) was asked to investigate what area would most benefit from a new clinic and he identified the Sino area. During the May 2022 trip, we visited the area and discussed the project with the local chief George Orawo. Since we already have amazing support and commitment for Kirongo's Ted Rayner Memorial (Ted's) Clinic, we wanted to approach the Sino project in a different way. Ted's Clinic is a private clinic built on private land and because of this it only qualifies for minimal government support. Consequently, Amani UK is responsible for funding all the staff, equipment and maintenance of Ted's Clinic.

It wasn't viable to take on this level of support for a second clinic and so by the end of the year we had reached agreement in writing with the local "council" (which is led by the chief), the local elders and the health authority that we would fund the building of the clinic in the chief's office compound (which is public land) on the basis that the local health authority would fund the staff, drugs and equipment on an on-going basis. Once the clinic becomes fully operational, ownership of the clinic will pass from the Upendo Foundation to the health authority.

The donor came up trumps at the end of last year and building work started in early January. Yet again, Leonard and the Upendo Foundation did a great job in organizing the building work and within two months construction was complete—just in time for our visit. On 22nd March the visiting Amani UK team attended a ceremony to celebrate the completion of the building work. Chief George, the local



The Sino Grace Clinic nearing completion



Completion Day tree planting

elders, a representative from the health authority and many of the local people joined us in the celebrations. There were many impassioned speeches about how the clinic will benefit the community, including the reduction in the number of deaths of mothers in labour because of the inaccessibility of the next nearest clinic. There were many requests from the elders and the community for the Upendo Foundation and Amani UK to provide staff, equipment and drugs for the clinic and it had to be made clear that it was now time for the health authority to meet its part of the bargain. At the time of writing, these costs are in the local budget and we hope to see a functioning clinic when we visit again later in the year.

The Sino Grace clinic is strategically positioned at the village crossroads and is close to the Sino SDA, Kombaka and Masanga schools, all of which receive support from Amani UK. There is a shaded waiting area in the clinic, but this will be supplemented by the planting of three umbrella trees during the Completion Day celebrations.

For some time now, ladies from the Women's Institute in the Hazlemere area have been busy knitting all sorts of things including dolls, cardigans and blankets. In March we took two cases full of blankets to give to newborns and their mums. These were distributed at both clinics and were very gratefully received, especially as at this time of year the temperatures get as low as 15°C at night!



Laboratory equipment finally back in use

In the meantime, 20km away from the Sino Grace clinic, we're very happy to report that after a gap of five years or so since Kenya Power's transformer next to Ted's clinic blew up, mains electricity has just been restored using a newly installed alternative power line which has been run from a more reliable supply. This will enable the laboratory to use all its testing facilities and provide a much better service to the local community. It is hoped that Ted's clinic will also now be able to provide laboratory services for a government funded clinic which has opened approx. 2km away in the God Agak area.



Handing over the WI blankets to the Sino Grace clinic



Handing over the blankets to Ted's clinic

Reflections on the March 2023 Trip

Sue Smithin (trustee), my wife Margaret and I made up the mini group which visited Kenya in March. The original plan had been to make the trip during the February half term, but a combination of personal reasons and flight prices led to the decision to delay the trip by four weeks. There is feedback about the trip elsewhere in this newsletter, but here are some reflections and some additional news which will give you an idea about what a trip to Oyugis is like.

As per last year we stayed at the Osika Gardens Hotel in Oyugis and were very well looked after. Because we were such a small team we flew from Nairobi to Kisumu rather than using the services of Mission Tours and one of their vans. For a small team which remains in the Oyugis area rather than including trips to the Kakamega rain forest and / or the Masai Mara, this works out to be cheaper and quicker. As it turned out, because of the 24hr delay at Heathrow which meant we only had about four hours sleep in our Heathrow hotel followed by an overnight flight, we were happy to get to Osika Gardens as quickly as possible!

There is always a full itinerary on these trips and here's an overview of what happened. We were up early on the first morning and straight into the programme. We spent the first day in the Kirongo area visiting community groups. At one group we "passed on" newly born animals from one group member to another, increasing animal ownership within the group. We also visited groups being supported by funds from the Shalom Trusts (see the Autumn 2022 newsletter). Being welcomed by the groups and visiting people in their houses is at the very heart of Amani UK's work and this was great way to start the trip. It is early days for the groups being supported by the Shalom Trust funds, but it was very encouraging to see how some of the groups are achieving an annual return on investment (ROI) of 20-40% through being able to buy foodstuffs in bulk and selling it in smaller quantities at a profit. The Imani Women's group has taken this approach one step further and are initially



"Passing on" a calf at a Kirongo group

buying grain when the market price is low, storing it and then selling it in smaller quantities out of season when the market price is much higher. Some Hope for the Future groups which we visited later in the trip have invested in beekeeping. The return on this activity is slower because of the time it takes to establish new hives, but honey harvesting is now starting and we'll soon be able to measure the ROIs from this activity.



Singing from a Hope for the Future group

ingredients such as ground nuts and so we had initial discussions over lunch back at the hotel on how the community groups we fund might supply the factory. In the afternoon we spent time with the Hope for the Future staff understanding how they look after their community groups.

Day 5 was spent visiting schools and some of the Hope for the Future groups. On our penultimate day we visited the Kasimba Lwala Primary School. This was our first visit since the completion of the new classroom block, kitchen and toilets. The transformation has been amazing and what a reception we got, the highlight of which was the entertainment which the pupils put on for us. We then visited two other schools and the Sikri ICT hub (see separate report). In the afternoon we visited two of the Hope for the Future groups which are investing funds from the Shalom Trust in beekeeping. That brought us to our last day in Kenya which was spent visiting the new Sino Grace clinic before having a quick lunch and then driving to Kisumu to fly to Nairobi for an overnight flight back to the UK.....and some rest!!

Margaret writes: The memories of our trip to Oyugis back in March are fading slightly, but what I will always remember is the warmth and hospitality shown to us when we visited the groups. What is always memorable is the beautiful singing! Two groups in particular stood out for me. One group, as we were sitting in a member's house, sang to us with harmonies. It was a really moving moment and showed such kindness to us as they made us feel very welcome. Another group we visited shared food with us - chicken in juice and ugali (a thick maize porridge) which we ate with our hands. It was quite a challenge! Also, we were given bottles of "soda" (fizzy drinks). When you think that they shared with us when sometimes it is a challenge for them to have enough to eat, it is very much appreciated to be included in this way and to share a meal.



Lunch at one of the groups

(If you're interested in a trip, please contact me, Peter Fish. We're planning a 1 week trip in Sept / Oct and a 2 week trip in Feb. which will include a trip to the Masai Mara).