

Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

May 2024

From the Coordinator

There are a great many encouraging things to mention in this newsletter most of which are possible due to a very positive financial year. We receive restricted giving (for specific purposes such as Keep a Girl in School, the Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic, Buy a Gift for Kenya (BaG), orphan support and schools links) as well as unrestricted giving which is used to support the staff in Kenya and the 50 community groups in the Oyugis and Ringa areas of Western Kenya. At the time of writing our draft accounts are still being verified by our independent examiner and final approval of the accounts still has to be given but I can report that income in the majority of the above areas rose in 2023 with BaG income increasing by an amazing 250% and our unrestricted giving increasing by over 20%. In addition to this we benefitted by a very favourable exchange rate which enabled our GB£ income to be converted into even more Kenya Shillings.



Peter Fish is International Coordinator of Amani UK

In February the exchange rate suddenly dropped and it has returned to a historically more “normal” level. However, we are still hoping to achieve the goals of our 2024 budget, especially because of the strong income streams we are receiving from you, our donors.

I am also happy to report that there have been two team visits to Kenya this year and one more is expected towards the end of the year. In 2025 we are expecting the number of visits to increase to four with the addition of a post-grad young adults visit in the summer. Please get in touch if you are interested in making a visit or even just to get some additional information.

Amani UK is able to ensure that 100% of the donations we receive are sent out to fund our work in Kenya because of a dedicated team of trustees, advisers and other supporters all of whom enable the multi-faceted aspects of our work to operate so smoothly. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to this amazing team which enables me to carry out my responsibilities to Amani UK with a minimal amount of pressure, not forgetting a fantastic team of staff members in Kenya who run the day-to-day operations.

Contact details: Telephone: +44 (0)1494 716505 Email: contactus@amaniuk.org.uk Website: www.amaniuk.org.uk
Address: 14 Maxwell Drive, Hazlemere, Bucks HP15 7BX, UK  : search for 'Amani UK'  : @amaniuk_

Buy a Gift for Kenya



Thanks to our wonderful supporters, 2023 proved to be a record year for Buy a Gift with donations at two and a half times those of 2022. When an animal is purchased, its first offspring is given to another community group (pass-back) and the next offsprings are given to other members in the original group. Here's a story from the Kirongo manager Bernard Ouma about these gifts which keep on giving:

“Mama Jesca is a member of the Wegine Women's Group and received a pass-back in 2020, which was a bull. She reared it to maturity. With the permission from her group members, she sold the bull and purchased the heifer (in the photo). The cow is now two months in calf. She arrived at this decision since she needed a source of income and some milk. Hopefully in the near future, she will be in a position to get milk from the cow for her use at home to feed her children and even sell the surplus to get a little income. Also, she will now be able to purchase stationery for her children in school and pay the little school levies required from parents.

Today, 15th May 2024, we visited her at her home. She is really happy and thankful to Amani UK for this program that has enabled her acquire the cow. She has passed her sincere regards and hopes that the program continues to empower other women in the community, just as it has been impactful and life-changing for her. Mama Jesca told us that she never envisioned or even thought of owning a cow. Amani UK has given her an opportunity to own one and it is truly miraculous, for which she is greatly thankful.

'Wegine' is a Luo word that translates to 'let them see' in English. The group derives its name from the fact that they came together as low income women and formed a group, to collectively work hard and change their economic situations and thus enable other women to see and do the same.”

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 funds resources and expertise.

Amani UK (Amani means "Peace" in Swahili) is linked with the Upendo Foundation which is our Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) partner in W. Kenya. Upendo works with 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 near Ringa 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.

Where Are We Now?

The "About Amani UK" summary in column 1 of this page gives the bare bones about our origins. It is now coming up to 25 years since the process of change from a centralised organisation built on top of a hill, training and equipping people in farming techniques to an organisation concentrating all its resources on the community groups being formed in the Ringa and Oyugis areas. It is also 20 years since the concept of the formation of the Upendo Foundation, a process which took 3 years with the eventual registration of the Upendo Foundation with the Kenyan NGO board in 2007.

There have been many bumps in the road on our journey, including times when the staff in Kenya agreed to work for no pay because Amani UK simply did not have the funds available. This is a measure of the dedication of the Kenyan staff who are committed to helping the poorest of their fellow citizens. HIV / AIDS hasn't disappeared and there is a high percentage of people in the community groups "living positively" but the development and availability of ARV drugs has given hope to so many people who would previously have been stigmatised with little hope for the future. So, looking at where we are today compared to starting from nothing 25 years ago, we have so much to be thankful for as we *"Help the Kenyan people find a Kenyan solution to their challenges which is sustainable and capable of continuous development."* and here's a brief summary of where we are now:

Community Groups - 50 groups are looked after by 8 salaried staff at Kirongo and Hope for the Future. There are 827 members, 149 of whom are HIV +ve. In addition there are 1,833 children in the groups, 712 of whom are orphans. The groups are our primary focus for all our funding.

The Economic Empowerment (EE) programme provides seed loans for group members to start up micro-businesses such as bulk-buying maize and selling it



The Kolanda community group

in small quantities in local markets. The loans are paid back every 12 weeks plus a small interest payment which then qualifies the group to increase their next loan. In this way during the first few years, each group can accumulate a sizeable "pot" most of which they will keep with some being returned to provide EE to another group. The programme is about to incorporate its 18th community group and EE is now a central part of our sustainability approach as the surplus earnings also help pay group members' schooling and health costs.



Baby blankets knitted by ladies in the Hazlemere area being handed over to staff at Ted's Clinic

Health - The Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic funded entirely by Amani UK serves 1000s of people local to the Kirongo area. Its laboratory provides testing facilities for these people and for another local clinic. The newly built Sino Grace Healthcare clinic is a joint project with the area health authority with Amani funding the building and the authority responsible for the equipping and staffing. In addition there are 67 community health workers within the 50 community groups.

Education - Keep a Girl in School (KaGiS) provides over 3,500 girls with sanitary products every month they are at school so that they can achieve their potential. The Healthy Choices programme provides community based personal care and development education and HIV testing to school age pupils. There are 19 school links between UK and Kenyan schools where pupils share their cultures and promote cross-cultural understanding (see page 3). We also give direct support to the Kirongo Rainbow Primary School.

Food and Water - Group self-sustainability involves equipping them with farming inputs given via the Buy a Gift for Kenya (BaG) scheme (see page 1), using regular income from our donors and also gift aid claimed on our donors' behalf. We are constantly looking for funding partners to help provide reliable, clean water for communities (see page 4) as this is fundamental to their development.

Business - The Business Community Loan Fund (BCLF) is part of the Upendo Foundation and is funded by a separate UK charity Trade Relief. BCLF funds local businesses with low interest finance which will increase employment in the area. Amani UK helps to support BCLF's running costs.

Visiting our Linked Schools

The April team included two head teachers for whom this was their first trip. Here are the reflections of Hilary Douch (recently retired head of St. Giles C of E Primary School, Horsted Keynes which is linked with God Agak Primary school) and Julie Green (Head of St. John's C of E Primary School, Baxenden which has just formed a link with Nyaluru Primary) after visiting their linked schools. What they write below is being included in the next letter going out to all our UK linked schools.

"We didn't know what to expect on our (first) visit to Kenya, however we were both looking forward to it and were excited about meeting our link schools. Neither of us had visited Kenya, or indeed any African country, so we both felt a little apprehensive and nervous about what we were expected to do, say and behave like! We needn't have worried - the wonderful staff from Amani UK organised, advised and supported us through the experience of a lifetime and the making and strengthening of the friendship with our link schools.

Julie had only recently become linked with her school and had exchanged one set of letters with the headteacher of her school so when the opportunity to visit them (and be a part of the Amani team working in Kenya) arose, the timing seemed perfect. Hilary already had longstanding links with her school, and having just retired from headship, felt now was the perfect time to visit. Although no longer working at St Giles she intends to continue to be involved with Amani UK and the link school project.

Finally we arrived in Kenya and were given a warm welcome by the Kenyan Amani team, however, nothing you read or are told will prepare you for driving up to your school and being greeted as an honoured guest! After being made to feel welcome by the teaching team, Julie was introduced to the whole school in a special welcoming ceremony with performances and speeches from the children. Hilary was also introduced to the whole school and gave a talk to the children and some parents about her school. In both schools, most children had not experienced a 'white' teacher before - so we had their full attention! To fully immerse ourselves into our schools, we had the wonderful experience of teaching each class an English hymn with actions - the Kenyans love singing and quickly learned the song and sang better than us! We also had the opportunity to show and describe some photos of our own school; both the children and staff were fascinated. Kenyan children are taught by rote, so the question and answer sessions were interesting!

Day 2 was even more special - Hilary visited Julie's link school (since her link school had closed for the Easter break), and by now the children were no longer shy and couldn't wait to run up to us and say "hello!" - it was a novelty for them and for us being the centre of their curiosity!



Julie (left) and Hilary either side of the Head Teacher at Nyaluru Primary

We had both taken gifts for our schools, most of which they were familiar with, however, the parachute was a complete mystery to them. Luckily, Hilary was an expert and taught them (and me!) how to use it outside in the hot Kenyan sun. What was meant to be one class turned into the whole school surrounding us in excitement - organised chaos! With half of the morning gone, we then taught the story of the 10 lepers in an English drama lesson - another new experience for the children, teachers and ourselves! The school then treated us to an end of term closing ceremony with more traditional dances and speeches, again a fantastic experience we will remember for many years to come.

The whole trip felt like a once in a lifetime experience and it was a real privilege to see behind the tourism into the real life of Kenya. We hope this is not a one off visit and plan to continue to make strong cultural links with our schools and perhaps revisit them a few years down the line! We also plan to fundraise as the Kenyan schools are in real need of resources and equipment. However, this is a personal choice, and not an expectation. If the opportunity presents itself, we would encourage you to visit your link school - it makes the whole experience special and deepens your understanding of a different culture, how they live and the many challenges they face.

Linking with a Kenyan school will undoubtedly enhance the understanding of the children in the school you lead, whether or not you can visit we would both highly recommend linking with a Kenyan school as a way of helping children understand culture differences and to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. If you have any questions we would be more than happy to have a chat.

Hilary Douch and Julie Green."

Hope (and Kirongo) Springs Eternal!



The Abururu waterfall near Kirongo

You may be wondering how much the recent disastrous floods in Kenya have affected the Oyugis and Ringa areas where we work. Fortunately, the area is not low lying and tends to escape serious flooding even during the recent extreme weather. However, some building foundations have been damaged due to the ground becoming totally waterlogged and we know of cases of deep pit latrines collapsing due to the unstable ground. In the medium term it is very likely that crop yields will be poor because the rain has leached most of the fertilizer out of the ground.

There is no doubt that the weather patterns in Kenya are changing and despite the current floods, it is likely that the dry seasons will become harsher resulting in even greater difficulties in finding clean water supplies for domestic use. The main sources of water are rivers and springs with springs being the more important as many can be found in areas a long way from the nearest river. Springs may just be seasonal but there are many which, with the right care, can provide water year round for hundreds of people in the local community. A spring can be “encouraged” to continue providing water if a gravel filter bed is installed at the source of the spring. This prevents the spring from blocking up with silt and also cleanses the water. A manual chlorine dosing unit can be provided at the point where the cleansed water is collected to ensure the highest possible quality of water and concrete steps are built to provide safe access to the collection point.



Building at Hope's Konyuka B spring



Kirongo's Dudu spring

At the end of last year we were delighted to receive a grant from the Kitchen Table Charities Trust for four spring protection projects and an additional grant from another donor for a fifth project. Although the concept for each spring was the same, the detailed work and logistics varied depending on location. The local communities were mobilized to enable vehicles to gain access to the springs to deliver building materials. In some cases the local community also provided additional materials and labour. Where a spring was still providing water (there were early rains at the start of the year) in some cases it was necessary to divert the flow so that the work could be carried out. Despite some of the challenges, all five projects were completed within three months, providing over 2,000 people with safe, clean and reliable water supplies which will at long last stop the queuing for water at dawn in the dry season.

On completion, the local communities were gathered together around their spring for training on how to use the new chlorine dispensers which had been installed at each location and one community member was given the responsibility to ensure that their dispenser is always kept topped up.

News in Brief

We would like to welcome Colin Knight as a new trustee. Colin and his wife Jane are the ones planning next year's **young adult trip** which will be the first one since the pandemic.

After many years of service, **William Dondi** who is Upendo's Administration Manager, will be retiring at the end of June. Two employees at Kirongo will

also be retiring at the same time. We would like to thank them all for their faithful service and wish them all the best in their retirements.

Following our AGM and Trustees meeting earlier this month, we will be making our annual **Charity Commission** (CC) submissions in June so please search for “Amani UK” on the

CC website if you would like more information.

We are in the early stages of planning an **“Amani UK Expo”**, at Holy Trinity Church Hazlemere in the Autumn, It will be an opportunity to understand what we do in more depth so please keep on the lookout for more details which will be published later this year.