

# Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

November 2024

## From the Coordinator

Earlier this month I was in Kenya with a small team of three, carrying out what we call our annual "admin visit". This visit is a bit different from other team visits as we spend more time in meetings, checking financial records, having 1:1 get togethers and carrying out training. We only spent six days in Oyugis and so the trip was significantly shorter than other visits. Nevertheless, we still made a number of visits to community groups as these visits are part of the process we carry out to ensure that our donor funds are being used in the optimum way.

It was a hectic but extremely encouraging time. We heard first hand from the community groups which are benefitting from the Economic Empowerment (EE) programme and through the hard work of the group members, they are increasing the original funding given to them at a prodigious rate as well as supporting their orphans with school equipment, uniforms and school fees. Other vulnerable group members are also receiving support through the funds which are being generated. It is still early days with this programme but the indications are that it will be one of the most significant initiatives Amani UK has instigated in recent years. You'll be able to read more about this later in the newsletter.

Whilst EE progresses, we can't forget about the mainstay of the local economy in the Kirongo and Hope for the Future areas - farming. We can testify from our visit that the rainy season was in full flow but the weather pattern is still unpredictable. Our Autumn time is the second rainy season in Kenya - the short rains. They started early this year and many of the farmers planted their crops. However, just after the crops germinated, there was a prolonged dry spell and many of the crops perished. The rains then re-started and we took the decision to fund emergency seeds and fertiliser for the farmers whose crops had failed. It was therefore encouraging to see during our visit that these crops were flourishing albeit a bit behind where they would normally be at that time of year.

In this newsletter you'll find updates on many of the areas of support which we provide. We also have our first "Expo" which is being held on February 8th 2025 so please see more details on page 2.

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*Peter Fish is International Coordinator of Amani UK*

## Project Changes in Kenya

The three organisations we work most closely with in Kenya are our NGO partner, the Upendo Foundation and our Community Based Organisation (CBO) partners Kirongo and Hope for the Future. Each organisation has its own board and there are a number of changes underway. Firstly, we would like to thank Revd Vitalice Oduor for his invaluable guidance and support as chairman of the Upendo board. Vitalice has now stepped down and has been replaced by Michael Arogo who has a wealth of experience working internationally with companies such as Rank Xerox.



*Michael Arogo*

To take up his new position, Michael has stepped down as chairman of Hope for the Future.

Currently both Kirongo and Hope for the Future are electing new members to their boards and this is expected to result in boards having younger, proactive board members who will be able to guide the projects through the next decade or so, a decade when the projects have great prospects of moving significantly forward.

## A Visit of a Lifetime!



*Walking through the beautiful Kenyan countryside to visit a widow*

Regular visits to Kenya will be in full swing during 2025 with the long awaited young adult visits re-starting in June. The timing of our visits can be tailored around the requirements of team members e.g. if a teacher from a linked school wants to visit, it needs to coincide with Kenyan term-time but it may also need to minimise the time the teacher is away from school. Visit durations are also flexible so if you are interested, please get in touch using the contact information above.

## 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.

## Amani UK Expo



**COME AND JOIN US!**



**Sat 8th February 2025  
10am - 3pm**

**Holy Trinity Church, Amersham  
Road, Hazlemere, HP15 7PZ**

**FREE entry**

Light refreshments served throughout the day

Real Kenyan soapstone available to buy

Email: [contactus@amaniuk.org.uk](mailto:contactus@amaniuk.org.uk)

WEBSITE  
[amaniuk.org.uk](http://amaniuk.org.uk)

Save the date! This will be an opportunity for you to talk to a wide range of people associated with Amani UK about the work we are funding. There will be a number of stands, each representing different aspects of our work (e.g. Keep a Girl in School, the Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic, Community Groups, Team Visits, the Kenyan Staff etc., etc.) and there will be someone at each stand you can talk to. So, if you have any questions and would like to find out more about us, please keep a couple of hours free on Saturday February 8<sup>th</sup> and take the opportunity to have a chat whilst enjoying some light refreshments. We are looking forward to seeing you!

## Amani UK



**'Gifts for Kenya'  
2024-2025  
Catalogue**

## Buy a Gift for Kenya

As reported in our May newsletter, 2023 was a record year for Buy a Gift (BaG) with donations increasing by 250% over those of the previous year. Your generosity has been amazing but we want you to carry on being amazing and at least match 2023's total this year!

We've got off to a good start this year and have reached 40% of the 2023 total but it is these few weeks leading up to Christmas when we usually receive over 50% of our annual donations from you, our wonderful supporters. So, are you up for a challenge? Please have a look at our catalogues which have been distributed in the Hazlemere area or visit our BaG website at [www.amaniukgifts.org.uk](http://www.amaniukgifts.org.uk). Thanks!

## News in Brief

Fancy watching Arthur Christmas and enjoying a delicious hot dog? If so, come to the Family Film Night at Holy Trinity Church, Hazlemere, 4-6.30pm on Saturday 30th November in aid of Keep a Girl in School.

The latest trustees' meeting was held on 16th November. We reviewed the current budget situation which is just about on track despite the challenging

exchange rate situation. All in all it was a very encouraging time hearing about significant progress in a number of important areas.

Although Vitalice has retired as Upendo chairman, he remains very busy leading the Oyugis Redeemed Gospel Church which is about to expand to cope with ever-growing numbers. He also has oversight of

other churches in the area.



## Making Further Progress at Ted's Clinic

It is now over 11 years since the Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic was established by Jan Rayner in memory of her husband. The clinic is located in the Kirongo compound which is also shared with the Kirongo offices and the Kirongo Rainbow School. The compound is a focal point for the local community and many visiting teams have spent a fantastic day with Kirongo community groups who gather to celebrate the "passing-on" (from one group member to another member in the same group) and "passing-back" (from a member of a group to a member in another group) of the off-spring of animals donated through the Buy a Gift for Kenya scheme.

The clinic is therefore well located to serve the local rural community and its role is expanding. The clinic was recently registered as a level 2 SHA care provider. SHA (the Social Health Authority) was introduced earlier this year to replace the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF). Previously, the clinic hadn't been able to register with NHIF but now it is able to treat patients with a range of ailments and claim back the cost of the treatment through the SHA system. This is accessed via the government SHA portal using one of the laptops donated to Amani UK and taken out by this month's visiting team. To be able to provide the right standard of care, the clinic is having to hold a much larger stock of drugs etc. and so an additional £1500 has been released for this purpose.

The clinic staff also make weekly visits to people in the community as many of them, especially the elderly, are unable to make the journey to the clinic itself. As well as the laptop, this month's team also took out a large number of blankets and hats knitted by ladies in the Hazlemere area (thanks again ladies!) and these will be given to the most needy patients.



*Checking the sizes of the hats!*

to the most needy patients.



*Medical camp queue at 9 o'clock in the morning*

costs Amani UK about £1000 to fund the organisation of each camp and limited funds mean we have to be careful not to raise expectations too high. Additionally, teaming up with organisations such as Beril's is essential as they provide the additional medical expertise free of charge.

Just before the Covid outbreak, the clinic was about to receive its first two medical elective doctors. These are trainee doctors, usually in their last year of training, who are encouraged to spend a month or two in a completely different medical environment. Unfortunately, the two doctors were on their way to the clinic when they were recalled to the UK because of the Covid outbreak. The good news is that it is looking very likely that two trainee doctors from Swansea University will now be spending next April at the clinic doing their electives and we hope that this will be the start of a regular stream of doctors spending time in a very different environment at the clinic.



*The Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic*

## Economic Empowerment – a Game Changer

The Economic Empowerment programme was introduced into the Hope for the Future and Kirongo community groups just over two years ago. It was a pilot exercise, funded by the Shalom Trust, to see if we could help groups move towards self-sustainability in a faster and more significant way. The community groups we support are almost all in very rural areas and rely heavily on the rural economy. However, not all groups are located in areas where the quality of land is good enough to support them and, as we have seen on many occasions, one or two failed harvests can knock a developing group back to square one. Unfortunately, the likelihood of this happening is increasing as we see the effects of climate change in Kenya.

So, in 2022 we “invested in” five Hope groups and five Kirongo groups to see if injections of funding could help them achieve the self-sustainability goal. The funds were used in a variety of ways, according to the groups’ skills and profile. A group of mostly elderly ladies invested in grain banking (buying grain when it is cheap and selling it when the price goes up). Another group invested in chairs and tents for hiring out at events. A few groups located in fertile areas invested their funds in growing more crops and some groups invested in beekeeping. Lastly, some groups used their funding to lend to individuals so that they could buy, grow or make goods and to sell them at local markets. Each individual agreed to pay back their loan plus 10% after 12 weeks. They would then be eligible to take out another (usually larger) loan on the same terms.

We have been monitoring the results for the last two years and now have a clear pattern of what is working best. First of all, it is worth mentioning that all the groups have really appreciated the funding, they have worked extremely hard and in the case of the loans to individuals, there have not been any repayment defaults.

The groups carrying out farming activities have had their ups and downs which really reflect the harvest situation each season. Although we understand how essential farming is, from a point of view of achieving self-sustainability, farming alone is unlikely to enable many groups to achieve this goal. The groups need to persist with farming but they also need other sources of income to grow and thrive.

Groups carrying out activities such as grain banking and chair hire are not subject as much to the vagaries of the weather but their turnover is relatively low and so the path to self-sustainability is slower.

Groups carrying out beekeeping have had a very slow start because it took time to establish their hives. There can be security issues with the hives i.e. honey theft and vandalism. There are also other requirements such as protective equipment and honey processing equipment. However, there is good potential for the future and it was encouraging to hear that the Hope beekeeping groups have come together to form a beekeeping association where members help each other out in areas such as selling the honey. These groups have just been given the funds to purchase a six frame portable centrifuge which will be a great help with the processing of the honey.



*Kirongo and Hope staff discussing EE feedback during this month's trip*

However, by far the most successful groups are the ones who have been funded with individual loans. Perhaps paying back 10% interest every 12 weeks seems a lot (in excess of 50% p.a.) but these are unsecured loans which would be impossible to get elsewhere except from local money lenders who charge an astronomical KES50 per day for every KES1000 lent. These groups are able to earn more profit than is needed just to repay their loans every 12 weeks. They are also now paying for orphan uniforms, school equipment, school fees, healthcare, food support etc. and this is exactly what was hoped for from EE.

Due to this success 10 more groups have been funded to participate in a new five year EE programme and this month's team were introduced to the latest two groups to be selected. The EE model is being developed further with the idea that at the end of the five years the group will retain most of the fund they have been building (this will be approx. three times their original funding in real terms), with half that amount going towards affiliating more EE groups and a small amount going back to Hope / Kirongo to help with the running of the projects. Keep a look out for more updates in the months and years ahead!



*The two newest EE groups—Well Wishers on the left and N'gad Yor Tielo which means “Follow the Footsteps” on the right*