



BALA ORPHANAGE, KENYA

ASH FARMHOUSE

POOLE KEYNES

CIRENCESTER

GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL7 6EG

mauraferdinando@btconnect.com 01285 770824/770535

October 18th, 2011

Dear Sponsors and Supporters of Bala,

Thank you again for your wonderful support for the children at Bala Mercy Children Centre.

A team of five, Suzie Axtell (committee member) and son James, Cate Luck, Dorian and Maura Ferdinando, went out in September spending every day at the Centre. The children now number about 480 and they looked very well.

Time was spent teaching, singing, playing creative games with the children, helping them with their reading and sorting books to set up a library. Clothes which had been kindly collected by several people were given out to the delight of the children and staff. Otherwise we caught up with the accounts and admin and spent time with Bishop Dominic talking over decisions affecting the future of Bala Mercy Children's Centre. The challenge at the moment is that expenditure at the centre is considerably more than the monthly amount we send and ways were sought to make the necessary savings.

We saw the twelve acres of land which is now fenced and in the process of having irrigation put in. With two crops a year it seems that it has the potential to provide most of the food for the children which will make a big difference to the running costs.

We are currently sending £4,000 a month for regular expenditure which needs to increase to £5,000 to cover basic running costs. Whenever extra capital amounts are received these are spent on land and new buildings. This year we have concentrated on developing the land.

The children are so aware that being able to study at the Centre is a wonderful opportunity. They appreciate the love and care they receive and work hard to achieve good results. They move up a class every year on passing the end of year exam (otherwise they have to repeat the class) and in year eight, when they are approximately 14 years old, they take the national Kenyan exam in order to go to secondary school. Only those who pass are able to go on with formal education.

The exam results have as usual been excellent; the school came 7th out of 169 schools in the area, and Billy Okute (the acting headmaster) received the trophy for top science teacher out of 600 schools.

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It was a highlight to meet up again with the '4 people' (see their blog on www.4-people.org), Roberto, Fabiana, Tommaso and Paola, who are working voluntarily at the centre for six months. They are working very hard getting suitable materials and building the new earthbag guesthouse* which should be ready next year for groups of young people or gap year students which will be fantastic. Tommaso's main job is to oversee the building of a new girls' dormitory, Elpis, a charity in Italy, having raised the money for this. *see small-earth.com.

The 'Give a Goat Project' is underway! Thank you to all of you who have given money towards this scheme. Two goats have been bought (at £300 each to include materials for a hut) and given to needy families. On average the goat will have one female kid per year which will be given to someone else and so the number of families helped multiplies. These great goats live in a wooden structure and produce about 6 litres of milk a day in addition to feeding their kids. This is a valuable addition to a limited local diet and the excess milk is sold. We are still collecting for this project.

Three long-term sponsors sadly died this year which reminds us to ask if you would very kindly consider Bala when making or changing your will. We are very grateful to those who have increased their giving to £15 or more a month which is much needed as food costs doubled this year alone.

With best wishes for a Happy Christmas and an exciting 2012!

Dorian and Maura Ferdinando

PS Please could you note our change of email address.

The address for writing or sending parcels for a child at Bala is:

c/o Bishop Domnic Ochoo
B.M.C.C.
P.O. Box 438
Homa Bay 40300
KENYA
East Africa (even though their letters note a different address)

P.P.S. We have just received very exciting news! Through Paul Hargreaves, Managing Director of Cotswold Fayre, Burts Crisps are very kindly putting Bala Orphanage's details on the back of their packets of crisps for three months and donating 1p for every packet sold during this time. We will put a notice on the website when we know the date that this starts. Please buy Burts Crisps!