

Operation Imprezza
 HELPING THE EDUCATION OF AFRICA'S FUTURE
www.operation-imprezza.org
 Registered Charity Number: 1113535

News From Kenya and Home

Stokeinteignhead Primary School Exchange visit, February 2012

Our brief for the week in Kenya was ambitious yet simple: we planned to install three solar panels along with LED lighting and laptop/phone charging connections (that we somehow managed to fit into our suitcases!) and finish off a project that had lasted three years and had yielded so many happy memories and hopefully helped develop the school.

Stepping off of the aeroplane at Nairobi gave us that instant hit of winter sunshine – how lovely! The sounds and smells of Africa seemed so familiar. We travelled with some trepidation. Political disputes with Somalia had led to some bouts of terrorism and kidnapping (albeit mainly near the Somali border). When we arrived however, the positive buzz and energy of Nairobi quickly dispelled those fears.

We travelled to Matayos via a very impressive, new 'International' airport at Kisumu City (we were told on several occasions: 'Make sure you use 'City' in the title, you won't be popular in Kisumu if you don't!') We felt like we were returning to our African home.

The school had changed in many subtle ways: the new classrooms (eventually to be turned into science labs) had been completed, a new nursery class had been created, and there were more pupils to fill the extra space!

Our main task was to install the solar panels; so this was what we did first. With lots of help from Dave (Catherine's brother), we fitted the nine LED lights

to one classroom, with the portable solar panels outside, revelling in the equatorial sunshine.

The lights were an instant hit. They transformed a dark classroom into a bright workspace, with the capability of children working beyond the 7 o'clock sunset. The capacity to charge a laptop is also a massive plus. The area is lacking mains power and this is something that is likely to remain absent for many years to come.

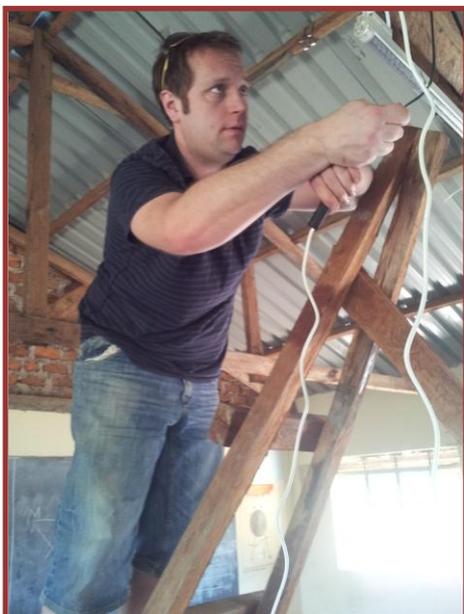
The children and teachers were amazed! They were quickly dreaming about more solar panels that could run a fridge, freezer and many other electrical possibilities. We were also told that the children at Imprezza Academy became minor celebrities in the village, with people constantly asking 'Are you from the school that has light?'

The rest of our week flew by. We taught English to very keen, intelligent and enthusiastic students. We observed bright, informed teachers and we took about three quarters of the school on a geography field trip up two of the local hills - not a long hike, but in 41 degrees it took its toll on certain members of the group (not mentioning any names, Mr Cross!).

Our short visit quickly came to an end with a goodbye meal at the students' living accommodation (fondly known as 'The Bungalow' to anyone who has been there). We were given a beautiful send-off, with singing and speeches. As we all stood up to pray for our continued health and good fortune, I was suddenly struck by the scene. It felt like the perfect metaphor for Imprezza and life in Kenya per se. As these strong, hard working children sang beautiful songs dating back from years before, I could feel ants crawling up my bare legs. I tried hard not to fidget or make a fuss. I couldn't help but be reminded of the beauty and raw talent that Kenya possesses, but talent and beauty that is often spoilt by natural (and unnatural) factors.

The journey home gave us time to reflect on our visit and plan for the return visit, when Rose (head teacher at Imprezza Academy) and Titus (assistant head) visit our school for a week, to share good practice and teach our children about their lives in Kenya. It quickly reminded us that this is a reciprocal project – we share our experiences, knowledge and skills with the Imprezza, but they also teach us about their positive views towards education and human rights, their incredibly high work ethic and their relationship with the world around them; all positive lessons for our children in the UK.

Joe working on the lighting



Joe Baxter, February 2012

eden project
 gardens for life

Check out the **NEW** website for news and fundraising events
www.operation-imprezza.org

Back to School!! (an extract from a blog written by a visiting group from Teignmouth Baptist Church)

"I don't hate Mondays" contrary to the song as it was a joy to return to the school site. As always I was hoping for buildings and other things to have moved forward more quickly than they have but then I do not have to cope with rising costs of foodstuffs and everyday needs.

The school now has 67 students. We were introduced to the classes during the morning and also had a tour of the site. It was really good to see that there was now mains water on the site with a storage tank. Officially this is only for irrigation for the agricultural plot but the school also uses it for cooking lunches and the tea breaks.

The Gardens for Life Project (run in conjunction with the Eden Project – and worked on by two lovely English people well seasoned in work in Kenyan agricultural projects) has fenced off a plot at the school for agricultural development. Each of the students has their own small plot. These have been

**The newly installed water tank**

fastidiously cleared of stones ready to start to plant when the rains come next month. The soil is rather shallow and there are too many areas within the plot which are untillable due to solid rock too near the surface. It will be interesting to see by August which crops have yielded best on the plots. They will try maize, sorghum, cassava and cowpeas amongst others!! Also they have planted fruit trees which will take some years to establish.

Mike had the task of typing all the exam papers for next week's End of Term Tests!! (I remember that job from last year). Eileen and Christine returned, tired from their walk in the greater than 31 degrees C, to do sterling work with a group of 7 girls all learning to knit for the first time. Meanwhile Paul, in his inimitable style, took 3 groups of 4 budding guitarists to start on their first chords. I will be interesting to see the progress people are able to make.

You can read the blog on ;

<http://bhodgedawlish.wordpress.com/category/tbc-trip-march-2012/>

**Pupils able to continue to study because of the lights powered by the solar panels.****Eileen teaching the art of knitting!****The staff from Stokeinteignhead Primary, outside one of the new buildings, with pupils and staff at Imprezza Academy.****Operation Imprezza**

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'even those without hope can excel given the opportunity.'