



## TANZANIAN CHILDREN'S FUND

### NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 2

September 2006

#### A Letter from India Howell

Our last few months at the Rift Valley Children's Village have been a time to remember.

When I returned from the U.S. last June, I found that the contractor had left the site, feeling that his work was done. Of course he was far from finished. (I was VERY glad that I had withheld so much money from him!!) During the first two weeks in June, we finished preparing the floors in all the houses; repaired the plumbing, so that the water actually runs from the taps instead of the pipes below the sink; repaired all the doors that hung six or more inches above the floor; hooked up the solar power for lights; and cleaned up the construction debris. It was quite exhilarating to see all the activity and to get things completed so we could move in!

In June we held our second round of interviews and hired eight local Tanzanian women to act as our housemothers, day workers and relief housemothers. We promoted Mama Upendo to "Head Housemother." We moved everyone in to begin training (i.e. learning how to turn 'on' and 'off' water faucets), thorough cleaning and setting-up of the houses. On June 14 the final move took place with all of the volunteers moving down to the new houses along with Raymond, our cook, and Arael and Jonathan, our social workers. On June 15 our two first children arrived. We now have 12 children living in the Serengeti House (we have named all of the houses after different national parks in Tanzania). One children's house filled and one to fill!



*Two of our new children at the Rift Valley Children's Village*

Each child is precious, adorable and anxious for the love of a family. Our volunteers were amazing as they helped these new kids adjust to their new life in a VERY different world. Just imagine being 4 years old and knowing only the world you had been born to - mud hut,

constant hunger, sleeping on a dirt floor, one set of ragged clothing, no hugs, no love, no mummy and daddy and no adult supervision. Then, one day poof!! You ride in a car! You move into a real house with a bed and lights and running water and lot's of other children! There is a daily round of meals, bath time, brushing teeth, kindergarten, rules, lots of adults (some with white skin!) and they are all

hugging you non-stop! In short, they must feel like they've been abducted by aliens and taken to a new planet. Most of our new children spoke Mbulu, a tribal language and did not speak Swahili or English. Many of these children did not know how to play by themselves or with others.

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#### The KLR Program – Kids Living with Relatives Program

By Ashley Frechette

On the last Saturday of every month, our Landrover is loaded up with supplies, and Arael, our social worker, and I head off for a long day spent crossing the district, making sure we see each of our KLR children. The kids are spread throughout the area, from Karatu to Oldeani to Bendhu to Changarawe, some houses as far as 40 minutes apart. At each house we stop to drop off supplies, to ask about school, about health conditions, about clothing, about any other needs. It is our responsibility to ensure that each child, and each family, is comfortable and healthy.

A Typical Home Visit Day: It is the last Saturday in August, the Landrover bounces along the dirt road, the tires disappearing into gaping holes and struggling to clamber over large rocks. Arael and I bump back and forth against the sides of the car as we make

our way to the Shabani house, where we will conduct a monthly home visit. In the back, cartons of soap, jugs of cooking oil, sacks of rice and beans, all bang together. The Landrover reaches the crest of the hill and turns left, cutting through a wheat field. The dry season has taken hold of the landscape, and there is nothing but brown as far as the eye can see. We sidle up to a mud house, nearly hidden among the drying corn stalks. As we pull up, children emerge from where they have been gathering the dried stalks in the field. Babu, Elizabeti and Haji recognize us instantly and come running. Everybody is greeted with a hug, and we laugh as we remember how Elizabeti used to be so shy when we arrived that she would remain hidden in the fields until we had departed. The unloading begins: a bag of rice,

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## Uhuru Torch — Freedom Torch — Arrives at Rift Valley Children's Village

Every year a torch called the Uhuru Torch or freedom torch is lit on Mt. Kilimanjaro and then carried across the country by runners to celebrate the country's independence. In 1961 the Uhuru Torch was placed at the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro and founder President Julius Nyerere said that the torch was a sign of hope and peace from the highest point in Africa. Nyerere wrote about the philosophy and significance of the Uhuru Torch:

We would like to light a torch and place it on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro, so that it shines beyond our borders, and brings about hope where there is despair, love where there is enmity and respect where there is hatred.

The Uhuru Torch is used by the Tanzania government to honor those who have made significant contributions to their communities. It is a 129 day torch race which began on May 31 in Morogoro and goes to selected sites. The Uhuru Torch arrived at

the Children's Village on August 21, 2006. A host of officials were on hand to dedicate the new buildings and publicly confirm their support and gratitude for our work.

They were so impressed with the houses I think several are wishing they could move in and join our family!



*Peter Leon speaking at Uhuru torch ceremony*

## The KLR Program—Kids Living with Relatives Program, continued



*Home visits: greeted by children*

of beans, a sack of corn, a jug of cooking oil, a sack of sugar, three bars of soap, three tubs of Baby Care. After the unloading, we sit and catch up. We talk about school, health, any problems they are having. Elizabeti needs a new daftari, or notebook, for school, and Haji could use some new shoes. We promise to bring them as soon as possible. We check in with their grandfather, who has lovingly cared for them since the death of their parents. We ask about his health, and how the children are doing. After a few minutes we take our leave. We climb back in the Landrover, wave goodbye, and head towards Oldeani, some 40 minutes away, to conduct another home visit with Jackson and Jacob.

Babu, Elizabeti and Haji, as well as Jackson and Jacob, are five of the twenty kids we refer to as KLR kids, or Kids Living with Relatives. These twenty kids are children who have lost their parents, and have been taken in by aunts and uncles or grandparents who truly love them. These relatives want to care for these children, but have found that they lack the resources necessary to do so. That is where we step in. When we take in a child as a KLR kid, we agree to cover medical and educational expenses for that child,

as well as provide a monthly supply of the necessary food and hygienic staples: rice, corn, beans, oil, butter, sugar, soap, baby care, vitamins, fruit. We also provide them with clothing and school supplies, and anything else they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This may mean providing beds for a family that had previously been sleeping on the floor, or renting a house for what is now a family of 10 living in a one room mud hut. The cost for renting a 3 room apartment in Karatu is less than \$15 per month. By doing this, we were able to help 4 siblings be reunited under one roof rather than divided among various aunts and uncles.

The KLR program recognizes the importance of keeping orphaned children and their extended families together whenever possible. As a result, all of our intake interviews aim to discover if children can remain with relatives rather than come to live with us. Our KLR kids may not enjoy the same housing conditions as the children who live with us. However, with our support and those of you who have sponsored these children, these children now have access to proper nutrition and a healthy diet, proper clothing, medical attention when needed, and educational support. More importantly, these orphans are able to live with blood relatives, who love and care for them. This we believe is the optimal outcome for children who have lost their parents. In addition, the food supplies we drop off with each family feed not just our KLR children, but any other children living with that family, thus assuring that all of the children in that family have access to a healthy diet. The financial support of the orphaned children means that family resources, already so scarce, do not have to be spread even thinner because of the children who have been taken in. In short, the KLR program works not just to benefit the child, but to benefit the entire family surrounding and supporting that child.

Ashley Frechette is our Volunteer Coordinator who joined our staff in January 2006.

## Letter from India, continued

Yet our volunteers found ways to communicate, to ease their fears and to shower them with the love and affection they so richly deserve.

The amazing part is that within days our new children started to settle in. Within weeks you would have thought they had lived like this for their whole lives. Within a month, they'd complain if we changed the daily schedule for bath time! My view is that for the first time since their parents died or perhaps in their lives these children know they are safe. They know what to expect. They know they will get praise when they follow the rules and most importantly, they quickly learn that they will be loved no matter what. I think the best summary of this came from little Simon, age 6. Last week one of our volunteers arranged for some of the kids to go on safari to the Ngoronogoro Crater. When the driver arrived, Simon informed him immediately, "I love the white women and the white women love me." That said, Simon climbed into the car and said "So, let's go!"

And so, on we go with plans to fill the second Children's House by the beginning of September. As I write this letter our social workers are out picking up the first two children who will be part of the family in Tarangire House. Ten more children will arrive over the course of the next week. The children in Serengeti House are already claiming rights over who will "be in charge" of showing them the ropes and the housemothers are excitedly fluttering about preparing to welcome their new children.

In the middle of August, Peter Leon, Ashley Frechette, two volunteers and I took 15 children on a family vacation! We drove in one bus for two days singing songs and marveling at all the new

sites. Thanks to the generosity of Debbie and Greg Blackmon we were able to take our children to Pangani on the Tanzanian coast for four days. We stayed in grass huts on the beach where we could hear the surf hitting the beach all night. For four glorious days I saw joy in its purest form. When the children first saw the ocean from a hill top I swear the sides of the bus expanded with the whoops and hollers. And the smiles! They even smiled while they slept! They swam for hours, collected every shell on the beach, took a boat to a sand bar, and explored the area in search of pirates and buried treasure. While at the hotel, they were all so well behaved and well mannered in the dining room we received daily compliments from the other guests. (If only we could get them to be that way at home!!) And through it all I have never seen such happiness, such glowing eyes or such pure delight. I don't think any of them will ever forget this trip. I know for sure that when I have a bad day, all I will need to do is recall those shining faces and all will be right with the world again. Thank you Debbie and Greg!!

Yes, these last few months have certainly been a time to remember. It's hard to imagine how it could get better! Everyone at the Rift Valley Children's Village feels so fortunate. We will always be thankful for all of you who have made this home possible for all of us.

India Howell is the Executive Director of the Rift Valley Children's Village.

## Construction Update

We are at it again! In June we opened the Rift Valley Children's Village and moved into new buildings and in July, we broke ground for Phase III of construction. We are building staff housing, a volunteer house and the main building. We are hoping to have at least two buildings completed before the end of the year. We learned that Tanzanian contractors are not equipped to build multiple buildings at the same time, so we will be using two contractors simultaneously to complete this phase. Sound overwhelming? Yes, it is. That's why I delegated the supervision to Peter Leon, our Assistant Director! Peter has absorbed so much knowledge about construction in the past year that he is always a couple of steps ahead of the contractors and is keeping everything running smoothly. The best part is that he loves this role (although he seems a bit obsessed with concrete block making). Yes, in Tanzania we make the blocks on site! No running down to Home Depot for supplies. Instead, we order truckloads of sand, cement and gravel so that everything can be made on the site. The concrete is mixed by hand and then poured into a form to make the block. After the block sets they have to spray water on them every day for about a week to cure the concrete. We are now making about 600 blocks a day. In addition, the foundations



*Children's Houses*

are all dug by hand and the huge stones for filling the foundation are hauled into place by hand. This work is not for the faint of heart!

## Asante Sana!!!

Thank you to our volunteers who, through their generosity of spirit and passion, devoted themselves to our children. With all sorts of energies of love, our volunteers at the Children's Village, helped with the many daily tasks involved caring for 28 children. Each day our children are gaining confidence as our volunteers coach and cheer on our children as they learn their ABC's; to read and write, to play soccer, baseball, put together a puzzle, make their beds.

We'd like to thank our volunteers for their abundance of ideas, laughter and joy they shared with our children and staff. Thank you Roz Echols, Seattle, WA; Erica Southern, Seattle, WA; Adrienne Umeh, Chicago, IL; Sunitha Menon, East Lyme, CT; Ros Price, Philadelphia, PA; Adriana Massara, Villanova, PA; Rebecca Gilbert, Berwyn, PA; Hannah Pajoleck, Osterville, MA; Hattie Warner, Carrboro, NC; Cindy and Alie Hayes, Rumford, RI; Cindy and Kelsey Kamm, Mill Valley, CA; Lindsay Wagner, Oldwick, NJ; Sarah Rowland, Far Hills, NJ; Ashley Best, NY,NY; Anna Spanfeller, NY,NY; Ceci Weaver, NY,NY; Alex Glascock, NY,NY; Marka Kyle, Ft Worth, Texas; Jersy Guyot-Eisenberg, Brookline, MA; Dawn Dunleavy, Boston, MA; Greg Adams, Brookline, MA; Kristin Guyot, Brookline, MA; Sarah Boisvert, Morristown, NJ; Cynthia Salten, Boston, MA; Meghan Lind, Boston, MA; Sue Spier, Suffolk, England; Barbara Hibbens, Edwards, CO.

We would also like to thank Tom Vorenberg, Philadelphia, PA and Roni Sack who brought campers from Keewadin Camp, Salisbury, VT—Maggie Boissard; Betsy Brogan; Ted Cart; Anne Chang; Ali Hare; Bryan Jacobs; Jesse Mostoeller; Ian Sotir; Claire Superak and William Watson. These campers painted the teacher's houses and classrooms at Gyetighi Primary School, organized after school activities for the kids, built a campfire circle at the Children's Village and assisted with daily activities

at home (bathtime, breakfast etc)--they were busy!

We would also like to thank those people who gave us fundraisers last spring. Thank you Heidi Wade Hughey, Brookline, MA; Donna and Bob Storer, Sherborn, MA; Paisley Kelling, Pelham Manor, NY; Lisa Hord, Pelham, NY; Nano Chatfield and John Higgins, Cape Elizabeth, ME; Todd and Lisa Cronan, Winchester, MA; Jesse Raiten and Ashley Best, NY, NY; Constance Silverman, Bernardsville, NJ and Pamela Salisbury, Bernardsville, NJ; Mary and Kane Baker, Palm Beach, FL.

Many people, companies, schools, and churches have sent us donations. Thank you to Patagonia; LEGO; Teva; The Annie Selke Companies; Chaco; Rotary Club of Torrington. Thank you to the private foundation who has donated 450 vitamins a day for a whole year to all our students at Gyetighi Primary School. We would also like to thank Katie Escherich, Segment Producer of ABC News Now who produced an interview with India Howell on "Changing the World" section at abcnews.com.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=2165613>



*Volunteer Lindsay Wagner with our children*

## Children of Tanzania

.Last year, Sue Rohrer, who founded the nonprofit organization, Children of Tanzania, and her friend Rosari Falvey came to our village to measure and provide every child at Gyetighi Primary School (450 students) with a uniform and pair of shoes. For most children in the school, this was the first time they had ever had a new uniform and/or shoes.

Sue returned this past July and did the same thing for the new Standard 1 (first grade) students at Gyetighi as well as for the 700+ students at Oldeani Primary School.

Having a uniform which fits, which is not in tatters and which is brand new means the world to these kids and their self-image. We already know that attendance improved at Gyetighi Primary School after the uniforms were delivered last year. We anticipate the students at Oldeani Primary School will be delighted with these gifts from the Children of Tanzania!

Thank you Sue!!

### ***Mission Statement***

*The Tanzanian Children's Fund was established to aid the children of Tanzania. Working in partnership with registered non-governmental, non-profit organizations in Tanzania, TCF provides financial and intellectual support to projects and programs designed to improve the lives of children in need.*

*The Tanzanian Children's Fund is a registered 501(c3) not for profit. Please direct all inquiries and donations to:*

*Tanzanian Children's Fund*

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