



## TANZANIAN CHILDREN'S FUND

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### *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*

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*Photo above right: RVCV children in front of a world map designed and created by Jenne Schueller*

## **A Letter from the Executive Director** by India Howell

In September we finished construction on my house and when I moved with all the kids to the Children's Village, I actually thought that our world would start to move at a slower pace. How wrong I was! The start of this year has been jam packed and needless to say, never dull!

In January we sent 37 students to boarding secondary school, 6 to boarding primary school and 1 back to college. The office looked like we were staging an army to go to war as the cartons of text books, writing tablets, uniforms and various supplies were trucked in for distribution. Since the boarding schools are all in such remote locations, we need to supply each kid with a semester worth of toilet paper and soap! When it was all over,



I decided that Sara Boisvert, our Education Director could add "quartermaster" to her resume. After much flurry and frenzy, all 44 students made it to school and by all reports are doing incredibly well.

We also opened the new school year at Geytighi

Primary School in January. This will be our first full year of managing the daily activities of the school. Our determination to have teachers in the classrooms teaching on opening day, a class schedule and the school cleaned proved to be a far greater challenge than we could have imag-

## **Teaching at Geytighi Primary School** By Jessie Cronan

The changes to Geytighi Primary School since January are nothing short of incredible. The new kindergarten classroom is beautiful, the teaching schedule is a masterpiece of timing which actually forces teachers to spend time in

the classroom, and the faculty the Children's Village hired are dedicated, passionate teachers. However, it is the intangible changes, the moments when things simply feel different, that routinely take my breath away.

I teach a review class on Saturday mornings to help prepare Standard Seven students for the National Exam and the material is dry to say the least (prepositions and irregular verbs seem especially tough on a Saturday morn-

## Teaching at Geytighi Primary School cont.

ing). Still, 55 teenagers routinely show up at 9 a.m. Their dedication is impressive, and the fact that they arrive laughing, rather than grumbling is a powerful reminder of the fact that, for these kids, school isn't just another chore. Education has become a stepping stone to a life beyond the coffee plantations.

Two weeks ago I brought a soccer ball up, and suggested we play during our break. Soccer, in Tanzania, is traditionally a game boys play and girls watch. I was fully ex-



*Jessie Cronan teaching at Geytighi Primary School*

pecting the boys to take the ball, and was ready to deliver an impressive lecture on gender equality, insisting that girls be allowed on the field as well. The words froze in my throat when, without any prompting, the class organized a boys against girls game. For twenty minutes nearly sixty kids sprinted up and down the field, laughing together.

It is the spirit of possibility, combined with a sense of fun, which has transformed Geytighi as much as a coat of paint or new roof. You hear laughter and conversation, where there was once a stony silence. The

excitement of the new school year is infectious. Teachers stay after school until 6 p.m., with entire classes paying rapt attention to lectures on science and social studies. When the children chant, as they do every morning, "education is the key of life," the words are no longer empty, instead they have come to embody the spirit of Geytighi.

*Jessie is from Winchester, MA and graduated from Princeton University in 2007, and received a Princeton in Africa fellowship to volunteer at the Children's Village. She has been volunteering with us since August 2007, and will be with us through November 2008.*



## Millennium Farm Model Project

By Nano Chatfield

In January we initiated a Farm Model Project with the support of a grant. The project is set on 3 acres of sloping school farm land contingent to our property. Why are we doing this? The people in our area do not own land of their own. All of the land is owned by private coffee plantations. The coffee plantation owners allow villagers to plant in between the coffee trees or on unused sloping land. For as long as anyone can remember, the villagers have only planted maize and beans and failed to terrace the slopes properly. The combined effect is greatly depleted soil which means lower crop yields and hunger.

Under the leadership of our volunteer Kate Hibsman, who researched different farming techniques and plant materials in Eastern Africa, we've begun the process of reclaiming and renewing the soil on the 3 acres of land for the project. By creating swales (to catch rain run-off) and berms planted with indigenous trees we have created terraces to prevent

soil erosion. In addition we have planted a variety of crops that will be turned into the soil at harvest time in order to renew the nutrients that were depleted due to years of single crop planting.

Our goal is to demonstrate to our neighbors how crop yields can increase when simple techniques such as these are employed to improve the soil and prevent erosion. By simply increasing crop yields we can make a huge impact on the problem of hunger in our area. People who have enough to eat do not get sick as often and are less likely to die and leave children alone in the world.

Once the soil has been renewed we will plant in rotation cash crops (other than maize and beans) that can be sold and then use the cash to purchase maize and beans for our school lunch program. Our goal here is to demonstrate to our neighbors that certain cash crops will yield more income than maize and beans so that

the family will have the opportunity for profit.

Thanks to the generosity of the World Seed Fund and Johnny's Se-



*Nano Chatfield inspecting new tree seedlings for the farm.*

lected Seeds we will be able to provide the appropriate seeds for those interested in replicating our model. Through the generosity of Peter and Alletta Lindstrom we will be able to provide free tree seedlings to our neighbors should they decide to initiate terracing on the plots loaned to them by the plantation owners.

## A Letter From the Executive Director cont.

ined. But after many meetings the school powers gave in and for the first time in the history of the school, classes started on the day school opened. Aside from a few hiccups, teachers continue to teach and the kids continue to learn EVERY day: overall, Geytighi is starting to function like a real school. However, I think a few of our kids would tell you this is not progress. It's really exhausting to be learning all the time rather than sitting



50,000ft high ash plume from Mt Longai eruption in March 2008.

around in an unsupervised classroom!

The New Year also marked many other beginnings. Our farm model project was launched in January and is now up and running. 'Seeing is believing' and people in the area are starting to think about alternative farming methods to increase production, as they watch what happens at our demonstration farm. And there is a buzz in the village as people form groups and come up with business ideas thanks to the micro finance program we've launched.

This is our third year of providing free medical clinics for our villagers. Our village population is getting healthier thanks to these bi-monthly clinics. Gone are the days of patients with chronic illnesses that have gone untreated for years and children who've gone deaf for lack of medicine.

For the last three months we've had earth tremors as well as full blown earthquakes. Reportedly this is due to the regular eruptions of the nearby volcano, but it is my opinion that it may also be due to the impact we seem to be having in this area! Providing better education, health care and opportunities to improve the lives of our neighbors is also bringing something for which there is no substitute. HOPE and it is happening here!!

## MIT Students Visit the Children's Village by Nano Chatfield

In January, Amos Winter, a PhD Candidate in Mechanical Engineering at MIT, brought 4 MIT under graduate students to the Children's Village. Their goal was to teach us a system they have invented that produces charcoal from natural waste products such as corn cobs. Given Tanzania's dependence on charcoal for cooking combined with a deforestation crisis gripping the country an alternative source of charcoal is truly heaven sent. Due to new restrictions on foresting, charcoal prices have tripled causing many people to steal into the forest to illegally cut wood for charcoal.

These students are participating in the D-Lab at MIT, founded by Amy Smith. The aim of this program is to introduce students to technological, social and economic problems of the Third World and then let them develop or invent affordable and practical solutions that can be easily replicated in developing countries.

Amos and his students have de-

signed a system which uses waste products such as corn cobs, sugar cane, coffee husks, grass, and wood chips to make charcoal. Amos and his crew demonstrated this system to our staff who Amos said were better at making the briskets than his students! Our hope is that one of our micro-finance groups will decide to set up a business to produce charcoal in this way. We would certainly purchase them!

*Thank you Amanda Maguire '09 from Philadelphia; Ke Zhang '10 from Boston, Massachusetts; Ammar Jimwaji '09 from Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania; Jodie Wu '09 from Atlanta, Georgia and Amos Winter from Chesterfield, New Hampshire for inspiring us all!*



## Family News

In February David Joshua graduated from Arusha Meru Secondary School. We are so proud of David who is our first Student Teacher to graduate from secondary school. He is now taking a computer class in order to be better qualified for an office job. His current dream is to attend university to be an accountant.



David Joshua, India Howell and his friends at graduation

## Staff Notes

We are proud to introduce Mwanajumbe Mohammed who joined our staff in February as our Nurse. She grew up in Arusha and is 23 years old and from the Mzigua tribe. She recently completed two years of training as a Medical Officer. Due to financial constraints she was unable to continue her studies. Mwanajumbe was introduced to us by her cousin Mwasiti Juma who is our oldest child who attends Tumaini Law School.

Thanks to her charming and compassionate nature Mwanajumbe has already become very popular with all of the children at the Children's Village as well as the dozen or so chil-



dren who come from school every day in need of first aide. Having a full time nurse will relieve a great burden of time for Peter and India as we were the chief "medical personal" until her arrival. Welcome Mwanajumde we are all thrilled to have you on our team!



## Microfinance Program by Andy Bryant

Last September we began a Microfinance Program which will provide financial services to our villagers, many of whom are farmers or coffee pickers. We created this program in recognition of the need for pro-active interventions at the household level to combat the incidence of marginalized children in Tanzania. Following an awareness-raising campaign, we'll begin providing credit, savings, and business skills training services to program participants in June 2008.

Our program will aid business activities that will benefit local entrepreneurs who identify areas of unmet demand in local economies. For instance, in the last three years we have provided an annual distribution of uniforms for primary school children (nearly 1,500 uniforms) in three separate primary schools in our District. (This has been funded through a grant by the nonprofit, Children of Tanzania.) The uniforms are currently produced in Arusha, but through our Microfinance Program,

could be sewn by local seamstresses following training. We hope our program will manifest itself as a mutually-beneficial partnership between the Rift Valley Children's Fund and its entrepreneurial neighbors, strengthening the abilities of both to realize their mutual goals of stability and security within area households.

Andy Bryant is the Director of our Microfinance Program. He grew up in

Wyoming, graduated from Princeton University in 2003 with a degree in African History and received his MPA in International Development from Syracuse University. For more information about the Microfinance Program contact Microfinance Director Andy Bryant [andy.v.bryant@gmail.com](mailto:andy.v.bryant@gmail.com).



*Peter Leon introduces the Microfinance concept at a village meeting.*

# Construction Update by India Howell

When I first graduated from college I worked for my father in the family construction business. After two years working with him and then two years with my own small construction firm, I decided that construction was not for me. Ha! It's clear that construction is in my blood and will be part of my life for many years to come.

Last fall we completed all the construction through Phase V at the Children's Village. However, the building of shelving and furniture for the buildings continues. With some of the buildings now in their second or third year of use, re-painting and repairs have also become a part of our lives.

That said we are still constructing in the truest sense of the word! Since last fall we have built a kitchen at Meali Primary School as part of the lunch program we started in 2008. We have also re-built a classroom and teacher's house at Geytighi Primary School. In all cases we couldn't be happier with the results. The brightest star is our kindergarten classroom. By Tanzanian standards the new classroom is revolutionary in design. Sky lights and real windows mean that there is light ALL the time – even on rainy days. A real chalk board means that the kids can actually see and read what the teacher writes. Kid size tables and chairs mean that the kids can concentrate on the task rather than trying to balance on a bench that is too high for them.

Our volunteers Jennie Schueller and Nano Chatfield painted the walls with numbers, the alphabet, and elephants! Our volunteers claim that everyone is more energized in this new setting.

We've already begun renovations on another classroom and another second teacher's house as well as two pit latrines with septic system at Geytighi Primary School. All of this construction will be completed by June so that we can turn our full attention to the construction of 3 more Children's Houses at the Children's Village. We hope to have these new homes completed before the end of 2008.



*Interior of new Kindergarten classroom at Geytighi Primary School*



*Refurbished Teacher's House at Geytighi Primary School*



*New school kitchen and Hot Lunch Program at Meali Primary School.*



*Boys AND Girls participate in the new athletics program at Geytighi Primary School*

## ASANTE SANA

Many thanks to the dedicated volunteers who help our children in their daily routines at the Children's Village. Their natural love for children shines through the tender moments they share together-- in the new songs they teach them or the games they play together or books they read. Our kids have learned to speak English with ease because of their quality time with our volunteers. Each volunteer brings energy, enthusiasm and new ideas into our family. That extra hug, shared laughter, quiet and noisy moments are the gestures which mean so much: with each moment our kids become more inquisitive, self-assured, and confident.

**Thank you to all our volunteers who love and our loved by our children.**

Meredith Adams-Spurrier, Richmond, VA; Laura Armitage, Richmond Hills, GA; Ginger Bohac-Hathorn, Woods, IL; Nano Chatfield, Cape Elizabeth, Maine; Maria Corcoran, Walla Walla, WA; Arthur Crenshaw, Birmingham, AL; Amber Croft, Waynetown, IN; Jessie Cronan, Winchester, MA; Lisa Desrochers, West Barnstable, MA; Caitlyn Fox, Lake Forest, IL; Linda Hayes, Princeton, NJ; Kate Hibschan, Brooklyn, NY; Donna Jackson, Brooklyn, NY; Ellie LeBlond, Bethesda, MD; Bridget McNamara, Conshohocken, PA; Caroline and Laura Morong, Camden, ME; Carey Morrissey, Weston, MA; Pamela and Fred Murray, Highvale, Queensland, Australia; Kristine Quinn, Gig Harbor, WA; Kathy Romig, Seattle, WA; Laura Samford, Birmingham, AL; Jennie Scheuler, Brooklyn, NY; Elleson Schurtz, Mason City, IA; Effie Scott, Chicago, IL; Rachel Smith, NY, NY; Sue Spier, Bury St. Edwards, Suffolk, UK; Martha Twidale, Ottawa, Ontario; Krista Tye, Las Vegas, NV; Gretchen Weiss, Brookline, MA; Peggy Wiles, Cambridge, MA; Elissa Zirinsky, Rockville Centre, NY.

Special thanks go to our volunteers and friends who gave us fundraisers last fall. Each fundraiser is an opportunity for us to make new friends by sharing the story of our work with our children. Thank you Alan Labos and his staff at Akari Hair Care & Spa, Portland, ME; Laura and Rich Armitage, Richmond Hills, GA; Mike Kuttner, Winchester, MA; Debbie and Greg Blackmon, Fort Worth, TX; Mimi Lines and Jane Goodhue, Bedford, NY; Polly and Dennis Donald, Boulder, CO; Alex Glascock, Anna Spanfeller, Ceci Weaver and Ashley Best-Raiten, NY, NY; Constance and Eric Silverman, Jane and Mike Steele, Susan and Patrick Palmer, Beth Rundquist, Bernardsville, NJ; Yvonne and Stephen Feinstein, Old Brookville, NY; Barbara Hibben, Edwards, CO; Arlene Joe and friends, Tacoma, WA; Paisley Kelling and Lisa Hord, Pelham, NY; Holly and Ramsey Stabler and Laurie Engels, Denver, CO; Donna and Bob Storer, Sherborn, MA; Caitlyn Storey, Seattle, WA; Krista Tye and Bree Goldwater, Las Vegas, NV; Teresa Costa and Xavier Ricart, Barcelona, Spain.



**45 Exchange Street  
Portland, Maine 04101**