

Abigail NEWS

Spring 2011



Grace & Daniels' Neighbours

We had often been amused by the number of children who appeared at the roadside and waved merrily to us as we drove past or peeped through the hedge to watch us when we visited Grace and Daniel's house but it wasn't really all that unusual. We are used to children appearing from nowhere as it were, racing across fields to try and catch our bus as we travel along the dusty roads. It seems to be the highlight of their day to get a smile and a wave from a masungu (white man)! We had also noticed some small mud houses tucked behind the trees across the road but again, there are mud houses everywhere. It was only during our visit in February that Grace and Daniel took us to visit their neighbours for the first time. What we discovered appalled us.

The family in the field to the left of Grace and Daniel have had to sell their land in order to exist after the main breadwinner became too ill to work.

One hundred yards in front lives Jane, counting off the days until she gives birth to her 11th child! We realised that most of the children who chase our bus belong to her but in spite of her difficulties, Jane is a good mother. The house was completely bare apart from a small cupboard and a wooden bench, which we tentatively sat on in case it broke under our weight. We were told her neighbours bought back the cupboard for her after her drunken husband took it to sell to get money to buy alcohol. He only appears

occasionally to steal what he can to pay for his habit. Since we came home we have heard he came back recently and threatened her with a knife. Once again, Jane was saved by her neighbours rushing in to rescue her.

Three of the children who followed us don't belong to Jane. They live in a tiny mud house two hundred yards behind Daniel's house. Their mother, in desperation, has gone off to try and earn money through prostitution, leaving the children with their Grandmother who ties the two small boys, Denis and Edwin, to a pole in the house while she goes out looking for casual work. Mercifully, Winnie, the little girl, who looks about 8, attends the local school and avoids this fate. When she's not at school, however, Winnie is left responsible for her two small brothers.

Fortunately, the children in the other houses we visited are very well looked after in spite of their poverty. Across the road from Grace and Daniel live two mothers who share looking after each others' children while the other makes a long journey by foot and motorbike to Burnt Forrest market to buy a few stalks of sukamawiki (a type of spinach) and about 2 dozen tomatoes which she hopes to sell to earn a few shillings to buy food for her children. Why we ask, do they have to make this journey when they each have a piece of land where they could grow their own vegetables? The answer is they need money

initially to plough the land and to buy fertilizer and seeds! All but one of these families have no beds and only broken sticks they call furniture.

One neighbour has a nice house which she is extending. We would like to see all these families in this position. The ladies themselves have joined forces to support each other but it is obvious that without help it will take a very long time before there will be any major improvement in their living conditions. When we visited them they presented Shena with a katenge and Roger with a Kalabash and sang us a song of thanks. Why we ask? What have we done to help them? Whatever small gifts we have given them so far are certainly not enough!! These are seriously needy families living on Daniel's doorstep who Abigail Ministries wants to help.



VISITING SHENA'S VILLAGE

Our first trip to Shena's Village was amazing. We bumped and jolted by Mini Bus down the dusty rutted road from the New Hope Orphanage to the railway line. We walked over the railway line and started across a field. At the far side was Shena's Village and children running towards us eager to greet the people they knew, but soon all of us had little brown hands in ours and their faces were smiling and laughing up at us. One young lad had put dust on his face and walked bent over a stick - presumably the village chief! We discovered later that the children had taken the day off school to be with us. As we approached the village, older children held the barbed wire (keeping the animals off their gardens) apart and as we climbed through the women were singing, hands waving and dancing to a drum. They prayed and praised God thanking him for their village. They greeted us with hand slaps, smiles and hugs. Their welcome was overwhelming.

The village has 12 houses and each has a plot of land. Their vegetables were growing well and they happily welcomed us into their homes. Although the houses are very basic without electricity, indoor toilets or running water, they are such an improvement to the other houses we visited (Tin Shacks or Mud huts lined with newspaper or cardboard to keep the rain out). The ladies were obviously proud of their homes and



had decorated the chairs with crocheted items and had other decorations on the walls. Water has been piped from a neighbouring house so they now all have access to clean water from a standpipe.

The ladies had worked together to provide us with a lovely lunch and gathered enough seats so that we could be together in one house. There was a special sense of community and the sound of ladies singing praise to God and the joy and smiles of the children was a wonderful experience.

Sheila



First Impressions

The beautiful hot sunshine which greeted us on our arrival in Nairobi was only bettered by the genuine warmth of the welcome we received from the people wherever we went. Everyone was pleased to see us and proud to show us round their homes however small and poor they were. I have never seen such poverty and the feeling of helplessness at not being able to escape from it, but saw the difference a small gift could make to help them get going and earn enough to support their families and make them independent or perhaps pay for a visit to a doctor or dentist, usually out of the question. There were children everywhere, most with lovely smiling faces even though they had no toys etc. If we stopped the van they were around us in moments. The fortunate ones had school to attend and showed their desire to learn, but many do not get the opportunity and can only watch

what goes on in the school grounds through the fence. I can see why so many Kenyans win medals for running. The children have a natural action even in bare feet and could keep up with the van which had to go slowly to avoid the massive potholes all along the dirt roads. I will never complain about British roads again. We don't know what potholes are! The lack of rain was evident and many crops were ruined by the drought.

It is a serious problem and we too existed without mod cons a lot of the time. It made me appreciate our blessings at home and how we take so much for granted and even waste such a precious commodity. It was a great team, good company, many laughs – and some tears. I trust that what we were able to do brought help to some of these lovely people.

Jean

Returning To Kenya

One of the most exciting things about a return visit to Kenya is the opportunity to meet up with sponsored children and families. So often the money goes out of our accounts unnoticed each month and it is easy to forget in the business of everyday living what is actually happening to the families we support. We were privileged this time to catch up with the folk we have come to love and to see how they were getting on. The children all looked well and had grown, they were still smaller than the average for a British child, but the fact that they were well and smiling meant such a lot. Sponsorship means that children attend school

regularly and get daily meals and the difference that makes is amazing. Distance, rain, bad roads, time – all these things make it impossible for Roger and Shena to visit everyone's sponsored children each time they go and so it was good to know firsthand that letters, love and support are really appreciated and looked forward to. The hugs were especially good!

Meeting up again with Simon, head teacher of a local school, was one of the highlights of my visit. Simon was part of a group of teachers I met on a previous visit. We had met to talk about Special Needs children and how

they could be helped. A more despondent group would have been difficult to find. We talked about mutual support, involving the parents and the local authorities. To go back and find that there is now a teacher/parent support group and that they have managed to get some funding out of the local authority was totally amazing. I am so grateful to God for growing these small seeds of suggestion and for helping to motivate these teachers who are now excited about their work.

Geraldine & Alan



Midwife For A Day In Kenya

Since returning to the UK I have been reflecting on the wonderful experience of staying at Plateau Hospital and being fortunate enough to "work" for a day in its maternity unit. As a midwife working in a rural hospital in North-east Scotland, I was really expecting the Plateau unit to be quite backward. However, I very quickly realised that the staff there are incredibly skilled and motivated, especially considering the resources at their disposal and their low pay. Having worked in the NHS, where everything is disposable and free at the point of need, it did shock me to see people having to pay for a delivery, and with no pain relief - ouch! On reflection, if the people of Africa could have a little more of what we have, and we could have some of their lifestyle, it might create more harmony and contentment in the world.

Donna



Painting At Shena's Village

The Abigail team left Shena's Village 'in the pink' after three strenuous painting sessions. On opening the huge paint cartons, it was immediately apparent where the name "shocking pink" comes from! The shade, chosen by the villagers to brighten up their homes, is unlikely to feature any time soon in Dulux colour charts. Armed with trusty rollers and brushes, and working under the supervision of Stephen, one of the older boys from New Hope, we divided into decorating 'hit squads'. Some of us tackled the intricate brush work around windows, doors and corners, while others got to work on the living room and bedroom walls. We had to contend with some rather uneven plaster work, as well as emulsion paint that Stephen had made thinner than a Size Zero model on the Atkins Diet!. But after two or three coats, and a quick 'dicht' of the floors with a damp cloth, the houses were left looking 'pretty in pink'. Some of the villagers joined in with great gusto, and they were certainly 'tickled pink' with the end result. Meanwhile, the children took great delight in picking at our paint-speckled arms and legs and, in a very touching gesture, they scrubbed Shena and Donna's hands with warm water and then rubbed in Vaseline.

Ian



Building A New Seed School



Dreams do come true – if you have enough patience and faith. Daniel always told me he would build a school in Eldoret but I could never see it happening. But here is the reality and the first brick of the new SEED School has been laid. I was very proud to lay the corner brick and even more proud of Daniel for all the work he does and

for what he has achieved with the help and support of Abigail Ministries. It was wonderful being part of the initial building programme for phase one of the new school - now we just have to raise the funds for the other buildings to fulfil Daniel's dream.

Kathleen

Meeting The Children



During my time in Kenya there were many memorable moments which inspired great emotion both exhilarating and heart-warming. But the most abiding memory, which will live with me for a long time, is with the children. I have never met so many children who are so content and seem to have a permanent smile on their faces. These children, when compared to children in our own country, have nothing in

material possessions yet seem to have so much to offer. With this attitude and the right education, there must be so much optimism for a better future for Kenya and its people.

David



Sally And Lillian

We would like to thank everybody who responded to our request in our last Newsletter for help for Sally and Lillian to transform their lives. Beccy and Ed had the pleasure of giving Sally money for her hen house when they visited her last October. This inspired Lillian to make the final decision that she wanted to give up brewing, to follow Sally's example and turn her life around as well. We gave her the materials and funds for her hen-house when we visited her in February. Both ladies have now given up brewing completely and have started an egg selling business with the chickens Abigail Ministries has provided for them.



New Kitchens!

We all helped with the building of new kitchens for the villagers. These corrugated iron constructions are a vast improvement on the small sacking 'tents' they had before.



Agnes & Stephen

Stephen had been victim to a common problem in Kenya. He had been denied his inheritance by a ruthless older brother. When we visited his family they were living in a rented house which they were due to be evicted from within a few weeks. They had six months rent arrears. Stephen suffers greatly with arthritis and is unable to work so they have to depend on Agnes finding casual work. In total they have eleven children although only the youngest two, Mercy and Teresa still live at home. They were becoming desperate and obviously needed help quickly.

Before we left them on Saturday, we asked them to meet us at New Hope on Monday morning, by which time we would have considered how we might be able to help them!! We had a plan for them but we wanted to keep it a surprise for a couple of days.

When Agnes and Stephen arrived at New Hope at the crack of dawn on Monday morning we invited them to accompany us to Shena's Village. We acted as though we were just happy for them to join us for the day but we knew one of the houses there was unoccupied.

Once there we all 'migrated' to the empty house and sat down. Shena then got up and started talking to them, saying how sad we were to hear about their circumstances and then, quite nonchalantly, asked if they would like to move in there! Agnes's reaction is indescribable!! She just held up her hands, fell down on her knees with her head to the ground and poured out thanks and praise to God. She was crying with joy, cuddling Stephen, delirious with happiness. He was speechless, probably a bit embarrassed by Agnes's reaction but, very, very happy. In the

afternoon they had no end of people in to see their new house and Agnes lost no time in imagining where she was going to put all the new furniture we promised to buy them. Straight away, Agnes made herself very much at home with all her new neighbours and everybody who passed by was taken in to see their new home. We have since heard that many people have come to have faith in God because of what they see as the miracle He has done for this family.



RESPONSE FORM

I would like to become a part of Abigail Ministries by:

- Sponsoring a child. Please send me details
- Becoming a regular donor. Please send me details
- Sending a one-off donation of _____ £

(Please make cheques payable to Abigail Ministries)

Name _____

Address _____

Please send me a Gift Aid Form _____



Thank You For Our Christmas Presents!

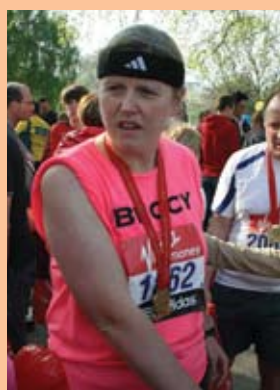
Thank you so much for your massive response to our Christmas appeal to send presents to Shena's Villagers on your friends behalf. We received the staggering sum of £3,500 through the appeal which means every house in the Village is now comfortably furnished with beds and bedding, couches, cooking stoves and pots and there are lots of happy children with new shoes and plates as well.

It didn't matter that Christmas came late! It was a day of celebration when the group gave out the presents to the Villagers when we visited them in February. It took several weeks for all the beds to be made so Anne decided to hold back all the presents so that we could give them out personally. We enjoyed seeing the joy on the faces of all the people as much as they enjoyed receiving their gifts.

New Addresses

A note to all sponsors of children at New Hope and Shena's Village. The address to write to is now New Hope Children's Centre, PO Box 187-00222, Uplands, Kenya. Sponsors of children at Seed School please address your correspondence to Mrs Grace Rugut as Rose no longer works at the school.

Thank you for writing to the children. They all love receiving your cards and letters.



CONGRATULATIONS TO BECCY ON COMPLETING THE LONDON MARATHON!

She raised in excess of £2,500 to buy equipment for the new Abigail Ministries Clinic at Seiyu which will serve the children of Seed School and families like Daniel and Grace's neighbours who live in that community. See the separate flier for more details.

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who sponsored her.



New Website!!

Please visit our exciting NEW UPDATED WEBSITE, www.abigailministries.org, for a lot more information about the work of Abigail Ministries and for more details about how you can support us.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS, REGULAR DONORS AND ALL OF YOU WHO ARRANGE SPECIAL EVENTS OR DEDICATE YOUR OWN SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS TO ABIGAIL MINISTRIES.



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