

Abigail NEWS

Spring 2015



A new baby unit at New Hope

It started with one teenage girl and her baby, Melvin, being brought to New Hope by her teacher last summer and now there are eight babies being cared for in the new baby unit. Most of the girls are from the Masai tribe. They have been rescued from forced illegal marriages to old men who arranged to 'buy' them when they were born. Baby girls are favoured amongst the Masai tribe as they are seen as an investment. A quantity of cattle is offered for them when they are born which is then 'paid off' while they are growing up until the full amount is settled. The mothers are aged only 13/14 years. They may be one of several wives but the older wives do treat the younger

ones well because they have all been in the same position at one time. There is quite a movement now, however for educated women in Kenya to speak up on behalf of the abused and for these practices to be abolished. The girls at New Hope are amongst the first few fortunate ones to be rescued and to be able to complete their education, knowing their babies are being well looked after.

Previously the younger children at New Hope slept with one of the teenage girls in her bunk bed which was not ideal for either of them. While visiting another Project with us last year, run by friends from UK, Cecilia (the 'Auntie' of

New Hope) saw how babies there have their own baby-size cot and each small group of children had its own mother/carer. She was very impressed with this arrangement and so has brought the idea into New Hope. All this has, of course, necessitated new equipment! Those of you who sponsored Beccy for the London Triathlon last year will be interested (and we hope pleased!) to know that we used the money raised to equip the baby unit with cots and to buy some small child-sized beds for the toddlers along with all the required bedding so that they no longer have to sleep with their older 'siblings'.

So! Once again, thank you for your support!



We praise God
for protecting
this family and
for leading them
to New Hope...

AGNES

We were thrilled when Agnes came bounding into one of the homes we were visiting in the Village. We hadn't seen her for 4 years. We first met Agnes in 2007 when we visited New Hope and were introduced to her family. A few days previously, her mother Miriam had knocked on the door of New Hope with her three children, Boss, Agnes and Jeremiah pleading for help. She was a young widow in the depths of despair, having been thrown out by both her own and her late husband's families. Boss, the eldest had been born when she was only fourteen so she must still only have been in her late twenties when we met her although she looked much older. Her traumatic life had led to her having severe depression and she had reached the point where she had decided to kill her children before killing herself. NEW Hope was actually her LAST hope. In the grounds of New Hope was a wooden hut where firewood and charcoal were stored. It was dark, dirty and smelly but it was the only place of shelter Anne could offer her with her three children. When we met them a few days after their arrival at

New Hope, the family looked as miserable as the shack that was the only place on earth they could call home.

When we returned to UK we found sponsors for the three children so they could attend school, while Anne provided food for them. Later, when the first Village was being built nearby, we sponsored one of the houses for Miriam and her children. By then Agnes and Jeremiah were doing well at school. Boss was not so bright but at least he was getting an education and had some hope for the future. In due time Agnes and Jeremiah proved to be two of the brightest children in Kenya and when it came to the time for them to go to High School they were offered sponsorship by the Equity Bank to go to one of the top High Schools.

We haven't seen Agnes and Jeremiah, therefore, for the past four years although we regularly visit Miriam and have seen Boss from time to time. Agnes is now a lovely, lively, mature teenage girl – a far cry from the pitiful little girl

we first met 8 years ago. In fact she was reminding me of our first meeting and when we bought her a bed when they moved into their new house. She told me she is still grateful to us because, as she beamed, 'I have a bed of my own and I don't have to sleep on the floor!' Both she and Jeremiah are waiting for their final results from High School then hope to go to University. She would like to study to become a research Pharmacist and Jeremiah wants to do Computer Science. Agnes's great desire is to be able to provide for her mother Miriam, who still has mental health problems.

Boss, the eldest brother, she told me, would like to become an electrician.

We praise God for protecting this family and for leading them to New Hope where with the combined efforts of Anne, Abigail Ministries and our sponsors, these wonderful children have been lifted from the brink of death to a bright, happy and fulfilling future and Miriam has a secure home where she is protected by the love of the other Villagers.

The Ladies Nutrition Group!

Shena had no idea what she was starting when she gave a talk about nutrition to a group of 24 ladies last year. We have received a few reports about their progress during the year but these only gave brief notes about which vegetables each had grown and whether or not they were successful. It was a thrill, therefore, for Shena to spend nearly 4 days with the ladies, visiting their homes and shambas, hearing their stories and helping them sow seeds in nursery plots ready for this year's planting. It seems the better nutrition has not only helped improve the health of their families, but their marriages are also 'blossoming'. They told Shena their husbands are far more inclined to come home for meals now that they are not served ugali, the rather tasteless, staple food made from ground maize at every meal. The men are also taking an interest in helping their wives in the shambas. All the women were radiant telling me about the changes in their husbands and we have to

say that those husbands we know from the past were certainly looking rather plumper than previously!! Another bonus they tell us is that their food bills have been reduced owing to the increase in home-produced vegetables – yet another reason to make their husbands smile!!

The other encouragement was their hunger for Bible Study. Apparently the ladies have already started meeting to read the Bible each week in small groups but they told Shena they didn't understand very much and were longing for Bible Study notes which would explain more to them. Shena was very happy to provide these and spent an afternoon training four ladies to become Bible Study group leaders. This means a further six ladies Bible Study groups were formed in that area this time with more of the Burning Hearts Bible Studies being asked for by Pastors from other districts who want to use them in their churches.



Emmy



Agnes



Gladys



Monicah



Priscah



Janet

NUTRITION LADIES

AGNES'S life has improved greatly in the time we have known her. When we first knew her she was travelling many miles on foot and by 'taxi' motorbike three times a week to buy a handful of tomatoes from a market to sell locally for a few Kenya Shillings. We bought chickens and built a hen house for her a couple of years ago. Last year she joined the Nutrition Group and has now been able to buy herself a sheep.

EMMY has to work hard to pump water from the nearby stream to water her seeds but they are thriving and she is one of the few who tried growing beetroot because her son is anaemic and she thought it would help his condition! She would like to go on a cookery course to learn interesting ways to cook the newly discovered vegetables.

GLADYS is convinced her baby son Kevin is the direct result of a variety of vegetables and better nutrition after having four daughters!

MONICAH can be seen bringing the BEST FERTILISER mix there is, she told me. She has just gathered it from her chickens and sheep!

PRISCAH lost some of her chickens when the netting round the hen-house rusted but the ladies have now set up a 'merry-go-round' to help each other and one of the things they will do is buy new netting for those who don't have any to protect their chickens. Her husband Joshua says the whole village will be healthier and stronger if they all eat a variety of vegetables rather than ugali, ugali, cabbage, ugali!!!!

JANET never liked gardening before, she said it made her dirty! However, she now enjoys watching the different vegetables grow and has decided to work hard which apparently makes her husband very happy!

We thank God for the transformation we are seeing in the 24 ladies in this group.

MEDICAL NEWS!

A group of children from Seed School came to explain some of their health issues to me. They started by telling me what their common ailments were. They are very similar to the ones children in UK suffer, but the attention and treatment they receive is vastly different. There are no GP's in that part of Kenya and parents and teachers are not allowed to administer any medicine except a painkiller. Everything else has to be prescribed by a doctor at the clinic and there are no routine preventative immunisations given. This means that every small ailment ranging from a cough to earache to stomach pains means a trip to the nearest Clinic 9 Km away. The journey starts with a walk to Cheptirit, the nearest town, 3 Km down the dusty/muddy road, depending on the season, then waiting for a Matatu ('bus') to take them to the small Clinic a further 6 Km away. The cost of the bus fare to and from the Clinic for the child and parent is the equivalent of a day's wage for

those who can only find casual work. There is then a charge for a 'card' (nobody could tell me what the 'card' was called) which they require before even being seen by a Doctor and then every tablet/dose of medicine is charged for on top of that. This is for minor illnesses, aches and pains which we in Britain wouldn't even think of going to the Doctor for but would treat from our own home medicine chest! In many cases, this trip to the Clinic is beyond the means of the parent and so, as the children told me, they just have to 'be ill' and receive no relief whatsoever and of course most of them don't have the luxury of a bed or cushioned settee to rest on until they feel better. A pile of dirty rags on a mud floor is no comfort when one feels ill. We are all longing for the Abigail Health Care Centre to be complete and up and running so that these minor childhood illnesses are no longer a major ordeal.

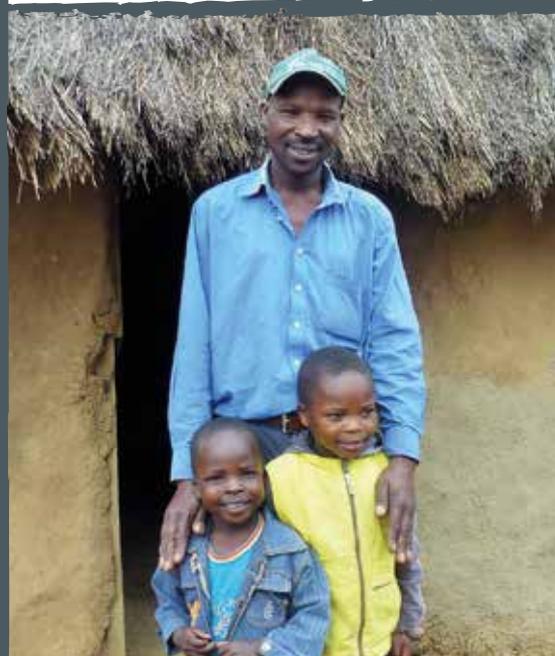
The 'New Toilet' Project

The toilet situation amongst the poorer members of the community is still a major health concern for the Government who have said they need 1.2m new toilets to be dug in rural areas. We were given money to provide a number of new ones and Daniel has been making enquiries for us as to who were the most at risk and therefore the most needful of a new toilet. We went to visit some families in a remote area where there are only two or three toilets scattered about and people have to walk several hundred yards to use them. This means a number of families use the same barely concealed hole in the ground and because of the distances involved in getting to them, they often prefer to just use the field! There is only

one well for this particular community which for some is 2 Km away and the water is anything but pure. These families live between the well and a clinic so there has been a great deal of concern that because of the lack of toilet facilities the water, which is piped from the well to the clinic is contaminated so we were requested to give these families their toilets as a first priority.

One of the homes we visited was that of Paul (Grandad) and Peter (Dad). Peter's wife died of leukaemia last year leaving the two men to care for five children under the age of 12. Relatives have taken the oldest (because she's a girl) and the youngest to look after but the three middle boys still live with Paul and Peter. Paul was

merrily drunk when we visited them but he showed us a report from the Agricultural Authorities who had tested his soil and told them to stop growing maize because their soil was unsuitable but would be perfect for growing potatoes. This was perhaps good advice but seed potatoes are expensive and an impossibility for Paul and Peter to buy with the meagre wages they earn from the occasional casual work they find. Paul was delighted when we offered to buy him seed potatoes and fertilizer. We also arranged for food to be bought for them. Our offering seemed very insignificant compared to their needs, but it was a start. We shall see how they use what they have been given and then decide how else we might be able to help them in the future.



Winnie, Dennis and Edwin



Dennis having his 'bath'

Some of you will have been following the story of these three little children and know that over the years their circumstances had improved considerably. We first met them three years ago when we discovered their Grandmother Esther left Dennis and Edwin tied to a pole in their shack with older sister Winnie then aged 8 responsible for them while she (Esther) went off to look for work. Having found sponsors for the three children we were encouraged each visit to see how they were progressing. Winnie particularly excelled at school. Even Grandma Esther seemed to have changed her attitude and was

taking an interest in the children. Sadly, circumstances have plummeted for them recently. Their mother, who is a prostitute, returned home bringing a string of men with her who have no interest in the children's welfare but regularly send them away to fend for themselves. To make matters worse, Grandma Esther has also grabbed the opportunity of Mum's return to shed responsibility for the three small children. Winnie seemed to be coping reasonably well with the situation, taking responsibility herself for going to school each day, but the two little boys were becoming wild. They roamed the forest unattended, stealing to obtain food and generally becoming totally unkempt. Most days the teachers from Seed School had to go searching for them to bring them to school so that they can be cared for and fed. One Monday while we were there, after roaming in the forest uncared for over the weekend, they arrived at school so dirty they weren't allowed in the classroom until they had had a 'bath' in two buckets of water teacher Carolyn provided for them. Unfortunately the local people want the unthinkable to happen! They want these two vulnerable little boys to be put in a borstal!

Seed School recently built a Hostel to 'board' the older children. Although Winnie is not officially old enough to 'board' there was one spare bed in the girls' dorm and so we provided the necessary bedding etc for her and she is now safely installed there. Unfortunately there was no room in the boys' dorm for the two little boys and we were at a loss to know what to do to protect them. The teachers live in a row of one-bedroomed 'houses' not very far from school. One of these rooms was vacant and the only solution Daniel could come up with was that we rent the spare room for Dennis and Edwin so that the teachers can keep an eye on them. It seemed an horrendous solution to us but the only one anybody could come up with as nobody was prepared to give the little boys a home. We bought them a bed and bedding and just pray they will manage. We know the teachers will look after them and it is better for them to be there than to be roaming in the forest but it is dreadful to think of those two little boys aged 6 and 4 living 'alone' in a room we have rented for them because their own family don't want or love them.

Please remember these three little children, especially Dennis and Edwin in your prayers.



Support

I would like to support the work of Abigail Ministries:

- By giving a one off donation £
- By giving a regular gift of £

(Please send me a Standing Order Form)

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Address: _____

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I am an eligible tax payer, please Gift Aid my donation.

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. THANK YOU ALSO FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND ENCOURAGING WORDS WHICH SUSTAIN US THROUGH THE YEARS.



THE WATER PROJECT

Here is the forecast for the Water Project – “Although it will remain cloudy for some time, this will soon pass and all will be clear later this year!”

The blessings of the Water Project are there for all to see and take benefit from, even though the water itself remains somewhat cloudy. Many families have been collecting water regularly from the Community Taps and using it for cooking and washing. The SEED School “farm” land and other nearby plots have been irrigated through the dry season and the harvest has been very good. In fact Seed School having grown tomatoes and particularly cabbages have enough to provide food for lunches as well as those in the new, small hostel for several months! It has also been known for the water to have been drunk with no ill effects!

While out in Kenya in February, Roger was able to finally get the paperwork for the Water Permit to the Authorities and meet several contractors and experts about filtration. We could see envy from all the officials as they viewed the quality of Water Tank and Pump System from the London Olympics that Nick Crosby and his team built on site last March! The bore hole also leaves many in amazement as the volume of water available is over three times any other one in the region, including those drilled since this one at Seiyo. We know and have been greatly blessed by God in His generous provision all round.

We are considering the options for filtration to remove the cloudiness and excess iron content and some other elements from the supply that will be used for the Abigail Health Care Centre

and for drinking within the school and the Community. It is proposed to have two supplies for the Community – one will be untreated water provided as now without charge and the other for treated water at a small cost to cover expenditure on maintenance and electricity.

Training of personnel on filtration and financial management of the water supply and distribution service is part of the potential contract with one supplier. This supplier will also monitor the progress of the operation for ten months after the filtration system is complete.

Join with us in both praise to God that we have been able to kick start this work and pray that the right decision will be made about the contractor to be appointed to complete the filtration, clean water storage and distribution.



JANE

While life worsens for some of our friends, we are delighted when we see the transformation in others. Jane is another person’s story you may have followed over the years. She was the lady who was expecting her twelfth baby when we first met her about four years ago. Her husband Paul was a drunkard who would only come home on rare occasions in order to take the few sticks of furniture Jane had managed to acquire during his absence and then to sell them to buy more alcohol. This happened on a regular basis. Many times her neighbours would have to rescue her from his abuse before he would eventually disappear again, leaving Jane pregnant once more and having to cope with trying to feed a growing number of children on no income! Despite help from some of our sponsors, Jane had almost lost the will to live and didn’t have the motivation to put in the effort she might have to help herself.

Life has changed immensely for Jane, however. She joined our group of ‘Nutrition Ladies’ last year and with the support of these friends she has turned her life around. She enjoyed seeing the fruits of her labours as her seeds began to grow and was able to harvest a good crop of vegetables she has never tried before. Her husband Paul has also taken an interest in their small plot of land having seen it produce good food and as a result he has come home and so far has kept off the alcohol. With her productive shamba and a comfortable home with nice furniture, Jane’s self-esteem has risen considerably and she now enjoys her work as one of the cooks at Seed School.