



THE MESERANI PROJECT

EDUCATING AFRICA'S CHILDREN

Inspired by the pupils, staff and parents of
Acklam Grange School, Middlesbrough, England.

Registered charity number: 1135670

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Newsletter - February 2014

Welcome to our first 2014 Newsletter for all sponsors and supporters of The Meserani Project. Whilst the newsletter is primarily for those individuals, families, schoolchildren and organisations that sponsor our pupils, we hope that it will also be of value to other interested parties.

Our most recent visit to Meserani was over Christmas and New Year, and this is always the busiest time of the year for the charity as the academic year in Tanzania begins in early January. The predominant issues were:

- Twenty-five new pupils had to be prepared with everything they need for their first day at secondary boarding school.
- Thirty-four pupils had to be provided with a brand new school uniform and school shoes as they were starting their third year at secondary school.
- Seventeen school-leavers had to be interviewed regarding their further education arrangements.
- Three students had to be prepared for their first year at Arusha Vocational Training Centre.
- Two students needed providing with resources and support with their teacher training courses.
- Two students were interviewed regarding the progress they are making in their A' Level studies.
- The 118 pupils currently at secondary school all had to be provided with new exercise books, file paper and pens for the new school year.
- Arrangements were made to pay the school fees for the 118 pupils currently at secondary school.
- Arrangements were made to pay the fees for the three students at Arusha Vocational Training College, and the two students at Teacher Training College.
- We started the process of trialling whiteboards with three of our secondary schools.
- The beds and mattresses for the teachers' houses at Meserani Chini Primary School were finally delivered to the school.
 - The instalment and connection of the four water tanks at Meserani Chini Primary School was started.



Our new pupils

We were once again fortunate to find a number of new sponsors towards the end of 2013, and were therefore able to ask our committee at Meserani to select twenty-five more pupils for sponsorship throughout their secondary education, starting in January 2014.



Moita new Form One pupils



Loading up the truck

Seventeen of the selected pupils were boys, and our current first-choice secondary school for boys is still **Moita Bwawani Boys' Secondary Boarding School**. These pupils started school on 6 January.



Checking the equipment



Ready to go!

We have identified a new school to send our female pupils to:

Engutoto Secondary School

– although boarding places at this school are limited, and they could only find places for four of our girls, based on which primary school they attended.



Nabulu, Inothi, Dora & Einoth.

Ready for school!



We had a number of meetings with the head teacher and deputy head teacher, and have started negotiations to secure a greater number of places for our pupils starting in 2015. Our four lucky pupils this time started school on 14 January.

Dora Loisulie



Maria, Anna, Baby & Dorcas.



Kipok Girls' Secondary Boarding School

is where we already have forty of our sponsored pupils, and this year we sent four more girls there, all of whom were

pupils at Kisongo Primary School. They started Kipok School on 13 January.

Heading off to their dormitories.



All of our twenty-five new boarding school pupils were provided with the following equipment:

School sweater, school skirt or trousers, four white shirts, pair of black leather shoes, tracksuit bottoms (Kipok), shorts (Moita), track suit (Engutoto), black jacket (Engutoto), three pairs of socks, towel, mattress, two buckets, metal bowl, mug, spoon, metal security box with two padlocks, mosquito net, two bedsheets, blanket, wind-up torch, mathematical set, English/Swahili dictionary, ten pens, ream of writing paper, twelve exercise books, two counter books (Engutoto), broom, scythe, sanitary protection (Kipok & Engutoto).

Form Three pupils



We have thirty-four pupils who started their third year at secondary school in January, and they all had to be provided with a new school uniform, and a new pair of school shoes.

Shoe fitting



Our further education students

Our 2014 school-leavers

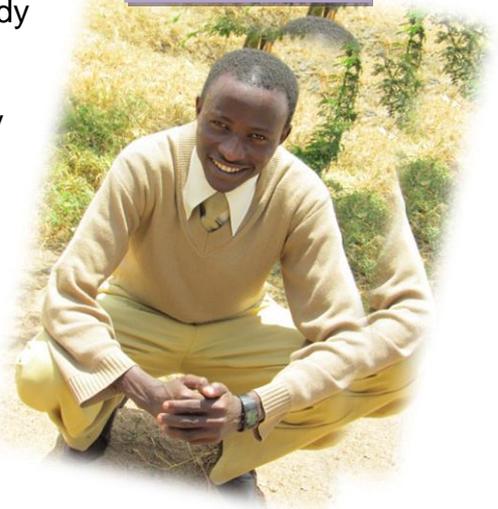


A major issue for the charity in 2014 is the fact that we have seventeen students who have completed their secondary education at Einoti and Moita Schools, and are waiting for the results of their national examinations, (they sat the exams. in November last year). The results are due out in April this year, and if any of them perform exceptionally well they are allocated a place at High School or College, and the government informs them of this in July. For those pupils who are not allocated a place at High School or College, and in Tanzania this will be the vast majority, we will be negotiating once again with the principal of Arusha Vocational Training College in order to try and secure places for our students on residential courses at the College.

We are extremely fortunate in that each one of these students has a sponsor ready to fund them through their Further Education, should they be given a place at High School, College or Vocational College. We met with all the students over Christmas and interviewed them about their future plans and ambitions, and it was so heart-warming to witness their reactions when we informed them that there was someone in England who had offered to sponsor them through their Further Education - without this sponsorship, they simply would not have been able to carry on with their education.

We are optimistically hopeful that Paulo Mesezeki and Maria Ngimasirwa will do well enough to be allocated a place at High School to study A' Levels, (they have consistently been placed in the top five of their year group throughout their time at Einoti Secondary School, and Paulo was selected as Head Boy in 2013). Elibariki Thomas and Lucas Dalash from Moita School are also predicted by their teachers to go to High School.

Elibariki Thomas



Baba Lotumieki

We are hopeful also that the following students do well enough to be allocated places at College: Baba Lotumieki, Edward Kuresoi, Magreth Parsalau and Jonathan Ndeleo. However, even though their teachers have made these predictions, past experience indicates that anything can happen!

Arusha Vocational Training Centre



Another brand new development for the charity is our link with Arusha Vocational Training Centre (Arusha VTC). We recognised last year that we would have a significant number of pupils who would have nowhere at all to go in terms of further education once they had completed their time at secondary school. While the students themselves would now be in a much

better position to gain employment as a result of what they had learned at secondary school, some of them may wish to gain vocational qualifications in order to further enhance their prospects. The only Vocational College in the area is Arusha VTC, but they are inundated with applications each year for the few places that they can offer. However, following a number of meetings with the principal and further negotiations with his deputy, we managed to complete applications for three of our students who had completed their time at Einoti Secondary School, and had

been unsuccessful in the national examinations. We were delighted to discover in January

that all three students were successful in their entrance examination and interview. They started College as residential students on 13 January, and it was a hectic time for us in the days beforehand making sure that they had all the equipment and resources that were needed. The fees for their first year were paid in full while we were at Meserani.



Meporoo,
Bwanashamba
& John



Teacher Training Colleges

Our first two students to attend Teacher Training Colleges, Leah Lucas and Naurey Levaani, successfully started their one-year nursery teaching courses in July last year. However, both students presented with major problems over Christmas – Leah's college had threatened to remove her



Leah Lucas



Naurey Levaani

from the course if payments for her final term were not paid immediately, and Naurey's college were insisting that she pay all the costs required for her to attend a residential teaching practice placement at a local school. We were able to resolve both issues, although it took several meetings with Leah's college staff, and a number of shopping trips with Naurey.

A' Level Students

We met with Lembris Loisulie and Charles Robert, both of whom are in their first year of A' Level studies. Charles is at Engutoto School, Monduli, and Lembris is at Sanya Juu School, Moshi. Both students were provided with a new set of pens, file paper and counter books for the start of their second term.



Lembris Loisulie

Whiteboards

In September last year we conducted some research into the possible benefit of providing whiteboards for the five secondary schools that our sponsored pupils attend. None of the schools have whiteboards, in fact we have yet to come across a government secondary school in Tanzania that has a whiteboard – they all have blackboards, many of which are in a quite unacceptable condition. The teachers that we spoke to were extremely enthusiastic about the idea, and when we visited an adult education centre at Meserani, who had one small whiteboard, they spoke very positively about the benefits of their whiteboard over the blackboards that they had.

We arranged with three of our secondary schools over Christmas for them to trial one whiteboard each, looking in particular at the potential costs of maintaining a supply of coloured whiteboard marker pens. We brought a selection of marker pens with us from the U.K., and bought a selection from a supplier in Tanzania, and asked the teachers to trial both sets of pens and report back to us if there was any significant difference.



Kipok School



Moita School

It was a genuine pleasure to deliver one whiteboard each to Moita School, Kipok School and Einoti School – one of which was funded by Andrew Ford, the pharmacist at Morrisons, Teesside Park. The teachers were delighted with their new resource, and extremely excited about the prospect of using them in their classrooms. The pupils were also eager to see the whiteboards – something that they had never seen before.



Einoti School

Renovation of teachers' houses

Beds for Meserani Chini School



bicycle ride through remote bushland). By providing quality accommodation for teachers on the school site, we expect to make it attractive for teachers to work there – indeed, since the building work was completed, two new teachers have been employed.

The final stage of the renovation was to provide beds and mattresses for each house, and a 5,000 gallon water tank for each house. The water tanks were delivered in September last year, and at the same time we paid a local carpenter at Meserani to start making the beds. During our visit in January this year we arranged for the completed beds to be delivered, and we also paid a local joiner to start connecting the guttering and piping for the water tanks, so that they could collect rain water from the roofs of the four teachers' houses.

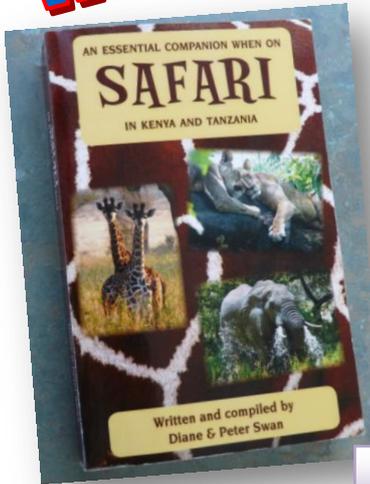


Beds and mattresses ready for delivery

East African Wildlife Guide

The safari and wildlife guide recently published by The Meserani Project continues to receive five-star ratings on the Amazon U.K. website, and we are now receiving enquiries from customers in the U.S.A.

Four book retailers in Tanzania are now selling the book, and all four sell out of copies as fast as we can supply them. If you have already bought a copy, please submit a review on the Amazon U.K. website – if you haven't bought a copy yet, the best way is through the York Publishing website: www.ypdbooks.com - or directly from us (saving you postage).



Front cover



Back cover

Meserani Clinic

The clinic at Meserani Snake Park is primarily funded by two of our charity's greatest supporters, the owners of Meserani Snake Park – affectionately known worldwide as 'BJ and Ma'. They provide free medical care for all the residents in the Meserani region, and have literally been 'life-savers' to so many people.

The Meserani Project supports the clinic by providing medical equipment and supplies as often as we can, ranging from an electronic microscope to simple bandages and dressings. Typical of the patients that were staying at the clinic during our recent visit were:



Christmas Party at the clinic



Lekishon – a seventeen-year-old boy who had been mauled by a buffalo two years ago and had lost his left leg. He has received long-term treatment at the clinic, where he was eventually provided with a prosthetic leg, a more developed version of which he received just after Christmas. Just before we left Meserani at the end of January, Lekishon discovered that BJ was paying the school fees for him to go to a boarding school near to where his family lived, and The Meserani Project made sure that he had all the necessary equipment that was needed.

Namayani – a seven-year-old girl who had suffered horrific burns when her clothing caught fire in her mud hut. This brave little girl had undergone several skin-graft operations, and was due to undergo further major operations to recover some mobility in her upper body.



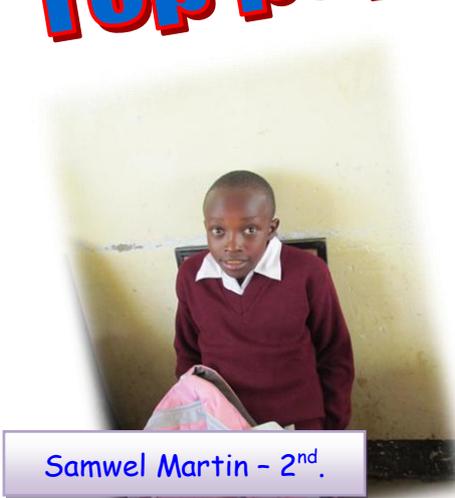
Shaban – a fifteen-year-old boy who had been bitten by a puff adder, but had the good sense to go straight to the Meserani Clinic so that he could receive the necessary anti-venom serum, and be put on a drip.



Martha – a twenty-one-year-old woman who had been bitten by a snake more than three years ago, but had relied on 'local' treatment, rather than the specialist treatment available at the Meserani Clinic. Her wound had become infected, and she had suffered major tissue loss. She is now being treated at the Meserani Clinic, and is also being educated in the use of a laptop while she is there.



Top pupils!



Samwel Martin - 2nd.



Lomayani Labarani - 1st.



Loda Kivoy - 3rd.

In the recent Form One examinations at Moita Boys Secondary Boarding School, the top three pupils were all sponsored by The Meserani Project, and two other pupils were also in the top ten!



Thomas Leiyo - 7th.



Kizito Saitoti - 10th.

Fame at last



Samwel Martin is being sponsored by Staindrop Secondary School, Durham, and his name appeared in their school magazine. It was a wonderful moment when Samwel showed his mother the school magazine from the U.K. with her son's name in!



Isra Mery



Isra with Diane

In the past we have purchased all of the pupils' requirements from markets and stall-holders in Arusha – the nearest town to Meserani. This in itself was extremely stressful in that all items had to be bartered for, transported back to Meserani, and the centre of Arusha is certainly not the safest of places for a white couple to go shopping. However, we made a major breakthrough over Christmas when we discovered that a local man from the Maasai tribe had set up his own shop at Meserani selling household

requirements – anything from mattresses to cutlery and crockery – in fact he was able to get hold of all the equipment that we have to buy for each pupil, apart from books and paper, and we came to an agreement that if we bought everything from him, he would price-match our normal sources in Arusha. It made common sense for us to take our 'trade' to the local people of Meserani, and we also discovered that Isra is a former pupil of Meserani Chini Primary School.



The Isra Mery shop at Meserani



Another delivery from Isra

Tree Planting



On New Year's Day we planted an acacia tree at Crater Lake

Sanctuary, Naivasha, Kenya, on behalf of The Meserani Project. A temporary plaque has already been placed by the tree, but we will have an official ceremony during our Adults Trip there in August this year.



Designer shoulder bags!

In January we commissioned the tailor at Meserani Snake Park to produce ten hand-made individually designed shoulder bags made from recycled denim

jeans bought at the local markets. These are now available for £10 each, with the full profit going directly to the Meserani Clinic. Please contact us straight away if you want to place an order – but you will need to be quick.



Medical supplies

We have established a link with an organisation in Edinburgh that provides medical supplies for selected charities. Their first delivery to us is in March, and we will be taking a consignment of bandages and wound dressings with us for the Meserani Clinic in our visit this August.

Other news items

▶ The 'Adults Trip' to Kenya and Tanzania in August this year is now finalised, and the flights have been booked – 27 supporters of The Meserani Project have signed up, and details are on the website:

<http://meseraniproject.co.uk/africa-expedition-2014/>

▶ If anyone is thinking of visiting Africa themselves, either on a budget camping trip or a luxury safari lodge tour, and you would like some advice/guidance/help, then do not hesitate to let us know.

▶ Barclays Bank, Stockton on Tees, continue to provide generous support to The Meserani Project – two of their employees have used their 'price-matching' allowance to sponsor two pupils to go to Moita School for four years.

▶ Four former Acklam Grange School pupils are spending three weeks in Africa in July this year, working for The Meserani Project. They are currently undertaking a major fundraising campaign to raise money to spend on The Meserani Project while they are in Tanzania – follow their project on <http://eastafrikaexpedition14.blogspot.co.uk/> - their story is truly amazing, and we should all be very proud of what they are doing.

▶ Thirty-four of our sponsored students sat their national examinations for Form Two in November last year – the results were published by the government in late January, and we were delighted to hear that thirty-one had passed, and have now progressed to Form Three. The three that failed have unfortunately returned to their homes, and will now not be able to continue their education.

▶ We had five pupils who had to re-sit their Form Two national examinations last year, and we were delighted to hear that three of them have passed this time – Theresia William, Nabulu Ngariavusi and Edward Saiboku.

▶ Frank Ndaskoy, a Form Two pupil at Moita School, was taken seriously ill over Christmas. We have heard since that he has been discharged from hospital, and has returned to school – good news indeed.

▶ Pendaël Emanuel, a Form Three pupil at Kipok School, has been diagnosed with a serious heart complaint. We are currently negotiating for her to be transferred to a boarding school close to Monduli Hospital.

▶ The Stockton branch of Soroptomists International continue to support us in many ways – organising fundraising events, and promoting publicity opportunities for the charity.

Theresia



Nabulu



Edward



Frank



Pendaël



What next?

- ▶ We are back in Meserani at the start of August, and on 16 August we will be meeting up with the twenty-five adults who have signed up for this year's trip - much of their time in East Africa will be spent involved in The Meserani Project.
- ▶ Assuming that the whiteboard trial receives positive feedback, we need to supply more whiteboards to the secondary schools that we support.
- ▶ We are meeting with senior staff at Arusha Technical College – we anticipate that some of our further education students may well be given places there in the forthcoming academic year.
- ▶ In July and August this year we will be making arrangements for our seventeen current school-leaver students to move on to further education establishments – this will be complicated to say the least.
- ▶ The staff room at Lesiraa Primary School is urgently in need of basic furniture – they do not even have desks for the teachers, shelves for books or cupboards for storage. Lesiraa School's recent national examination results for Standard VII were excellent – amongst the best in the area – and providing basic furniture for the staff room will only serve to motivate the teachers even further.
- ▶ We need to meet again with the head teacher at Engutoto School to negotiate further places for our pupils in 2015.
- ▶ Wherever funds become available, we need to provide more basic text books for Moita School and Kipok School.
- ▶ Dates for your diaries: (details are on the website www.meseraniproject.co.uk)
- ◆ Saturday 22 February – Acklam Grange School pupils are bag-packing at Asda, Thornaby, to raise funds for their trip to East Africa in 2015.
- ◆ Friday 28 February – Year Seven pupils at Acklam Grange School are spending the day setting up links with pupils from Meserani.
- ◆ Saturday 15 March – Quiz Night at the Blue Bell, Acklam.
- ◆ Tuesday 25 March – African Jewellery Sale at the University of Sunderland.
- ◆ Friday 4 April – Race Night at Acklam Grange School.
- ◆ Wednesday 30 April – Talk by Acklam Grange former pupils to Brookfield Community Council.
- ◆ Saturday 24 May – 'Kilimanjaro Challenge' on Roseberry Topping.
- ◆ Saturday 14 June - Acklam Grange School pupils are bag-packing at Asda, Darlington, to raise funds for their trip to East Africa in 2015.
- ◆ Friday 1 August – Race Night at Acklam Grange School.

Can you help?

- ▶ Two of our sponsors are still busy knitting the infamous Meserani Slippers, but are running out of wool. If you have any spare **balls of wool** sat in a drawer that you could donate to us, please let us know.
- ▶ Our 'cash for clothes' link has now ceased trading, so we no longer need your old or unwanted clothes, shoes, handbags and belts.
- ▶ **White shirts** (long and short-sleeved, new and second-hand – particularly medium and large sizes), **P.E. shorts**, **tracksuit bottoms** and **ankle socks** are desperately needed as part of the pupils' school uniform.
- ▶ Now that we have students at High School, we urgently need **plain back jackets or blazers** - second-hand would be fine.

► If you have any **unwanted sunglasses** with UV filter lenses, we urgently need these for an increasing number of Meserani residents who are having eyesight problems due to the intense sunlight.

► Like all charities, we are struggling to raise funds in the current economical climate, but this simply means that we have to work even harder to do what we can for those who rely on our support in Tanzania. If any of you feel that you would like to help in any way, there are a number of options:

- * You could host an African Jewellery & Handicrafts Sale, (we will provide everything for you – we have a large stock of traditional African Jewellery & Handicrafts that we have bought from markets in Tanzania and Kenya).
- * You could organise a fundraising event yourself, of your own choice.
- * You may wish to fund a water tank for one of our schools, (all schools are in remote, desolate locations, and currently some pupils have to walk many miles each day to collect water, thereby taking time out of their studies). The cost of each water tank is £347 and we would make sure that the water tank had your name on it – a lasting and meaningful legacy for you!
- * You may wish to fund a whiteboard for one of our schools. The cost of each whiteboard is £70 for the largest size available.
- * You may wish to sponsor a pupil through their secondary or further education, or you may know someone who would be interested in doing this.
- * You may have links or access to commercial organisations who may wish to support our charity. Kipok Boarding School is in desperate need of new classrooms and dormitories, and a commercial organisation may wish to fund a building project.
- * We have a number of volunteers who we affectionately call our 'Meserani Helpers'. These are not only friends and acquaintances of ours, but many of them are simply people who have heard of the project, and like to help out from time to time. If you would like us to add your name to the mailing list – there will be no obligation at all to do anything – all that happens is that we e-mail you when something is coming up, and if you can help, then that's great, and if you can't – no problem!

Please remember that The Meserani Project does not take expenses out of any money that is raised or donated. All people that work for the project do so entirely at their own expense, and every penny goes directly to the young people whose lives we are changing.

Thank you as always to our sponsors and fundraisers for your continued support – the project would not survive without you, and you are making a real difference to someone's life.

Diane & Peter Swan



Peter at Meserani Juu Primary School



Diane at the Meserani Clinic Christmas Party