



Report for the year 2018

Another year has passed; our association can celebrate it's 10 years anniversary. We went through many ups



and downs, yet it is unbelievable how much we managed to achieve for the children, considering we are dealing with the poorest of the poor in Kenya during this time.

Through the tireless efforts of our club members, as well as friends, we have grown. At the beginning of February, the completion of the Voi White House Secondary School was celebrated. Brigitte Geiser and Phipu Gerber, who have been instrumental in getting enough money for the development, came to us for the occasion and visited the classrooms, the various labs and the boys' dormitory.

Next year, the first Secondary School students comparable to a High School will be in the final exam. We want to accompany everyone until we are sure that they can take a job so that they can help themselves in the future. Help for self-help was always our motto. And above all, it seems important to show students what opportunities await them after completing High School. Not everyone has the potential to attend a university, besides that, without connections it is difficult to get a job in Kenya.

But as expected, new regulations came this year too, one of them was delivered by the police, in the letter that I had to sign, it was said that the fence along the road had to be moved 15 meters in 3 days. If we do not comply with the order immediately, a high penalty, imprisonment, and the breaking of the fence by bulldozers are threatened.

So we moved the fence and a new gate was needed. We often found that large trucks carrying construction materials had difficulty entering the existing gate. This was an opportunity to make the new gate wider and built a separate entrance for people. This has the advantage that the gate man does not have to open everything for every visitor. Also new is that every person who visits us must identify himself with a passport or identity card. Also, the time of arrival and leaving the site must be recorded in the book. This makes it possible for the authorities at any time to control who enters and leaves our place. Controls by inspectors, in my opinion, are exaggerated. When the one who comes for the quality of the lessons and the teachers, comes, we salute it. He also doesn't demand money and gives good impulses. All others need to be paid even though they only do their job. It is threatened that they would otherwise find any defects whose removal would be even more expensive. Visiting other schools, one finds that ours are comparatively excellent in all areas.





This is how the new gate now looks from the inside, in the guardhouse is always a watchman, controlling the movement of people, coming and going. Henry, the often-admired tomcat likes a lot staying there. He is bigger than any other cat you've ever seen here. But he is not a race cat, just well kept, properly fed and vaccinated. Oddly enough, people here have absolutely no relation to animals.



And on the outside of the gate you can see not only the flag of Switzerland and of Kenya, but of course also an elephant - after all, the national park is not far away and famous especially for these gentle giants. But since the construction of the new railway by the Chinese, the route that the elephants have been using for centuries has been cut off. Since the railway line was built on a high construction, hundreds of pachyderms are now in the villages, we see them passing next to the sports field. There are always clashes between trucks and

elephants, but also with other wildlife.

Some of our visitors, like our dear Jürg Flükiger, like to come by train. If someone is appreciated and loved by our people, he automatically gets a nickname. That's why he was named "King George". He gets along well with all the employees and the people, his friendliness and his humor are appreciated.

However, the train leaves the train station in Miritini, outside Mombasa, shortly after 7 o'clock in the morning. If you arrive at the airport just before 6am in the morning, it is an ideal way to get to Voi quickly. The train is comfortable and safe, but tickets need to be bought well in advance. You miss the congestion on the so-called "highway". As one enters Chinese territory when taking this train, the safety checks are very strict. Although it is said that the railway will belong to Kenya in 10 years, if all loans can be paid back. Our country is heavily indebted. The increase of taxes causing a huge inflation. The poor population suffers a great deal, and the staple foods are becoming more and more expensive from day to day. And that also affects our school operations. Every day, large amounts of food must be prepared for the various meals, and the staff and teachers expect a pay raise to help their families survive. Therefore, we are very grateful for any donation. We will not raise the price for the sponsorships. According to our list, we now have 245 sponsorships, for the 340 children who attend our schools. That's great! Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that sponsorships are simply no longer paid. We fully understand when someone is no longer able to continue paying for a child. But are very grateful for a feedback. In the face of inflation, it is difficult to make a budget anyway, unpaid sponsorships make it even more difficult.

Visitors are always most welcomed. We like to show them around, so that they can see themselves what is being done here and that really all donations and transfers are used for the schools. Our small association doesn't have prominent members, so we rely on word of mouth recommendation. Who can do that better for us than our dear visitors? When many little people do many little things, they can change the face of the world. Transparency is important; after the Annual General Meeting in Switzerland in June, the annual financial statements are shown on the homepage.

In 2018 we had a lot of visitors, mentioning all of them would fill pages. But, I would like to mention Hanna Zbinden and Margrith Ingold. Without the valuable and tireless efforts of them and other board members of



www.kenyanchildrenhelp.ch, our association would not be viable. They still do their work on a voluntary basis. Even the sponsors who accompanied them have already done a lot for us, it was nice to being finally able to show them everything. Elisabeth Mülchi feels already a member

of our team and is always committed to us.

I would also like to mention Karl Heinz Johnsen, as in the previous years, he was here again this school



year, and apart from all the material and tools he bought for us, he worked daily and passed on his valuable knowledge, as well as motivating our employees. He knows Kenya better than many others, he mixes with the population and usually finds what he needs. Otherwise he improvises.

His commitment to us shows once again how good it is to cultivate friendships. Real friends are so important, and they deserve to be appreciated. In addition, they enrich our lives immensely. With whom else can memories be shared? I like to think about how much I associate with Hanna Zbinden, but also with all other members of our association.



In the first term of a new school year, competitions take place in different sports, as well as in music and drama. Above all, our school is known for being the champions in handball, and this year our girls and boys proved again that they are the best. They even won at the national level and brought back many trophies. The school has developed relatively quickly, so basically it is not yet known as a High School. But as soon the champions march into a stadium then it's fast: Oh, again the White House and many can hardly believe what talents our coach

Roman has promoted. The boys can be proud, this time they were even better off than the girls. Their fighting spirit and the interaction inspired me, so I gladly accompanied them. I would particularly like to mention the captain of the handball team, Anthony Mwailigha, his achievements on an academic level, as captain of the handball team are impressive.

Fortunately, shortly before we participated, we had received a school bus, which was bought by the crowd funding, organized by our dear Brigitte Geiser. Marketing seems to be in her blood. She is trying again and again to find new contacts and ways for our children.



I would also like to mention that dear friends in Kenya appreciate what we do for the poorest of the poor.

Anyone who knows the country also knows about the lack of waste management. Linus Lenjos from Voi came with friends and built for days at this incinerator. Of course, he had to instruct our employees in the use of the furnace, he succeeded quite fast and we are so grateful for that. For fruit and vegetable waste there is a compost, plastic bottles, glass and metal are stored separately. It may even be enough for a second plastic bottle house. We are excited about how comfortable it feels in the already existing one. The temperatures are very good. In the months of June to August, it's real cold; but from December to April very hot. In this house, the temperatures are constant. It is open to visitors and anyone who wants to try it is welcome. Godparents are also happy to go on safari and to one of the beautiful beaches. But by staying overnight with us, they are closer to the children and experience how well it works with our trained teachers, employees and workers, who are already family for us.

On the official opening of the Secondary School, our friend Jiti Basil also came from the Lions Hill Lodge. He saw what big hole we had, for a long time we

made building blocks ourselves, then we took from it the earth to fill the bottles for our house from plastic bottles and waste. To his question, what we want to do there, I could only shrug my shoulders. He suggested a swimming pool, he is not only the owner of a most beautiful lodge, but also architect and builder. And he offered to make the plans, to give us the machines and the material, so that we only had to finance the work ourselves. I was only too happy to agree, even many who come from the coast cannot swim, and you can always hear how many have drowned as soon as strong rains fall. In April we were able to inaugurate the pool and start swimming lessons.



Our "Doctor," Fredrick Banda, is not just a certified electrician, he can swim and dive, better than anyone else. He is also often called when a child has drowned in the villages, so that he can bring the body up. Not a nice thing, but he does it. And he is invited to all funerals. I am always amazed at the matter of a funeral. The Muslims, however, bury their deceased on the same day. In our schools we have both Christians and Muslims. The religious education has a high priority. We had to decide what religion we should teach and chose the Christian one. On Sundays in the dining rooms, the fair is celebrated very cheerfully, with singing and drumming. The Muslims can pray in their room. Since one is convinced that the deceased only then safely comes to the hereafter, here in the villages people are drinking, eating and talking about the one who passed away, for many days. It's an expensive affair, usually more expensive than a wedding. For a woman, a bride price still needs to be paid. Although almost all people have been converted to Christianity by the missionaries, one still firmly believes in witchcraft, superstition is still strongly believed. We had 2 cases in our secondary school, where girls blamed each other that the parents practiced witchcraft against them. One of the girls we had to send home, the other case we could settle amicably. But in many other schools, the problem is very large and secondment from the Department of Education must intervene. Politicians, for example, never return to the villages where they were born. They fear for their lives because their birthplace could be jinxed. Another problem is the arson in schools, you often hear how many children are burned back in a bedroom. This can't happen to us, we attach great importance to the fact that an adult always sleeps with the children, their safety is important to us.



Easter eggs were not known until I introduced the custom. But I still make sure that the eggs are dyed together with the children. The fear of a bewitched egg is too big. Apart from that, Easter, Christmas and birthdays are celebrated mostly by the rich people. They sit mainly in the government in Nairobi and travel around the world at the expense of taxpayers. It seems they have adapted to Western customs in part. That is, when it comes to celebrations and gifts. The biggest part of the population is poor, for them it is a highlight if the whole family can sit together on Christmas and have enough food for all of them at least once a year. The much too long holidays from

October to January were also introduced by a rich minister. He thought children also needed to spend a lot of time with their fathers. He has been in the United States for a long time and may therefore no longer know how far away fathers are from their family because it is difficult to find a job. Apart from that, the number of single mothers is constantly increasing. Many children in our school are orphans, or live with an old, poor grandmother who often works on the field. For them it is not easy to feed or supervise the children. We allow all these children to stay with us during the holidays. Here they get enough to eat and are supervised. Many employees are constantly here, as well as teachers who are on duty. Since our school has a very good reputation, parents from all parts of the country come to us to ask for a place for their child. Classrooms and dorms are full, so we can't consider many.

In June I usually fly to Switzerland to hold the general meeting of our association www.kenyanchildrenhelp.ch and on this occasion also had the honor to be invited to the general assembly of the association "Education against poverty".

This little club has been supporting us for years, but also fighting for survival. We are very grateful that we have been supported by them for years. How wonderful that people working in



different parts of the world are helping children get a good education. Not only in Africa, but also in other parts of the world, it is not self-evident that a child is able to go to school. I guess it is not surprising that these children love to learn and appreciate the privilege. No-one has toys here, that's a good thing, because that's how they can live their creativity. I am always amazed at what games they invent and what they make from all that nature has to offer even in toys.

I am always looking forward to my visit to Switzerland and to seeing my family and all my friends again. But I also like to return to Kenya afterwards. I have become so used to the simple life here that I feel everything that you do not need as unnecessary ballast. The children and people here are dear to me. Our community now comprises about 400 people, as a village elder I am respected. In Europe, at least I feel like older people are being laughed at. Considering that Kenya became independent on 12 December 1963 from the British, and that at that time only 5 million lives in the nevertheless very large country, one understands the high unemployment rate better. An estimated number of about half of the 50 million here are still illiterates.

Due to the cold, the wind and the associated dust, there are always many sick children and employees during the winter months. In 2018 there was a lot of pneumonia and our manager Dickson was traveling with patients to one of the hospitals in Voi day and night.

But we have a good doctor who comes every month and examines all children. He has a record on every single one of them, and he often donates plenty of medications. Our teacher Maureen managed to learn a great deal from him. Malaria is common and is easy to treat in most cases. We have the necessary test equipment as well as the medication. There are several types of malaria, but only one of them is dangerous, the Cerebral Malaria; and it rarely occurs. In the execution of the test, you see immediately, if a case of this dangerous malaria is present, then it means one has to rush to the hospital. All the others are just medically treatable, the affected feel head and limb pain and have a fever. The tablets are very effective and in usually all feel fit after a day in bed. It's not nearly as bad and unpleasant as a flu in Europe.

The public hospitals are lacking in everything, you need buying medicines yourself, as well as dressings and everything else. For this reason, we bring our children only to private hospitals that are well equipped, have their own pharmacy and, if you're lucky, even good doctors. We send the kids to the St. Joseph Shelter of Hope hospital, which is run by Catholic sisters. It's open day and night, we are always received politely. You will find many trees and shrubs in nature, which basically help

against all diseases, but since they were banned by the British, few herbalists are left with the wide knowledge the ancestors had. The Moringa powder is known in many parts of the world, it contains just about all minerals and vitamins. Our children receive it every morning in the porridge, one also can see how healthy our children look. Birthday is celebrated monthly for all children born in that month. Mostly the party takes place in a dining hall. But it is especially pretty in the garden, our teachers are great at organizing and decorating. Most of them have been teaching with us since we started school here in Voi. They value what we do and teach children with love and understanding.

It happens sometimes that a teacher makes an application so that he can teach in a government school. The teachers, who have been with us for a long time, say that the ones who apply are doing it because they are lazy. That is quite possible, the teachers strike on an annual basis, sometimes for a long time. Our school is also encouraged to join in the strikes, but we always refuse. We are not afraid of the possible consequences of this refusal, our security system works perfectly well, in addition we have dogs that all Africans are afraid of anyway.

If teachers decide to look for a position in another school, we have always managed to find good substitutes, now we have a great team, which we want to keep. Time and again we mention that all people are the same and everyone is needed to maintain a business. Whether someone cleans the latrines, works in the garden, cooks or washes the laundry or dishes, everyone is valuable in the place where he is.



In September, the passing of the primary school by the acting headmaster Moses to Alex took place. We have not regretted this decision, everything works fine. The students reacted enthusiastically, and the teachers quickly got used to the new direction. The headmaster must attend the many meetings, which unfortunately are all too often convene.

Since they never start in time, I push myself against them as often as I can. We are lucky having inspector Bundi. From the beginning, he told us he would be fair, but strict, after replacing our DEO Machora. And that's the way he is, we get along well with him.

In October it was the 4th time a final exam of the 8th Class of primary school took place. Although we are accustomed in the meantime to the process incomprehensible for us, the whole thing amazes me again and again.



The children are subjected to physical visitation, in the classroom invigilators are walking around and in the open, there are police to make sure that everything is done correctly. Such an expense for the final exam in a primary school and then the costs that are incurred, somehow are a bit out of proportionate. But our school was again one of the best in the whole county of Taita-Taveta.



This year we had to wait a long time for rain, but in December it rained almost every night, we are so thankful for the precious water and we enjoy how beautifully everything has grown, the green is a real refreshment for the eyes.

We celebrated Christmas and New Year's Eve, as usual under the stars of Africa and are looking forward to the coming year with confidence.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you and wish you peace, joy, health and all the best in 2019.

And I look forward to your visits!

A. Biberstein

Annedore Biberstein
KENYAN CHILDREN HELP

