



Report for the year 2020

This year felt like a roller coaster ride. Sometimes it went up and then down again.

It started off very well, the Manilal Ambalal Desai Foundation gifted us with many school books.

DESAI was a freedom fighter. In 1880, the English built the first railway and let many Indians come to the country. Most were labourers, but also very educated people came, they were needed as translators, doctors, administrators. But all were considered inferior. DESAI fought to ensure that Indians were respected and given high posts in the government. He himself has long since passed away, but the foundation still honours him and they believe that only educated young people can make good decisions.



We received not only the books you can see in this photo, but books for all classes, including those for our Secondary School. We are very grateful for this, if we had had to buy them ourselves, we would have needed a lot of money. We planted a tree in his honour. DESAI is really a role model for many.



Our dear friend Karl Heinz also came, as he does every year, and as always he made sure that everything was tidied up. And everyone likes to help him, because he is also popular with our workers and likes to eat with them. He even brings the tools himself, because here you can only find cheap stuff, everything comes from China and breaks quickly.

And, as usual, I was once again going too fast, didn't look at the ground and fell. The ground here is very hard and if you don't see a stone, you hit it hard. So I broke my right shoulder and my right upper arm. The first operation went very well, but because I discharged myself from the hospital the very next day and went back to work, the implants slipped and I was told I needed another operation. But I took my time, because I knew my family would be coming soon.

Of course I was very happy about their visit and enjoyed a few days with them here at the school. Then we drove to Mombasa together, we stayed in a hotel by the sea for 2 days.

Afterwards, full of confidence, I drove to the Mombasa Hospital to have another operation. If I had known what was in store for me, I probably wouldn't have gone. I was under general anaesthesia for 6 hours, they operated 2 bones out of my hip and inserted them in my shoulder and upper arm. Of course it didn't work and I ended up in a wheelchair. I named it my *Ferrari*, it was so much better than the one in the hospital.



Please excuse me for not mentioning all visitors by name, there were so many, it would fill pages. But I am happy about everyone, no matter if they come for the first time or have been here before.



When our friends from Dance for Hope were here, I watched in my wheelchair as they danced with our children, it was great to see, everyone was enthusiastic. They had already collected money in Switzerland and went shopping themselves for many of the things we needed here.

And when our dear friend Jürg Flükiger was here with other godparents and friends, I could stand, but when I tried to walk a few steps, I waddled like a penguin. Nobody would have thought back

then that they would fly back to Switzerland on the last flight before the big lockdown.

They were still here when this sympathetic orthopaedic surgeon took me to Nakuru for another operation on my shoulder. A doctor who had learned his trade at the Schulthess Clinic in Switzerland inserted a shoulder and an artificial upper arm bone.

Our dear Osbone is always with me, and I was still in the wheelchair when I left the hospital in Nakuru. He was also the one who found a driver to take us home safely. Just in time before the lockdown. If I had stayed just one day longer, I would have had to stay in Nakuru until October. So I was lucky again. I left Nakuru in a wheelchair, but by the time I got here I could walk again.



Unfortunately, all schools had to close in March because of Corona. We wanted to keep our children here and asked for an exemption permit, but we did not get it. The children would be safer with us than with their relatives, if they still had any. The children who had nowhere to go stayed with us, of course. We are grateful that the teachers also stayed here, so they were in constant contact with the parents and children. If one of the children needed money, we sent them something. The teachers also tried to send the children tasks from afar, but many had to work, e.g. fetching water and helping with the cooking, so they forgot a lot of what they had learned.

But even during the time when the schools were closed, we had a lot to do.

Our compound is big, so there is always something to renovate or paint in the buildings. And in the dormitories we had to buy new mosquito nets for all the beds. Linen and woollen blankets were washed,



all rooms were disinfected and sprayed against mosquitoes. Even when there is no rain, we always have many mosquitoes. And because no rain had fallen, people in the villages had no crops and nothing to eat. Because of the lockdown combined with curfews and travel restrictions, they had nowhere to go.... so we started distributing food. Not only did the lockdown cause shortages, everything became more expensive. The products themselves were sold at the same price, but taxes were increased on everything. Our country is heavily in debt and the tax money should help reduce the debt. I am sure in most countries in Africa the problem is the same. They are probably not ready for democracy. Sometimes it would be better to have a good dictator who has the good of the people in mind.



Actually, our government should have helped these poor people, they got enough money from various aid organisations. I have been denouncing for a long time that these organisations send money but do not see what happens with it. Direct aid is always better! There are not only our school, but also many other small schools that take care of the poor. There, the money is better managed and helps the people directly.

So we let these poor people come to us and distributed to them what they needed most urgently. It would have been too much if they had to carry everything home. So we organised motorbikes and sent them home. Many people cannot imagine how poor these people are in the villages. They live in the simplest huts, very few have a bed. A cooking place consists of 3 stones on which the food is prepared and then simply eaten with the hands. No one has cutlery. I wish

visitors could come and see for themselves. Then they would realise that what they are complaining about are luxury problems. Luxusprobleme sind.



Very few people here could pay for a school, they taught themselves to read. That is the reason why our school here is absolutely necessary. How can young people decide which path to take if they know nothing? Knowledge is the most important thing in life! We are fighting for this and are very grateful if you support us..

On the other hand, the lockdown was good, not so many people got infected with the Corona virus. There was also an immediate mask requirement with us. It was not observed everywhere and some wore them under the nose, so a lot of education had to be done. Here in Voi city, at the same time as we disinfect our hands, we also take our

body temperature. And even the handles of the shopping trolley are disinfected before we go to the supermarket..

As no flights to and from Kenya were possible, tourism suffered most of all. Hotels and lodges had to close, so many people lost their jobs. We don't have unemployment insurance and the government doesn't help people. But fortunately, Kenyans are resourceful, some took up fishing, others drive a tuk tuk so they had a little money for their families. But there is not much money to be made, the main thing is to survive.

Thanks to your donations, we were able to pay the teachers and staff of our school their wages even in these difficult times, and they are eternally grateful to us for that. Other teachers were no longer paid, many public schools had to close. Some turned their public school into a chicken farm. In Mombasa, the rooms were rented out to others. Nobody can afford to leave rooms empty.

We live here as one big family and it is important for us to sit together and talk often. It doesn't matter what colour our skin is, what religion we belong to or whether someone has a university degree. It also takes people to cook, wash and clean latrines, without these people an organisation cannot function. I think the most important thing I have been able to convey to our people is that everyone needs to be respected. Also that the environment is

important for everyone and that you should respect animals. Kenyans are not aware of all this, many forests are cut down, but we always plant new trees and if animals are treated well, they will remain our friends!



These children stayed here all the time, they had no one to go to. Some are also children of the staff or teachers. Personally, I am always happy to see children laughing and playing, it shows how happy they are.



I often invite our female teachers to my place, we like to discuss what we can do better. It is worth keeping staff and teachers for a long time, you can gently tweak them until they are the way you want them to be.

I would like to sincerely thank all those who collected money for a specific cause. The teachers and students of the Spreitenbach school collected money for a hospital ward. We were still able to start this project because of the Corona Virus. We want to carry it out during the next big holidays in 2021. And through my friend Mischa, we received money from an American women's association for the urgently needed renovation of our sanitary facilities.

As always, we build everything without machines, with proven craftsmen. We have had practice in this by now. We did some of this work before Corona, and the rest just before school started in mid-October..



Not all the children were allowed to go back to school, only classes 4 and 8 of the Primary School and Form 4 of the Secondary School. Of course, there were many other children here. We asked them to wear private clothes instead of the school uniforms, otherwise we could have got into trouble with the authorities. I think it's good that all the children have the same uniforms, the same casual clothes and the same pyjamas. Make-up utensils are not allowed and neither is perfume. Mobile phones must also be handed in. You can use a school phone if you want to tell parents something..



It was not quite so easy to let the students come back. Strict precautions were taken. We bought many boxes of face masks, many bottles to disinfect hands and of course many soaps to wash hands all the time. Here everyone uses the same soap, it disinfects the hands at the same time. If someone wants to send a gift to their godchild, please take note. Shower towels are always welcome though, we can't buy enough of them here in Voi. And books are also very popular according to their age, they also share these with the other children in their class. Reading stimulates their imagination and they become better at writing essays. Every day children come to me and get something to read. I myself also love to read, I can't imagine my life without books. Especially books with a historical background are good. If you know the past, you can imagine what the future will bring.



Some changes had to be made in the classrooms as well. The desks have to be at least 1.5 m apart. In addition, each school needed a room to accommodate those who had to be in quarantine. Fortunately, we have large enough classrooms, but sometimes the dining hall had to serve as a classroom.

These are the Form 4 students of our Secondary School. Students and teachers always wear face masks.

And here are the classes 4 and 8 of the primary school.



Grade 4



Class 8



When you need it least, there is another power cut, it lasted 3 days. It can be cosy to eat by candlelight, but when the water pump fails, it becomes critical. Therefore, we had to send for water by tanker again. Since this had happened several times before, we now know who to call. Fortunately, the pump was working again after 3 days. You learn from experience. That often works better than all academic titles - and our banda, whom we also call doctor, knows everything about electricity and water.

In 2021, a new school system will be introduced. Children will no longer be graded only on their academic knowledge, but also on their craftsmanship, artistic skills or other abilities. Some sing beautifully, others are true artists and can draw excellently, others have talents as actors. From grade 4 onwards, they have to answer questions in detail. This means extra work for teachers, but also better opportunities for the children. Until now, in primary school they could tick 1 out of 3 possible answers. In Secondary School, the teachers themselves write the tasks and these have to be answered in detail. The final exams, the KCPE in primary school and the KCSE in secondary school, will show how good the teachers and students really were. These exams are the same all over the country and are set by the Ministry of Education. In 2021, these exams will take place in primary school on 22 March and last 3 days. In Secondary School they start on 25 March and last 3 weeks and 2 days, during which time no other children are allowed to be here. Of course, visitors are not welcome either.

However, personal visitors who only come to see me are most welcome. I look forward to seeing everyone.



And speaking of animals - I think many remember Obelix, our donkey. He already had an injury on his leg when he came to us. Over time it got worse, we spent more money on vets than his purchase price was, and so we had to realise that he couldn't collect firewood anymore. So we bought a donkey lady, her name is Lina. They are very happy together and now come together to fetch their breakfast bread.

It touches my heart to see them so happy.

Many talk about doing something for the environment. We don't talk about it - we act. The environment and animals are always important to us.



If you only see photos, you can't imagine what a big team it takes. Not only here in Kenya, but also in Switzerland. Our board members of the association www.kenyanchildrenhelp.ch work continuously and through them we receive new sponsorships, but also donations. Without money, nothing works, so I would like to thank everyone for their constant support.

The Kiwanis Club Solothurn celebrated its 50th anniversary and they sponsored 29 children for our school in Kenya. That was more sponsorships at once than ever before. Two members sponsored each school for one year. Of course we hope that some of these sponsorships will be kept for a longer period of time. In any case, we thank you very much and wish you all a happy, healthy and successful New Year.



In Kenya, doctors and nurses went on strike. They received absolutely nothing from our government to protect themselves from Corona. Some were sacked and their families were suddenly left without money and received no compensation from our government.

On 25 December, some doctors went back to work. They reported that they had reached an agreement that was satisfactory to all sides. But many doctors were dismissed and replaced by those who had just graduated from university. Is this a solution? Certainly not for the relatives of the doctors who died in the line of duty. It does not bring back the dead, they deserve our respect, apart from that there is nothing good about it.

I am often asked why I stay in such a corrupt country. When I emigrated to Kenya years ago, I dreamed of a lodge in Kenya. This dream came true, and the best thing about it was that I met many people who are still helping today. Arno Köster from the Udo Lindenberg Foundation would also not have become one of my best friends and without this friendship we would still not have water. I never thought I would run a school, but this school is now one of the best far and wide and we have been able to help so many poor children so that they have a better future. In life, things often don't turn out the way you think they will, but in the end they make sense. My greatest wish is that several students will take with them into their lives what they have learnt and exemplified in our country, and in time lead our beautiful country to more justice and a sense of togetherness that does not yet exist. That is why I stay here and never stop hoping.

I don't think I will write much more about this year. It started incredibly well and ended just as well. Everything that happened in between is already history.

Let's hope that this Corona virus can be eliminated by vaccination at some point, but when this will be the case is still written in the stars. Let us remain confident, but also cautious, this virus is worse than many think.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us again this year. From the bottom of my heart, I wish you all a happy, healthy and successful new year 2021. Please stay loyal to us.

A. Biberstein

Annedore Biberstein
KENYAN CHILDREN HELP

