

NDEEBA PRIMARY SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2011

Dear great friends

I am glad to write to you again and I wish you a Happy New Year! The final term of 2010 ended on the 3rd December 2010 and we shall re-open this Monday 31st January 2011.

This last term we have seen even more changes at our school and I thank you so much for your continued support as I know we would have nothing and would have closed if Nikki hadn't stepped in to help and through you supporting her we have stayed open and have grown. I would like to go through some of the things that have happened this term.

We have some children who are from the villages that I have relations in that I have seen are bright and have promise. I have tried over the years to create a boarding section for these children so that they can come to our school and so that I can hope to help them complete their primary education. But the conditions that they slept in were not good and I was unhappy about that but there was no money and nothing I could do so I just had to accept it. Nikki said she would see if she could help us improve the dormitories and I was so happy when she told us that our friend John had given us some money to transform them. We have been able to buy new beds, mattresses, bedding, pillows, and even to paint the walls. Nikki managed to negotiate good prices in the end on buying the items so with the money we were also able to buy pans for the fire to cook the food, more plastic bowls and cups and a water container with a tap to keep our boiled drinking water in. We were also able to have plastic covers made for the mattresses to make sure that they last us many years as we have a problem with some children wetting the bed. I cannot believe what the rooms look like now and the children were so happy. Nikki now does a regular spot check on the rooms to make sure that the children are keeping their promise to keep their room clean and to respect the gifts they have been given.

I'm not sure in the past if I have told you about a small boy who now lives with my mother. He is around 2 years old, called Hamuza. He was abandoned there by his mother who came to visit when he was about 6 months old and he has no father. When Nikki first met him she found him in a ragged dress as that was all we had and she thought he was a girl. When I told her his story she took pity on him and Hamuza became very attached to Nikki. She has made him a bed and net and has got him some clothes and a teddy bear. Since then a lovely lady Lizzie in the UK has given us some small clothes for him and he is so proud. Nikki has said she will do her best to support him through his primary school. Nikki thinks he is very bright and I hope with Nikki's support he can have some hope for the future. He is a lovely boy and is now very much part of our family.

Nikki surprised us a while back with some sports equipment. Her friends in the UK Elaine and Lisa had organised an event with horses to be able to help us. I don't know much about horses but I know that when Nikki was in the UK she had much to do with horses and she misses that part of her life a lot. She explained to me about a 'spider ride' and it sounded fun! The money from Lisa and Elaine allowed Nikki to buy us some sports items. We did not have much before except some balls and Nikki wanted us to do more sports not just for the children's health but because the education department have told us we must

do more PE lessons which was difficult with us. Now the children can learn more sports and they have fun and it is lovely to see their faces! Now people walking by stop and watch us. Before only the rich schools could do this and now we can stand proud and see our children getting healthy and learning more sports. Nikki is hoping we can have a sports day soon.

Nikki also bought her camera in and took a group photo of all the children for me. It was lovely to see them all and it made me smile. It did however show us how many of the children do not have uniform and those that do have uniform that is old and falling apart. I know that the children try their very best and Nikki and I are looking at ways we can improve this.

We used to have dry and wet seasons here but it seems that our weather has changed and it can rain whenever and can be so much heavier than ever. It has been some years since we had rain like we had in October. It flooded the whole community of Ndeeba including the school and just when things were getting better it would rain heavy again. It brought chaos to Kampala. Some places took weeks to dry out. But people still had to work for food and still had to find somewhere to sleep, but how I don't know, only God knows. So that is the experience we sometimes face. We have since been trying to make changes to the school to help with any future flooding. I pray to God that we are ok in the future.

Children sat their mid exams and did very well and parents were happy. To me I think it happened because Nikki one year ago felt very strongly that we should make sure that all the children were fed a lunch meal but we could not afford this. She helped us find a way and since then they have all eaten at school. This has helped their concentration because they can study rather than be hungry and tired. Our highest class P7 sat for their final exams in November. These are really important for the children as this is for the PLE (Primary Leaving Exam). This is the end of their primary education and for many of the children this is the end of their education at all as only a few can afford to continue to secondary school. The highest grade you can get is a First. It has been sometime since we have ever had a student gain a First, Yesterday I received a call from the Education Department and our P7 have achieved 7 Firsts!! With 20 Seconds. I can't believe it, I am so happy. Usually it would be the rich schools that would achieve this not us poor schools in the slums. I am so proud of the children and of the teachers but above all I am so grateful to everyone who has helped our school, whether through gifts of items or through sponsoring our teachers. 2 years ago we were being forced to close and now this. It is because the teachers are happy, the children are happy and children are eating and sleeping safely under mosquito nets that when you put all this together has given us these great results. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Although Nikki wants it kept a secret here in Ndeeba, I do want to tell you about the help that she gave to the mother of 2 of our children. The lady was very poor and was about to lose her home and she came and asked Nikki if she would take the children in as boarders as she would have to leave the area to go back to the village as she had no money. Nikki would not let the children become boarders as they are 4 years and 5 years old and she felt very much that they were too young and should be with their mother. But she also didn't want to lose them from the school. The oldest boy Wanji over the last 2 years has become a friend of Nikki's and she has seen that he is very bright and she does not want him to be lost in the village. She agreed to lend the mother some money in terms of a business loan to enable her to start a small business in the market so that she could earn enough money to keep her home and feed her children. It is important that the money is not just given so that the mother values it more. Mama Wanji now has her own stall in town selling underwear, toothbrushes and soap to name a few and is so happy. Nikki wanted it kept a secret as she was not in a position to make this help public as she would have

people begging every day for help. I know she would love to help everyone, but I know that this is not possible and that she can only do what she can do with what little she has. I am so grateful for her helping Mama Wanji, as she is a very hardworking lady that is on her own. I pray this will now give her some stability.

At the end of the term we held our Graduation day for our Nursery section. These children will now start their Primary 1 class next week. It was such a nice day. We have restarted our house colours so that every child is either in Mubiru House (Red), Wight House (Blue), Bonita House (Yellow) and Nikki House (Green). I know Nikki had told me that when she was at school she was captain of green house so I wanted to give her that house. We chose blue for Wight House as it was for the sea and it is an island. Yellow for our little Bonita who died last year as her smile was like the sunshine, and Mubiru is my family name. We held a music competition throughout the day and then we gave the children their certificates and cut a cake. It was such a lovely day!

And finally the children have been on their school Christmas holidays the last 2 months and we have been so busy at the school. Our friends in Ireland gave us some money to repair the roof, concrete some of the classrooms and put some guttering up. This is a huge gift to us we cannot thank them enough. Hopefully now our roof will not let in water all over the students and will help us with managing the flood water. It has also given work to local people so everyone in the community is happy. It has been a big job but we are so proud of how our school is looking for a wooden school we are so proud.

I know Nikki has been working hard to help us have a brick school one day and I know that this costs a lot of money. We have been so lucky to have been given some very generous donations to the savings and I know Nikki has been organizing fundraising events back in the UK. She has told me about the skydiving that will happen this year. I did not know what it meant, but then Nikki explained. I have to say I could not understand why people would jump out of planes, but apparently it is great fun! I will have to believe Nikki as to me it seems very scary! She has promised to show me some photographs. Thank you to everyone who has helped towards making a brick school dream possibly come true, I love you all.

Although we still have some problems, we have achieved so much last year that I feel so hopeful for this year! We are struggling to find accommodation near the school for the teachers who are not from Kampala. We did have some rooms near the school but they kept getting flooded. The landlord is not interested in repairing the problem and we will not pay for the repairs in order for the landlord to get the benefit, so we must find a new place as soon as possible. All of the good things that have happened are because of you and through Nikki who stays by our side. Having her here all the time has helped us because she always comes to the school to check on us and she has identified many problems that we could not see. We feel comfortable in talking to her and telling her of our problems and we know she will listen and try and help if she can. I feel blessed to have her as a friend and to know she is by my side. There was a time when I felt so alone and I didn't know what to do about the problems we we're facing but now I am at peace as I know she is there for all of us, but she makes it very clear she could not do anything without all your support, so thank you from the bottom of my heart.

May God bless you all

Rose Kibuuka (School Director – Ndeeba Primary School)

PHOTOS BELOW.....

PHOTOS

Hamuza with the sports equipment, Nikki at the Graduation with Rose in the background, some of the children in class. Our new house colour t-shirts, our great new roof & Hamuza with his new clothes!

