



the longest journey begins with a single step

Welcome to our very first Footsteps Newsletter. It is aimed at our friends and sponsors so if you have been sent this you probably already know that Footsteps is a charity that focuses on changing the lives of children in and around Kisumu, near Lake Victoria in Kenya.

We often get requests for current information, photographs and progress reports, so this quarterly newsletter is aimed at keeping you up to date with news from our building projects, life in the schools, future projects, events being planned and, importantly, how the money raised is being used on the ground.

We wouldn't be able to do any of our work without your support and although it may seem like a drop in the ocean when you read about the problems in Africa, our projects have made a huge difference to the individuals and communities we have been able to reach.

We hope you will find the newsletter interesting and would welcome any feedback on it, or on the projects we are running. Thank you for the support you have given us so far.

Suzanne 



Two Footsteps Supporters Complete Sponsored Climb of Mount Kilimanjaro

by Peter Jackson

During the last week of February David Burditt and I locked our horns with the largest free standing mountain in the world and attempted to ascend to the roof of Africa.

At 5895 metres Kilimanjaro towers over the great plains of East Africa and is the highest point on the continent. The path we chose took a fairly circuitous route up the mountain, winding its way up and round Kilimanjaro during the 5 day ascent, allowing plenty of time to see everything it has to offer, but most importantly to acclimatise to the altitude. Spurred on by the team of local guides and the sterling efforts of Eric the chef to load us up with carbohydrates, we emerged from our tents on the evening of Feb 27 as prepared as we were ever going to be.

Climbing by torch and moonlight we battled with the altitude and our inner demons as we inched up the icy rocks for hours on end. Finally at 5 a.m. we reached Stella Point, the volcano's rim and a mere 30 minutes away from Uhuru peak across the snowy path that edges round the crater. At minus 10 Celsius there was no time (or inclination) to hang about

at the summit, and we beat a quick retreat after the obligatory photo call at the summit.

Thirty hours and 40km later we were back at the gates to the Park, desperate for a shower and a bed but proudly clutching the certificates declaring that our trip had been a success.

From Kilimanjaro we flew to Nairobi and on to Kisumu in order to visit the various projects Footsteps is engaged in. In one whirlwind day (courtesy of some rather intrepid off-roading by Vincent the driver) Tony took us on a tour of all the schools and the Katito Medical Centre. Despite the grinding poverty it was uplifting to see not only the massive progress that has been made but also the ceaseless smiles and enthusiasm of the children. David and I agreed that the proceeds of our charity climb should go towards rebuilding the decayed remnants of four mud-walled classrooms at Obingo, hopefully allowing this terribly deprived school to function as it should.

All in all, it was a trip that was exhausting physically, mentally and emotionally. The deprivations we suffered on the mountain were only temporary and pale in comparison to the challenges of ordinary life in rural Kenya.

Footsteps Kindness Trophy Awarded to Rokeby School

Boys at Rokeby School now have a new trophy to compete for throughout the school year. In February, Suzanne Thomas presented the Footsteps Kindness Trophy to Rokeby headmaster Jason Peck in recognition of almost £30,000 raised by the school's parents circles. The funds raised enabled Footsteps to build its first medical centre in Katito, near Kisumu, and a nursery block at Magunga school.

The bronze trophy will be awarded twice termly, once to a boy in the Pre-Prep and once to a Prep School Boy, to acknowledge acts of kindness towards others. The award fits with the school's motto, 'Smart, Skilful and Kind'.

Footsteps also presented Suzie Wingrove, the head of the Rokeby Pre-Prep, which sponsored nine children, with an album of drawings by children at Magunga school as well as self portraits by some of the Rokeby boys who had been involved with the sponsorship scheme.



Rafiki 2010

This year we have more volunteers than ever for Rafiki and all are busy preparing for the trip to Kenya in July 2010. Fund raising is well underway and there are sweet stalls, cake stands, car boot sales and sponsored events taking place to raise money for this year's programme.

There are also a couple of events happening that will bring the team together before we go and hopefully raise significant funds for the programme.

Once again Footsteps is entering a team in the Blenheim Triathlon on 5th/ 6th June with a number of the Rafiki volunteers taking part, (although there hasn't been too much evidence of training on the streets of Oxford yet). No doubt everyone will get round and have a good time as usual and plenty of money will be raised. All supporters welcome!

Once again we will be holding our African dinner and auction on May 28th at Headington School, Oxford. This is always a highlight in the calendar, with the opportunity to sample some incredible African cuisine, hear the drumbeats of a local African drumming group and get some amazing auction items which this year will include villas in the sun and a safari. If you would like to come along, or fill a table, please contact Rupert Taylor for more details.

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Footsteps Projects Make Great Progress

Classrooms are close to completion at Footsteps most recent project at Kanyalwal. New floors are currently going down, then plastering will take place and doors and windows will go in.

The community around the school has been transformed by the installation of a tapped water system in the school grounds, meaning it is no longer necessary to take drinking water from the old bore hole which turned everyone's teeth brown. The garden that was put in "Ground Force" style by Ned (a volunteer on the 2009 Rafiki programme

from Headington School in Oxford) is flourishing.

Back at our very first school project in Magunga, a new head master has been appointed. Later this year we will complete the school's administration block and plan to finish our building work there.

At our school in Rae work has been completed on the administration block and plans are underway for a new classroom which we hope to finish before this year's Rafiki programme.

You may remember Wenwa school with its row of classrooms made of rusty, old iron sheets. Well

we've now built up to the roof of the replacement classrooms and in two months these will be completed too.

Having made so much progress with existing projects we are now in a position to consider new ones. Obingo primary school is in an even worse state than Wenwa was, so it's likely that we'll go there to build four classrooms and repair and finish some others. On the medical front we are doing feasibility work on a new children's ward and laboratory to sit alongside our HIV/AIDS centre in Katito. This would be a much needed and very much welcomed facility for the local community.

Children from Rae School



Children from Magunga School



Politics, Global Warming and Getting Enough to Eat by Tony Robinson

It has been cold, relatively speaking, and raining here in Kenya, which means the community is frantically preparing their land for planting. However, climate change affects even sub-Saharan Africa and the seasons aren't as reliable as they used to be. The community live in hope of a good crop to get them through the year.

The irony is that Kenya is perfectly able to grow all the food it needs and with a surplus to export. The reality is that government corruption, failed IMF policies, subsidised foreign imports and other factors have ravaged this country and left the population at the mercy of greedy politicians whose central thought is to perpetuate the status quo for as long as possible.

Last week politicians returned to parliament after breaking for Christmas on the 10th of December! One of the first items on the agenda? A pay rise from about 850,000 shillings **per month** (about £6,800) to 890,000ksh (£7,100). This is on top of the 200,000ksh travel allowance they receive and the 200,000ksh security allowance.

Happily, none of the money from Footsteps goes anywhere near a member of the government