

Report on Visit to Kenya December 2011

Geoff and I flew out to Nairobi on Sunday 11th December. For Geoff it was a first visit to sub-Saharan Africa, for me, a welcome return to speaking some Swahili and a great opportunity to see Sanata at first-hand. Arriving in Gilgil on Monday in time for a late lunch, enabled us to see the Rift Valley and Gilgil town in daylight, before recovering from the journey and learning more about the whole operation through long discussions during and after dinner.

Tuesday saw us up early, and after a session with Leonard, Peter and Roselyn in the Sanata office, we travelled to see the Agricultural project and the Medicinal Herb garden with Mary. Both of these were really interesting. The range and use of medicinal herbs was an eye-opener for us both. The Agri project is clearly a key part of the Sanata vision in providing good nutritious food: it appears to be doing just that. The potential with this site is tremendous, and what a superb location for the new Restart Building.



Following that we went with Kennedy and the Headmaster to see both the schools. The problems were evident:: both looked very run-down and in need of some investment and work on them, apart from the problem of day to day running costs. Adding to that is the location of both schools – particularly the boys school which to us did not obviously seem to be attractive to fee-paying students from Nairobi!

We were driven to Naivasha in the afternoon to see the flower operation. This was on an amazing scale – quite an eye-opener.

Returning via Lake Naivasha allowed Geoff to hear hippo for the first time. Although we did not see any.

Wednesday was the key day. We began with a visit to an IDP camp in which between 700 and 1000 people were living in a camp occupying less than half an acre. Seeing this level of poverty and lack of opportunity for development was hugely depressing, but as ever, the people we met – particularly the children – were so welcoming. We followed this with a drive through Bondeni and talked to some of the inhabitants.

We then moved on to the Restart centre and the Women's Workshop. Both these visits were tremendously uplifting despite some of the awful stories of abuse and neglect concerning the children and of course we were given a great welcome. We bought a selection of presents from the Workshop – really good quality in everything they sold.

The Restart was just amazing. Despite the horror stories of their past, the children were so calm and the Restart is so obviously a vital home for them. They welcomed us so warmly, and were proud to show us round and sing and dance. It was a great pleasure and

privilege to be there, and see children allowed to be children in a safe environment.

It was clear that there is a real need to build the new Restart as soon as possible and then to be able to move the Women's Workshop to a safer building as a matter of some urgency.



The afternoon gave us time to think and make some sense of all we had seen. I must say that there was a lot to take in,

but I felt that we had gained a huge amount from the experience, and had at least obtained a framework of the complex and interconnecting issues within which Sanata is operating, and just what it is trying to achieve. For myself, I was so impressed with all that I saw of the Sanata operation and the people involved, and am extremely pleased to be involved.

Although it could be seen as a drop in the ocean – given the levels of poverty and the problems that are being faced, I prefer to see it as a seed. I think it has the potential to be sustainable and act as a template for other areas. Given the right conditions the Sanata plan could grow

A very big thank you to all at Sanata for making us so welcome, and to Mary in particular for looking after us so well and arranging everything – including a night in the Mara at the end. It was most memorable visit – and it has served to make us keen to return.

Chris Conway