

Miracles can be small things



Joseph, B2A worker John Simba, and the new trike

Like most 6 year old boys, Joseph's world revolved around playing, eating and sleeping. The long hot dusty Mwanza days were spent chasing the goats, catching dragon flies and watching the older children fetch and carry water and go about their daily chores. He was a strong and healthy little boy, full of mischief and fun. These carefree days were not to last long however when 2 events happened that would change his life forever. Joseph contracted Polio which left him paralysed from the waist down, taking away his independence and vitality. Not long after this a large metal water tank came crashing down on top of Joseph, hitting him on the head. Back in 1977 the medical facilities available in Mwanza were basic but combined with the prayers of his family and neighbours Joseph survived the accident, but at a terrible cost.

Now at 35 years old he always wears a hat to cover the large patch of bald skin on his head where the water tank hit him, but worse than that is the paralysis

from Polio. His shrivelled legs are permanently folded to one side and of no use to him. With no rehabilitation available he has spent the last 29 years crawling around on his hands and calloused knees, using flip flops to protect his hands. His view of life has been the dust and dirt of the streets of Mwanza and other people's feet as they hurry by, only making eye contact with the few people that bother to kneel to his level.



How Joseph used to get around

Joseph asked Bridge2Aid if we could provide him with a trike, not only improving his mobility but literally lifting

him up into society and enabling him for the first time in years to engage with his peers at the same level. With donations from the UK we were able to purchase a smart blue and yellow machine with hand operated pedals. Joseph said "it is a miracle that a person like me could have such a wonderful trike, this will change my life!"

It is a humbling thing to be part of a miracle. In 2006, with our western outlook we do not often stop to think that such a small thing could be considered a miracle, but for Joseph it was more than he could imagine and has changed his life.

Joseph's miracle cost only £70, there are many others in Mwanza town who think that such a miracle could never happen for them, with your support we look forward to proving them wrong!

Bridge2Aid is...

...a small UK registered charity operating dental and community development programmes in North West Tanzania.

Our community development programme works with the disabled, disease afflicted and elderly street people of the region – both in Mwanza city and at a disabled care centre, Bukumbi.

Our dental work helps build the capacity of the Tanzanian health care services with dental training. We operate a dental centre in Mwanza which donates its profits to our work and provides free and subsidised treatment to those in need.

If you would like to receive the free newsletter regularly, either:

- Contact the office - 01243 771653
- Visit the website - bridge2aid.org

Bukumbi Work Progresses

For some time now we have been discussing plans and proposals for our Community Development work at Bukumbi Care Centre (BCC), the great news is that over the last couple of months there have been some tangible developments at Bukumbi and the community have been fully engaged with the process every step of the way.

The water system

On one of our visits at the beginning of April we discovered a hand water pump that had been broken for several months. After a short discussion with the community Water Committee we were able to establish that people had been paying 100 TSH (Tanzanian shillings) for a bucket of water that neighbouring villagers would collect for them from the Lake (approx 5p), but if we could fix the water pump they could pay the same amount for a whole months water supply! A fundi (workman) from the local village came and quoted us for the work. One of the important principles of Community Development that we follow is the involvement of the community representatives in every stage of identifying and addressing needs. With this in mind we held further discussions with the Water Committee about how the money would be collected, saved and kept safe. They agreed a system and so we went ahead and fixed the pump. The community now have an organised and recorded system of water collection and are paying far less than they were before and even selling cheaper water to the surrounding villages! The money they are saving will be used for any future maintenance and repairs.

Partnerships

As well as working collaboratively with the community at Bukumbi Care Centre we are also in the process of identifying other organisations who provide support and we have had several opportunities for this over the last few months.

Sr Anna, who has lived in Mwanza for many years and has been working at BCC for most of this time, has a wealth of knowledge and we are partnering with her work at Bukumbi to increase the effectiveness on both sides.



The repaired pump now supplies water to the whole centre

The community have become an equal partner in decision making, and as well as the new Water Committee, a Health Committee is soon to be formed. There is an exciting sense of empowerment and activity throughout the centre as people are given the opportunity to make decisions.



Sr Anna has visited Bukumbi for many years

To assist us with developing the community's involvement we had a consultant, Burchard Rwamtoga visit Bukumbi with us in early April. Burchard has 16 years of experience of working with similar communities elsewhere in Tanzania. His visit was a great opportunity to help us understand the community more and for them to begin to share how they feel about living at Bukumbi. We met with the chairman, secretary, manager and Management Committee at Bukumbi and also had a wider community meeting that allowed everyone to share their views and opinions.

Team developments

To help us with our work at Bukumbi Care Centre we are employing 2 Community Development workers to regularly visit the Centre and meet with the community to discuss the issues they face each day.

You can be part of it!

At Easter 2007, we will be running a 2 week work team at Bukumbi to refurbish one of the dormitories

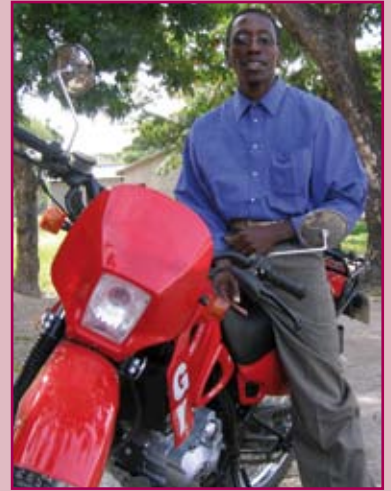


and operate a playscheme for the children. We anticipate costs per person will be around £1,000. To find out more or to apply to be part of the team, complete the enclosed flyer or contact Sarah in the UK Office.

News

DDO now mobile

After many months of delays caused by difficulties with supply and VAT, we were delighted to present Dr Samuel Kalongoji with a motorcycle for use in supporting RCOs that are trained on our Dental Volunteer Programmes.



Samuel is one of the key personnel on any DVP. As the District Dental Officer (DDO) for Magu, one of the districts close to Mwanza town, Samuel is responsible for training RCOs in the 39 dispensaries in his district. He is a skilled practitioner and patient trainer, and has been vital in helping us to develop the DVP.

As well as his day to day responsibilities providing a dental service at his clinic in Magu, Samuel is also expected to travel regularly to visit his RCOs, who are dispersed across a very wide area along roads that are often inaccessible by car or bus. The motorcycle will enable Samuel to reach these clinics and support the RCO's dental training and development.

Donation to MUCHS

The Muhumbili University College of Health Sciences is the principal training establishment for dentists in Tanzania. In May we were delighted to make a donation of a large number of hand instruments to assist them in training the next generation of Tanzanian dental personnel.



The generosity of dental companies and individuals in the UK and overseas has allowed us to build a solid dental programme in Mwanza. In addition

to resourcing our own programmes, we have been pleased to make donations of materials from time to time to bolster government clinics in Tanzania. Pictured receiving one of the 19 boxes of instruments are Dr Paulo Sarita, Head of Restorative Dentistry (left) and Professor Mabelya, Dean of the Dental Faculty (right).

Toilet update!

From the community meetings we held it became clear that the toilets were still a big issue. So together with the Water Committee we set an action plan.



The new Water Committee with B2A worker John Simba (far right)

1. The first task was to ensure that even if they weren't being used, the toilet blocks needed to be kept as clean as possible to prevent any health problems, the community took this on board and each time we visited were keen to show us the clean toilet blocks.

2. We then discovered that people were using the surrounding 'bush land' to go to the toilet and of course the health risks of this are huge, so the community discussed it together and decided to dig some temporary pit latrines which we assisted them with financially.



Temporary long drops will be used until the repairs are complete

3. The next step was to have the main toilet blocks cleaned and the waste dug out of the chamber so they could be used again.

4. We still had the problem of not having sufficient water as the main water supply is not functioning and the water tanks are rusty and full of holes. The Water Committee decided that they would keep the toilets closed until a suitable water supply can be provided. In the meantime the residents will make use of the temporary long drops.

5. The community are beginning to discuss the issue of hand washing. They are starting to identify the links between hand hygiene and disease. They are looking at simple devices that can be installed to facilitate this.

Climb Kili - join the team!



Bob Miller will be Climbing Kili

With over a year to go, we already have 10 people signed up to take part in our Climb Kili challenge in September 2007!

To help us carry out all the work that is needed at Bukumbi, and to expand our Clinical Officer training programmes, we are aiming for 30 people to take part. The funds that we hope this challenge will provide will enable us to do so much – so why not join us, play your part in making that difference, and achieve something truly memorable at the same time?

The group is made up of a range of ages and backgrounds. Bob Miller is a dentist from Cambridgeshire who has already been to Tanzania with the DVP, we asked him why he had signed up;

“The truth I think is that I am lucky enough to be in a position to make a difference, so why not make that difference?! It is a challenge that I genuinely don't know I can overcome until the very end and which may be very humbling.

“My patients were happy and generous to support me in my “Bob's 1000K challenge” back in 2002 and keep asking me what I am doing next so I am sure they will spur me on. And of course “because it is there”- a hoary old line but, even if there is no rock climbing as such, it is still very much a real mountain and I want to climb it!”

To take part you need to raise at least £2,800 – sounds a big amount, and it is, but very achievable and we will give you lots of support to help you not only reach the target but exceed it.

As well as a fundraising pack and our advice on the phone, there are also training weekends between now and the challenge when you will receive fundraising advice and swap ideas with other climbers, many of whom will have raised amounts like this before. To find out more, simply contact Sarah in the UK office.

B2A Tanzania Team

Bridge2Aid is making a difference to people's lives, not only through dental and community development opportunities, but also by employing local Tanzanians to 'deliver the goods'. From those who assist in keeping the houses & offices running safely and smoothly to others whose skills ensure that the services of Bridge2Aid and Hope Dental Centre reach those in need, this well oiled machine is gaining momentum! Making ends meet is a challenge when inflation is at 6% and the poor rainy season will only increase food prices even higher. We are proud to be able to provide employment and support to our team of staff. With Community Development pressing forward other posts will soon be filled.



B2A & HDC staff celebrate May day together

Diary Dates:

(Further details available on the website)

Friday 14th July 2006
Supporters Evening
(North & Midlands- Derby)

Saturday 15th July 2006
Supporters Evening
(South & South West - Chichester)

Sat 7 & 14 October 2006
Interviews for Easter 2007 Team

23/10/06-03/11/06
Dental Volunteer Programme, Mwanza

26/2/07-09/3/07
Dental Volunteer Programme, Mwanza

31/3/07-14/4/07
Easter Work Team, Bukumbi

In Brief...

4/6/07-15/6/07
Dental Volunteer Programme, Mwanza

7/9/07-16/9/07
Climb Kilimanjaro Challenge

UK Visit

Thanks to a monumental series of mistakes by British Airways last year, Ian & Mark flew to the UK for free in April! The 12 day trip was a great success & a fantastic opportunity to meet with supporters, donors & friends. 1200 miles, 8 different houses and 34 meetings later, they returned to Tanzania, thankfully with no further mistakes by BA! Thanks to everyone who accommodated, watered and fed them!

Food Tubes

One year on, the Food Tube fundraising idea has raised over £3,000! Sadly, Smarties have changed the shape of their tubes to a hexagonal prism, which means you can't get £15 of 20ps in there any more, but you can get quite a few £1 coins! So please do keep collecting and sending us the money – every penny raised makes a difference to the food we can provide to Bukumbi.

