



# HABARI

A voice for young people in Africa

Issue 34 | Summer 2008



# Get on your bike!

Welcome to the summer edition of Habari and my first as editor. I have learnt a great deal about the fantastic projects Build Africa is involved in and have been fortunate enough to work with some truly inspirational people during my first few months here. People like George Otiu-Kidenda, our Kenya Country Director, who I interviewed for this edition.

There is news on the situation in Kenya as well as an overview of how it has affected our staff and school projects. Despite the dedication of over stretched teachers there are some schools such as Echariria in the Naivasha District of Kenya that are suffering terribly from inadequate learning conditions. But with your continued support Echariria, and schools like it, can become thriving educational institutions in which pupils desperate to learn are given the chance to continue their education into secondary school.

From the Masindi District of Uganda we also report on the Build a Farm project and feature a slide show with a difference from Kumi. What do school projectors and bicycles have in common? Find out on page 10!



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# The latest from Kenya



2008 has been a year that most Kenyans would like to forget. As you will know the year began with the eruption of widespread violence following disputed election results. In our last edition of Harbari we reported on the disruption this understandably had on Build Africa's work, especially in the central Kenyan districts of Naivasha and Nakuru. For the first two months of the year it was impossible to visit projects in the field, let alone carry on working and staff at Build Africa Kenya's Nakuru Town regional headquarters were subject to a curfew for this period.

The violence has affected schools in two ways: temporary closures have been widespread and a massive influx of people from problem areas has put an enormous strain on already inadequate resources. As the headmaster of Echariria Primary School informs us:

"Our enrolment has increased from 1057 children at the end of last year to 1530 pupils now. This has come with its own challenges such as congestion in classrooms as well as inadequate desks and teachers."

And near Kiambogo Primary School four Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps have sprung up for villagers escaping the violence, putting a similar strain on the schools in the area. Fortunately the government resettlement programme is progressing well. Its title, 'Operation Turundi Nyumbani', translates as 'Operation Let's Go Back Home'. It is a heartrending reminder of the upheaval many Kenyans have experienced over the last few months.

In a recent e-mail our Kenya Country Director, George Otui-Kidenda, also explained why communications had been poor: "We do have a problem in that in the recent violence demonstrators burned down the nearest telephone exchange to us. We therefore have to be connected through one that is further off."

These are just a few examples of the real day to day problems our staff is facing in Kenya!

The good news is that all staff are safe and well and work has now resumed in an atmosphere of (albeit uneasy) calm. And since our last report former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has helped secure a power-sharing deal in which the opposition leader Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) has been given the post of executive prime minister. Mr Annan has urged all Kenyans to take part in building a healed and united country and not leave it to the politicians: "I would urge all of you to remain engaged. We want Kenya to return to the old Kenya: stable, peaceful, prosperous and welcoming."



Mediator Kofi Annan (left) with Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki (centre) and opposition leader Raila Odinga

The creation of a new prime ministerial role has led to discussions as to how power should be shared. To date this process has not been finalised with both sides accusing the other of lack of commitment to the coalition. But Mr Annan remains positive: "I am beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel", he said after negotiators from President Mwai Kibaki's government and the ODM adjourned their talks recently.

Kenyans are holding their breath.

To find out more there are daily updates on the BBC news website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

## Build a School in Kenya

In the article on page 3 we report on the strain the recent troubles have wrought on Kenya's schools. Echariria Primary School is one example of how an already desperate situation has worsened due to disruptions to lessons and chronic overcrowding.

### Echariria Primary School, Naivasha

Echariria School is located in the Naivasha District of Kenya. Currently 1,530 children attend the school hoping to receive a decent education, but this is simply not possible with the school in its current state. The classrooms and pit latrines are made from wood or have mud walls which are eroded by the wind and rain. This means that the classrooms are often open to the elements and lessons are cancelled during periods of bad weather. The state of the sanitary facilities at the school leads to many of the older girls dropping out.



Teachers at Echariria try their best to teach classes of up to 80.



Crowded classrooms make it very difficult for children to learn. A lack of desks means many children share or sit on the floor during lessons.

Echariria receives a little support from the government. It pays for the 26 teachers' meagre salaries, as well as supplying a few textbooks and supplies. There is no funding to develop or maintain the school structures. One of the students, Ruth Waithera Mabroukich, writes:

"Some of the major problems we have in our school and others are shortage of facilities to use. In my school classes are made of timbers and children feel cold when seated in them. Pit latrines are also few and so too the desks. I feel that we can learn better if these things are improved. Our teachers are hard working and they are helping us a lot."

The teachers are committed to the future of the school. They encourage the pupils to work hard and enter them in for the end of primary school leaving exams, which they need to pass in order to secure a place at secondary school. However, the average grade at Echariria in 2007 was 190, (anything under 250 is, in effect, a fail with pupils very unlikely to be able to secure a place at secondary school). This reflects the desperate need to improve the learning conditions at Echariria School, and give the children a far better chance of getting a decent education and continuing with their education when they leave primary school.

This year we want to build and equip a new classroom at Echariria as well as work closely with the school management committee and the local community to develop a plan for the development of their school. Everyone at the school is very excited about what the future will bring.

## Letter from Christopher Kihara

Received 23.06.08.

Christopher Kihara is in Class 8 at Kiambogo Primary School. Read about Christopher's experiences over the past few months.

“First and foremost much greetings from me! I am well. I am fifteen years and going on with my studies. I am in class eight.

My life has been a bit bad in the last five months. We were displaced from our home and lived in IDP camps for two months but for now we are back home. Our house was not burnt but all the household goods were stolen. At school there has been no big problem but there is a shortage of teachers. Those who are there are trying their best to make our future.

There have been no problems in the community apart from the crashes that were there. Your plan for building us an administration block is one of the benefits. You as Build Africa have been refreshing our teachers by taking them to seminars which enable them help us improve in our learning.

You have supplied members of the Health Club with some sanitary towels. Through your help, this club is now in a position to teach non-members on how to keep our

environment clean, also teaching others good behaviour. Build Africa has also been training the school management committee on how to reform their duties.

Thank you for your support to our school. I hope you will continue supporting us. Thank you.”

Yours friendly,  
Christopher Kihara



Pupils outside the temporary classrooms.

# An interview with Build Africa Kenya's Country Director, George Otiu-Kidenda



## What is your name?

George Otiu-Kidenda

## How old are you?

I am 53 years old.

## Where do you live?

Currently I live in Nakuru, a rather small town at the bottom of the Rift Valley in Kenya. I will however soon move to Nairobi, when Build Africa Kenya moves its headquarters to the capital of Kenya.

## What is your job title?

I am the Country Director for Build Africa in Kenya.

## Do you like your job? What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I love my job! The most rewarding part of my job is the opportunity to interact with and work with young people, communities, the government and other development partners; to identify issues afflicting young people and together to find lasting solutions to these problems. Together we can help the move towards the alleviation of poverty, not just amongst the youth, but in the country as a whole.

## Why did you choose to work for Build Africa?

Up till now I have only had the opportunity to work for the big nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). Build Africa is not a large NGO. Build Africa offers me the opportunity to engage with the youth, their communities, government and others at levels that I would not be able to in larger organizations. Build Africa allows me and my colleagues to define the ground on which we stand based on real issues affecting young people in Kenya today. The organisation allows me to really listen to the people living in and suffering from poverty and allows us the space to try various ways to try and solve our problems – Build Africa allows me to work differently.

## Where did you work before?

I started my career in the Government of Kenya's Ministry of Culture and Social Services, where I first worked with the young in 1978. Following this I joined the Norwegian Cooperation Development Agency (NORAD), where I worked for 4 years before joining CARE Kenya, where I

worked with young people in matters related to HIV transmission. I left Care and joined Plan Kenya, where I worked as the Programme Director for 4 years, before joining Build Africa.

## What inspires you to get up in the morning?

I am inspired by the fact that I belong to a family committed to poverty alleviation amongst the youth in Kenya. This family does not just consist of the internal Build Africa family but of the extended families of young people and their communities as well. I do not work for nor do I assist communities. Rather I work with young people and their communities. I am inspired by their enthusiasm to find lasting solutions: I am just the facilitator. That the youth and communities value my contribution to their development journey is as inspiring as the fact that I am able to contribute at the level which I do.

## What do you see as the main challenges facing Kenya?

In Kenya, the high incidence of poverty and pervasive unemployment, especially amongst the youth, must be seen to rank amongst the main challenges facing the country.

## Can Build Africa really make a difference and how?

Build Africa can make a difference. However, development is a slow process, especially when most of it has to address attitudinal changes, as is the case in most of Africa. Build Africa's approach of community development and community capacity building within the education and economic sectors gives the communities the confidence to succeed – it helps them work their way out of the terrible cycle of poverty.

## Are there any projects you feel are particularly successful and that you feel proud of?

The education project: throughout the world, those countries that have developed are those that have provided quality education to their youth in addition to other economic and policy issues. Build Africa's education project addresses issues afflicting education in the country with the aim of ensuring a quality education for all young people.

## Build Africa in partnership with the community

Improving education in Africa can be a complicated business. But Build Africa is fortunate in the commitment and cooperation it receives from the local communities and government. In recognition of this vital relationship Build Africa is promoting School Development Plans (SDP's) in Uganda and Kenya. The plans reflect Build a School's commitment to a holistic approach to education, from the provision of school materials and sanitary facilities to the training of teachers, School Management Committees, parents and the wider communities. The barriers to progress are often unique to each school and community. Our goal is for every school we work with to develop a plan for development that responds to its individual needs.



Build Africa Uganda Country Director Apollo Gabazira (left) and Buliisa District Chairman Fred Lukumu (right)

At recent community meetings held at various schools in the Ugandan districts of Masindi and Buliisa discussions were held concerning this necessity for a sustainable education that goes beyond the acquisition of brick and mortar structures. School committees were encouraged to take an active interest in the affairs of the schools and their children, the parent/school partnership being essential to the success of Build Africa's education programme. Similarly it was agreed that the involvement of local

education authorities, district chairpersons, local councillors and church leaders was essential to the sustainability of the programme.

Build Africa's commitment to a sustainable community driven education has been applauded by the Buliisa district chairman Fred Lukumu and the district leadership have pledged their support by signing an agreement with Build Africa Uganda. Mr Lukumu also applauded the combined efforts by Build Africa and local communities in putting up classroom blocks and sanitation facilities at Waiga and Kisomere Primary Schools and he confirmed that the government will construct two classroom blocks at Waiga Primary School to supplement the newly built structures.

"Education is a liberalising tool", he stated. "We are being rated as second class citizens because of our little education, so I urge you all to embrace education to change this perception".

He also urged the ethnic communities in Masindi and Buliisa to foster education as a means to ending long standing tensions between the Balalo, Alur and Bagungu tribes:

"With education the friction among us will end. That is why I appeal to you to utilise these new institutions you have gained by sending all your children to school".

In 2008 the Build a School campaign is working with 47 schools throughout remote areas of Kenya and Uganda. In total 27 schools will receive new classrooms, sanitation facilities and teachers offices. The remaining 20 already have new infrastructure in place – we will be turning these new school environments into thriving educational establishments. With the SDP programme the productive partnership between Build Africa and the local communities is set to benefit many more schools in the future.

## An interview with Patrick Muringa of the Katweyambe Farmers Group

In Uganda 98% of farmers are unable to harvest enough produce to feed themselves and their families. Through Build a Farm we work with local farmers whose current harvests are barely enough food to feed their family, let alone provide an income. We train farmers in modern farming methods and give loans in the form of seeds and equipment so farmers can substantially increase their harvests within a year.

Patrick Muringa is Chairman of the Katweyambe group in the Masindi District of Uganda. Patrick grew 8 acres during season one of the programme and sold 6,697 kilos of maize through the Build a Farm project. He repaid his loan and made a profit of £146, the equivalent of 44 weeks wages for the average Ugandan! He has just harvested his second season of maize which was three acres.

We asked him what were the main challenges he experienced in farming before he joined the Build a Farm project? "The main difficulties I had were due to finance. The ploughing and seeds were an expense I could not afford"

The funds provided for Patrick have paid for seeds, ploughing and the construction of a crib for the storage of his maize crop. He can also pay for six local people to assist him during ploughing and harvesting.

What are your responsibilities as the Chairman of the group? "As Chairman my responsibilities are to organise meetings with the secretary, to monitor all members of the group and to keep some of the materials of the office at my home.

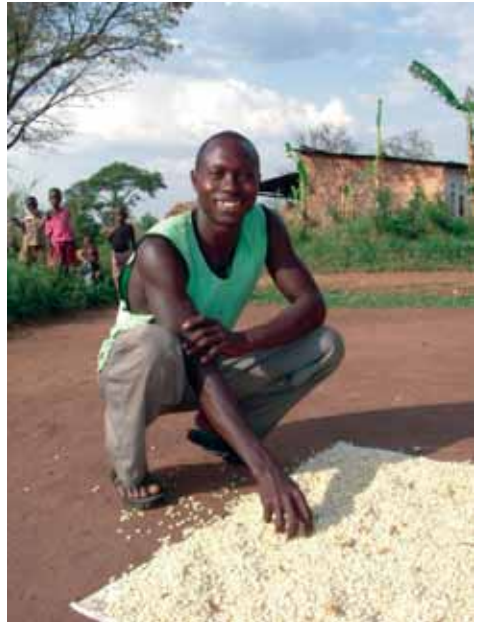
The cooperative structure of the project has also been beneficial: "There is a lot of encouragement with the group and we give each other advice. Some members tried to sell out of the projects and part of my job is maintaining farmers and encouraging them not to sell out of the group"



What will you do with the profit that you make from your harvests? "I want to construct a house for my family and to educate my six children. Some of my children are at school, some are not. I hope that within a couple of seasons I will begin making enough money to start construction on my house."

Through Build a Farm Patrick has learnt modern ways of farming and how to maintain his fields efficiently: "Other benefits have been getting better markets when working within a group. I have learnt how to manage and maintain relationships with others, how to cooperate with people and how to make money."

Lastly we asked Patrick what had been the biggest impact the project had made on him. He replied: "Before joining Build a Farm the market was very cheap and the work was very hard. We were not exchanging views with other farmers, not working together. Now these things are all much easier, work is easier. I have doubled my harvests and doubled the money I get from them."



### Build a Farm update



Katweyambe Farming Group is a model of how your support can improve the incomes and the quality of life for young farmers. The success of

the farming groups is proof that by addressing the need for training, finance, cooperation and effective marketing the cycle of poverty in the rural areas of Kenya and Uganda can be broken.

But we appreciate that there are also serious challenges in addressing such long standing and complex issues. While industrious farmers made a healthy profit last season others were unable to pay off all of their loans. The reasons for the shortfall are complex, but bad weather and a tendency to sell outside of the project were significant factors. The necessity for ready

money to provide for families combined with the pressure put on them by local maize merchants has forced some farmers to sell prematurely. And this has reduced the profitability that a later bulk sale would have provided.

The success of farmers such as Patrick Muringa has shown that the Build a Farm model does work. There has been a significant improvement in farming skills, in the access farmers have to profitable maize markets and in the size of their crop yields. While we continue to develop these strengths we are also addressing the factors affecting shortfalls through active consultation with the farmers and the wider community in general. We will keep you informed!

# London students demonstrate bicycle powered projector at Tididiek School

An ingenious solution to the lack of learning materials in Tididiek Primary School was test run by two London University students recently. The prototype of a bicycle powered projector was flown in pieces to Uganda and transported to Kumi District for an electricity free slide show. The hope is that since many schools in rural Uganda have no electricity supply the projector could see widespread application throughout the country – all you need is the apparatus, slide material and a willing cyclist! The potential for use throughout the developing world is clear.



The challenge presented to Imperial College's Mechanical Engineering Department was to invent a simple, low-cost means of providing good quality, accurate and realistic illustrations in class. Developing Technologies ([www.developingtechnologies.org](http://www.developingtechnologies.org)), an organisation dedicated to providing technical support to development charities and agencies such as Build Africa, chose the projector because of its minimal cost, reliability and simple construction. As one of the engineers, Marcus Rafla, pointed out: "The projector is cost effective when compared with text books. It is interactive and dynamic, making long lessons and days at school more interesting. We certainly got the children's undivided attention".

We asked the engineers what technical problems they had experienced in the development of the projector. Zhifeng Lim explained: "The main

technical problem was producing enough light with a limited amount of power...but maximum power production is sufficient at 30 to 50 watts. The equipment has reliability built in. The electricity is powered by pedal-operated generators and the light source is LED with a life-span of 10 to 20 years. The battery will last 2 to 5 years and a replacement can be bought locally. It is also easy to put the material on to 35mm slides as all you need is a computer with a printer." But both Marcus and Zhifeng believe that the real test would be to leave the apparatus with a school for a longer period of time to see how much the school utilises it. It will also provide a good test for the projector under long term exposure to the heat and dust.

What were their impressions of Uganda? Marcus: "The countryside was very different to how I had imagined it. When I think of Africa I think of savannah and grasses. Uganda was actually very green". And how was Tididiek? "The reaction from the community was overwhelmingly positive. The government officials were very excited: they suggested ways we could implement the project and wanted to test the projector asap!" Zhifeng added: "The people were incredibly friendly. You can see the children's excitement in the pictures we took. Because the community has built the school themselves I think they are taking more pride in the project and really want to make it work."



# Fundraising

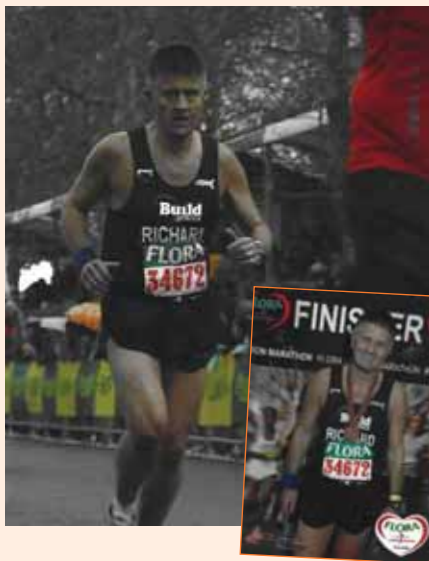
## The London Marathon 2008

A big thank to all our London Marathon runners who endured the pouring rain on Sunday 13th April to run the 26 miles to raise money for Build Africa.

After months of gruelling training Richard, Alex, Jack, Richard and Joel all completed the marathon. Joined by over 35,000 other runners, they raised over £15,000 for our projects in East Africa!

Thank you again to our runners from all of us at Build Africa and the young people we work with. And thank you to their sponsors, families and friends for their continued support and patience.

If you are interested in running the London Marathon for Build Africa in 2009 please contact **Helen Sharpe** on [helen@build-africa.org.uk](mailto:helen@build-africa.org.uk) or **01892 519619**.



## An evening at the House of Commons

On the 21st May Build Africa held a reception at the House of Commons for some of our long term supporters and their guests.

The evening was a huge success with over 80 people attending the event. Our host, Greg Clark MP, and Damon Buffini both offered an insight in to why they support us.

Joining us from our offices in Africa were Apollo Gabazira from Build Africa Uganda and George Otiu-Kidenda from Build Africa Kenya. This was a great opportunity for our supporters to hear how much difference their money makes directly from the people in the field.

Thank you to all those who attended. We hope you enjoyed the evening.

# Latest news

## A new look for our website

We will shortly be launching a revamped Build Africa website with blogs, e-news, great fundraising ideas and up to the minute information about our projects in Kenya and Uganda. Don't forget to visit us online at [www.build-africa.org.uk](http://www.build-africa.org.uk).



## New Staff

A very warm Build Africa welcome to two new members of staff.



Jo Thomas is our new Director of Programmes and Communications. Jo is British but has lived in Africa for many years now. He started life as an agricultural field officer in Tanzania in the late 1980s, becoming country director and then regional director for organisations including Concern, Trocaire and Traidcraft. Jo will be based in Nairobi - he lives there with his Kenyan wife and two young children.



Our new Director of Fundraising and Communications is Oliver Kemp. He has 10 years experience in Fundraising and Communications, having managed the fundraising team at both Education Action International and the Haemophilia Society. He has also set up, run and successfully sold his own company (a youth dating site)! Oliver is based in our UK office.

## Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation

In March of this year we were delighted to receive the fantastic news that The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has pledged to support our education project in Kenya with a generous donation of £75,000. The foundation funds a variety of organisations and charities around the world and we are very grateful for their support. Their donation has kick-started this project and will enable us to begin the transformation of 18 schools across the districts of Machakos and Naivasha.

