

# NEXUS

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*Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference*

## MONITORING TRIP TO KENYA AND TANZANIA

~Connie Gerwing~

Nairobi! The hot air of an African night hit us as we walked off the plane, through customs and immigration and into the hubbub of the arrivals area. Our six travellers were: President Charlie Matt, board members Connie Gerwing, George Bunz, Joe Gubbels and Peter Van Winsson, plus Ted Gerwing, treasurer of the Alphonse Gerwing Foundation. We were travelling to Kenya and Tanzania in January to check on our recently completed projects and to assess the potential needs of the communities there.

After a day in Nairobi to orient ourselves we headed east 200 kilometers into the heat of the Kibwezi/Kinyambu area. We



Nzavoni Primary School Children

arrived on Friday afternoon, and after checking into the Kambua Guest House in Kibwezi we headed to a local school with Simon Ngumbi, chairperson of the Kinyambu Rural Education and Community Development) group (KRECD), our partner organization. We were swarmed by the primary school children and greeted warmly by the head teacher and staff. It was a good introduction for those who had not been to rural Kenya before.

On Saturday we met with the members of KRECD to review the recently completed project at Nzavoni Primary School. We also signed the agreement for the next project, poultry raising, something new for us. Children will be selected from three different area

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Signing the agreement for the poultry project

**MONITORING TRIP TO KENYA AND TANZANIA cont.**

schools and given ten chicks to raise at home. They will receive training in good practices, learn to keep business records and pass on their learning to others in the community.

After a relaxing Sunday afternoon we headed over to Nzavoni Primary School where our most recent project was just completed. Thanks to a \$25,000 matching Alberta CIP-ID grant, we funded building three classrooms, a head teacher's office, and a staff room there.

older children were very nice with space for their materials and a lock. Teacher tables and desks and the head teacher's desk were there but the cupboards and other furnishings arrived after we left.

Monday was the big opening ceremony. The parents and children were all waiting when we arrived and even though we had to wait several hours for the District Education Officer, we had a great time while waiting. (Everyone uses somewhat unreliable public transit there;



**Nzavoni Primary School old classroom compared to the new classroom.**



**Outside of new buildings**

It was a chance to look it all over before the grand opening the next day when all the community and students would be there. The buildings looked great and the two large water tanks we included in the project were full since the recent rains.

There were some problems with the quality of the desks built for the younger children. Simon had not seen them yet and so we realized that he would have to get the supplier to make some repairs to them. The desks for the

few have private cars, even head officials!) Patrick Munguti, a retired drama and music teacher and member of KRECD, kept the kids and adults dancing to music from the sound system. The community is very grateful for the new buildings, which they expressed many times to us.

Our interest in Nzavoni, starting several years ago, had also sparked interest from the local county government to consider what they could do to improve the school. Two early childhood education classrooms were built in the last couple of years and some others were recently renovated and improved. The school now is in much better condition and the staff and students have a safe and comfortable place to work and learn.

On Tuesday we visited two schools: the Starshine Academy and Kinyambu Primary School, the first school we worked with in Kenya. A friend, Dr. Eglay Nyakoa, who is completing her medical internship in Nairobi, came for a day and spoke to the students to encourage them in their studies. She herself comes from a very poor background, was supported by donors to attend secondary school, and has become very successful.

On our two day journey to Ussongo village in Tanzania we stopped to visit the headquarters of the Canadian Harambee Education Society in the city of

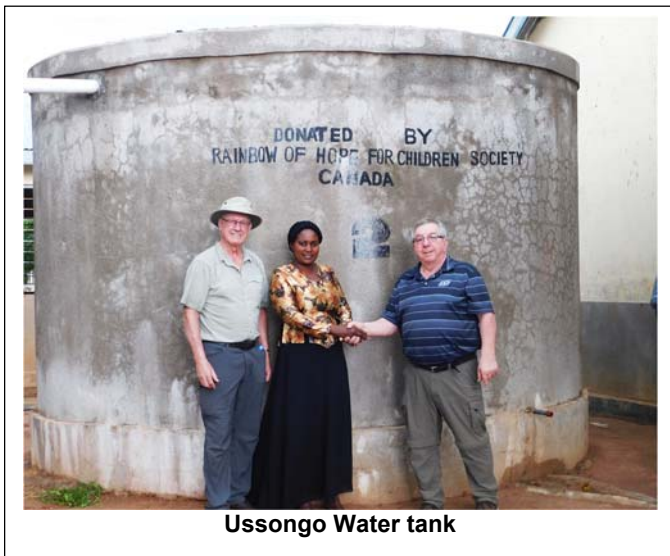
## MONITORING TRIP TO KENYA AND TANZANIA cont.

Katesh. Their donors sponsor girls, such as Eglay, to attend secondary school in both Kenya and Tanzania. Their offices in Katesh are beside a hostel, study hall and garden area that Canadians raised funds to build. The girls attending schools in the area have a safe and healthy place to live which greatly improves their chances of success.

In Ussongo, Rainbow of Hope for Children worked with an organization called the Daughters of Mary. Their school is progressing well from its humble beginnings of two classrooms, completed in 2016, which we funded. They teach primary students in English and have a skills program focused on young women who are trained in sewing and computers for local employment.

We went next to Ussongo Primary School where we had also previously built classrooms. They still have close to 100 students in each room so more classrooms are certainly needed.

Recently we added some big, above ground cement water tanks. Much of East Africa goes through periods of severe drought yearly and needs to save as much water as possible. Wells are very expensive in comparison, less than \$5000 for a big cement water tank versus \$25,000 for a borehole.



Since 2013 when ROHFC members began to visit both Ussongo and Kinyambu areas one of the great effects that we have seen is an exchange of best practices between communities which we have been able to

facilitate. For example, in Ussongo this time we saw a style of desk with a metal frame that seemed very strong so we took photos and sent them to Simon in Kenya. These could be a big improvement on the local type they have. He has already had a prototype built and will get some made to test them for durability in Nzavoni. Good ideas go both ways. The Kinyambu area used above ground plastic or cement water tanks and when Ussongo wanted some tanks they first asked for a cistern type that was in the ground. This type is expensive, requires mechanical means to get the water up, and is hard to clean. We were able to advise them of the better Kenyan solution. We also can pass things on from projects in other parts of the world where we work.

Our final school visit was to the Tabora School for the Deaf. It was established in the 1960's as the first school of its kind in Tanzania and is a model even today. There is a lot of stigma and very little support for children with disabilities. Families drop their hearing impaired students at the school when they are young and leave them to grow up there and some have no idea about their families or where they come from. This school is in need of some infrastructure improvements.

It's positive to see the impact we have in the communities in which we work but it's also difficult to come to terms with the great needs that are everywhere. We are often asked for help, but we know we have limited resources. We try to focus on doing what we can. Our reward is to see the local communities becoming empowered to move forward on their own. Each time we go, we find not just our project improvements but others that have been done as well with local work and resources.

At Kinyambu Primary School we first built a library. Then we built a fence and added desks and teacher tables and chairs and other school supplies. The local community then considered the problem of the many disabled children in the area and decided to build some dormitories for them at the school now that it was fenced and safe. They are using the library as a classroom for them. There are 60 disabled children in one class with one teacher but they are moving forward to get another teacher. And we are considering funding some classrooms specifically for disabled students and then the library can go back to its original purpose. This is how change happens. ☺

We invite all members and interested visitors to our

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Sunday Sept. 8, 2019 at 1:10 PM**

**The address is: 8340 Jasper Ave NW, Edmonton.**

It's the common room in a condo and someone will meet you at the door.

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## AFRICAN REFLECTIONS

~ Ted Gerwing ~

Treasurer, The Alphonse Gerwing Foundation

During January 2019 I had the opportunity to join the Rainbow of Hope for Children (ROHFC) project monitoring trip to some of their funded projects in Kenya and Tanzania.



Being a nephew to Alphonse Gerwing and as a current director of The Alphonse Gerwing Charitable Foundation, I already had an idea of what to expect, but as the saying goes, “seeing is believing.”

*By helping provide these few basic needs, lives are being improved dramatically.*

I was very impressed by the range and scope that ROHFC has with its current funding commitments globally, and gained an appreciation for the challenges these projects present. More specific to Kenya and Tanzania, but likely attributable to other third world countries, the main challenges are related to local infrastructure, the availability of skills and resources, and communication between all the invested parties. An example of the local infrastructure challenge was as simple as finding wood and screws to build a satisfactory desk. Finding local tradespeople with the proper tools to build these desks was also a barrier. Then there is the communication challenge between different languages and finding out that possibly the kind of desk you may think you are getting and the final product can be very

different—and usually not in a good way. One of the most important aspects to ensure success that helps to navigate these challenges is to have a local “champion” on the ground and in the community. For Kenya this was Simon Muendo Ngumbi—a very valuable liaison between the local communities and ROHFC.

One specific event for a recently completed project we attended was the official opening of the ROHFC funded new school buildings and water storage facilities for Nzavoni School near Kibwezi, Kenya. Project success could be summarized by the smiles on the faces of the parents and students in attendance. Simple things that we take for granted, such as clean drinking water and a roof over your head for schooling, are not always available. By helping provide these few basic needs, lives are being improved dramatically.

The kids were so appreciative during our visits. They were genuinely curious about us and became very excited when presented with some new school supplies or a new soccer ball.



**The head teacher at Kinyambu accepts new balls**

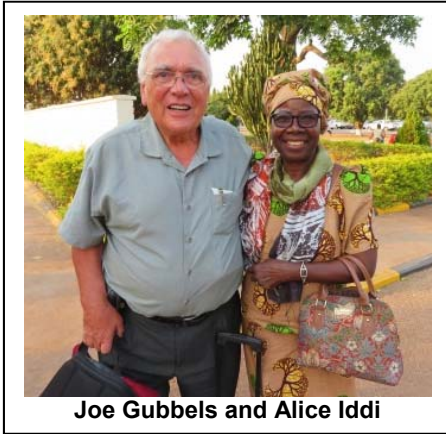
The focus on education with accessibility by all despite religious differences is a noble commitment by ROHFC. One specific slogan that stood out for me when visiting another Canadian project in Tanzania was written down on a wall stated “You can’t do Everything but you can choose to do Something.” How fitting when we assess the current state of the world today. 🇨🇦

*Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world. ~ Desmond Tutu*

## REPORT FROM GHANA

~ Joe Gubbels ~

The purpose of my visit to Northern Ghana was to learn about the La'angum Learning Centre that Alice Iddi initiated eleven years ago in Bumboazio, Northern Ghana, Africa. The La'angum Learning Centre is operated by the



Joe Gubbels and Alice Iddi

rural communities in Northern Ghana. PAMBE Ghana is supported by individuals, community groups and organizations in the USA, and elsewhere, including Rain-



The La'angum Learning Centre

bow of Hope for Children Learning Centre follows the Montessori philosophy of active-learning. They strive to integrate the local language (Mampruli) and culture in educating the whole student: academically, physically, socially and emotionally. They nurture a natural desire for knowledge. Emphasis is on learning English, as this is the official language in Ghana. At present, La'angum Learning Centre has 278 students and 10 teachers and 10 support staff. In comparison, the public school in nearby Bongbini has 435 children and 7 teachers with no desks for pupils in grades one to six. As classes are so large, the teachers in the public school spend most of their time organizing and controlling the children. They are obliged to teach English but speak mostly in the native Mampruli language. Not all children go to school, as they are occupied in gathering wood,

carrying water, working on the farms, harvesting produce (including cashews), and caring for the grazing sheep and goats.

Rainbow of Hope for Children is assisting in the food and nutrition lunch program at the La'angum Learning Centre. This plays a key role in the lives of the students



who often lack adequate nutrition. The volunteer women from the Bumboazio community take turns weekly to prepare and serve food to almost 300 pupils and staff every school day. The nutritious meals change each day and contain a variety of millet, corn, black-eye beans, oil, soya beans, dried fish, peanuts, cassava, tomato sauce and various local condiments. Meals are cooked over an open wood burning fire in a room with an open space between roof and walls. The women cut wood and then carry it on their heads for a distance of 3-4 kilometers to the school.



With the support of ROHFC, PAMBE Ghana is able to pay the annual premium of the Ghana National Health Insurance for all La'angum students and staff. We witnessed the screening tests for Hepatitis B and the initial booster vaccinations. There were 4 students who tested positive. Technicians advised families of the



Screening tests for Hepatitis B

**REPORT FROM GHANA cont.**

need for a follow-up treatment for the students who tested positive.

Their library needs more solar lighting, but it was well organized with a number of books in English, which the students and teachers may borrow for home reading and study. The solar-powered computer lab is scheduled for continuous student use. More computers are required to accommodate larger classes.



**New water and sanitation project**

A new water and sanitation project has been started with the building of the base for rainwater collecting and storage tanks and facilities. An extension of this project is a biogas digester, which is funded by Wainwright and Revelstoke Rotary Clubs and Rotary International. Biogas technology, which converts human waste and other biological materials into energy, is considered to be an excellent innovation for the developing world.



**The PTA executive at work**

The gas will be delivered to the stoves to use to cook for the students. Switching to using gas rather than wood has many advantages including, preservation of the forest, reduction of serious health problems caused by exposure to wood smoke, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and less need to collect and carry wood. Plans are to have the biogas infrastructure up by September 2019, at the beginning of next school year.

A very active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is an important component of the La'angum Learning Centre. The role of the PTA executive is to ensure that the buildings, equipment and school infrastructure are well maintained. The PTA executive also organize activities to raise funds to supplement the operation of the school, including school supplies, teaching and learning materials and future projects. Above all, they cultivate and strengthen the relationship with the communities served

and with the government.

Most of the students come from the villages of Bumboazio and Bantambaari. We met the chiefs of each village. Through translation, we discussed with them the need for education and how we could help. They were pleased and I received a live rooster and an armful of yams from one and a live hen from the other.

The chiefs' compounds are very large with round huts to accommodate each chief, their wives and children. Each village has many compounds and each one consists of a



**Huts in village compound**

number of straw-roofed, round huts in which each wife lives independently with her children. The polygamous husband lives in his own hut. The many children in the compound all seem very happy and were not afraid to approach me. Some of the children have distended bellies, which indicate a lack of nutritious food. The wives take turns to gather the wood, water, food, and keep the compound clean. We discussed the bottle light project that we developed in Peru and thought it could be applicable for these huts, as, during the day the interior of the hut is dark. Similarly, Eco-Wood Burning Stoves project developed in Peru would be very effective to reduce wood consumption and inhalation of smoke.

Students from Bantambaari have to walk about five kilometers to attend La'angum in Bumboazio. Children of kindergarten and grade 1 are too small to walk this distance. We discussed the possibility of constructing two classrooms in Bantambaari. Currently, students who finish grade six and wish to complete Junior High School have to travel three kilometres further to Langbinsi.

The La'angum Learning Centre has been a very successful development project which can serve as an innovative model in other areas of Ghana. For sustainability, however, it is now time to transition the Centre to be funded by the Government of Ghana. To initiate this we developed a draft agreement and met with the Municipal Chief Executive (Mayor) and the director of Ghana Education of East Mamprusi Municipality. They offered their support in the development of an agreement for funding to eventually assume full operation of the center. La'angum has made a marvelous contribution to the advancement of education in Ghana. Its success is due to Alice's vision, determined hard work and leadership. ✎

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## TABORA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

~ Charles Matt ~

What should one expect when you go to visit a school for deaf people in the developing world? Silence? People hanging their heads in gloom and despair? We had come to Tabora, Tanzania to visit the School for the Deaf and I didn't know what to expect. We met with the head master and staff and took a walkabout on the property to see the facility. I was amazed by the size and layout of the buildings—very nicely kept, I thought.

Then seemingly out of nowhere, we were surrounded by scores of children of all ages. We were surprised by the energy of these kids—there was absolutely no sign of gloom or despair. They were so happy to have visitors. They surrounded us and many of them latched on to us individually, all trying to get a bit of attention. We tried to interact with them, but we were the ones with the disability! They tried to communicate as best they could using sign language. Then they saw the cameras and it became apparent what they wanted—any kind of picture you would take of them. Did they ever love to see themselves in the pictures!

The teachers eventually managed to herd all of us over to the auditorium. We presented ourselves to the children through a signing interpreter. They had prepared some dancing for us. I watched intrigued as to how 20 or so children would accomplish this. The troupe leader, a girl about 13, signalled with her arm for them to get into position, then stamped on the floor a couple of times as the start signal for the rest to begin the routine. As they danced and twirled I could see how intently they focused on the leader and each other in order to keep together.

Later we went out to the trades school where they were teaching some of the older students carpentry and sewing. These students were trying so hard to be someone worthwhile and have some importance to someone in their lives. There were about seven young women who were sewing new dresses and were doing a very nice job of it. Five young men in the woodworking shop were more outgoing and entertained us with their ability to plane wood, build chairs and work

with tools. The tools were quite simple, very old, and kept very sharp. Very good basic habits to have.

In Tanzania having a child with a disability is a black mark on the family name. Some of these children's parents had just dropped them off at the school with no note or identification. A few were very young and did not know their parents names or where they came from. We met one young girl who was dropped off at a very young age and had lived at the school for many years. It was heartbreaking to know that she does not know her family and is trying so hard to find her place in the world. I often ponder on the good work these girls or boys could do given the right opportunity or situation.

I was so in awe of these children! After hearing some of their stories from the headmaster, I wondered how we could help them succeed. How can we enable them to become functioning adults and citizens in a society that doesn't necessarily accept them?

Currently we are raising funds to build a water storage tank at the main school to help with their water shortage problems. I would also like to find some way to fund tools and materials for the boys and girls at the trade school. There must be some technology available that would assist these children with communication. One of the



The trades school teaching some of the older students carpentry and sewing.

easiest things that comes to mind is texting, but, in a land where these kind of costs seem prohibitive it is an almost unreachable dream. They are just shy of 200 students right now and growing.

I would certainly appreciate and encourage ideas and assistance from anyone. I know there is a solution, no matter how low-tech it might seem. If you have some ideas please contact me at [rohfc2017@outlook.com](mailto:rohfc2017@outlook.com).

## PROGRAMS OF THE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY

Your support is requested and appreciated for the following projects:

Program Description	Funding Goals	Program Description	Funding Goals
Casa Ambrosina, Gender Equality and Empowerment of Young Women, Alagoas, Brazil	\$20,500	Solar Power at La Loma School, and Well Water Testing at Romero Community, El Salvador	\$5,300
School of Family Agriculture, Bahia, Brazil	\$20,200	PAMBE Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation, Ghana	\$7,500
El Sauce School Mini-Farm & Organic Agriculture Training, El Salvador	\$25,000	Public Education Complex, Chinchá Baja, Peru	\$11,000
CIS Scholarships, El Salvador	\$26,500	Future Schools, Nepal	\$54,000
Tabora School for the Deaf Water Tank, Tanzania	\$17,000		


### Projects Under Development

We are accepting donations towards the following projects that we plan to implement in the near future:

Eye Health Care, reducing avoidable blindness, Indonesia	\$10,000	Kinyambu & Area- Classrooms, Kenya	\$60,000
PREDA, protecting children, Philippines	\$10,000	Disaster Relief Fund	\$10,000
PAMBE Future Projects, Ghana	\$21,500	Hospital, Itasy, Madagascar	\$26,500

The Rainbow of Hope For Children Society (ROHFC) attempts to maintain as low as possible operational costs. The Society allocates 6% of revenue towards these costs. All ROHFC Board members are unpaid volunteers who donate their time and expertise towards these projects. There is no paid staff.

## RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF



**Thank you to all our donors,** and

- Several Rotary Clubs, the Knights of Columbus, Edmonton Community Foundation, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation.

A special thanks to:

- Sharon Romanow and her leadership students at Blessed Sacrament School in Wainwright for helping prepare the NEXUS mail out.
- The Peter Van Winssen Professional Corporation, Wainwright, Alberta for donating the cost of the NEXUS mail-out.

We thank you for offering a gift to one of these projects and are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:

**RAINBOW OF HOPE**  
**WAINWRIGHT, AB T9W 1S7**  
**PO BOX 2883**

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[www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca](http://www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca)

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**NOTE:** When making a donation using a credit card be sure to include the 3-digit security code on the back of your card. That number is now required by the credit card companies.



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NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.