

CHOLE CHANGING

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND
Issue 1



LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Living in the West it is difficult to imagine life without reliable access to electricity, but that has been the reality for the people of Chole throughout their history. In early June all that changed when the charity **SolarAid** installed a state-of-the-art solar power system for the Learning Centre, Health Centre and Women's Market. Remarkably a couple on holiday at the time had responded to the SolarAid appeal in *The Times*, and were able to see their contribution come to life.



The project involved the whole island, supported by Jean and Anne and the team at Chole Mjini Lodge. It opens the way to the web, distance learning, a functioning vaccine fridge in the Health Centre and many other opportunities.



Editor's Note: A magical experience for visitors to Chole is seeing the stars so bright and near in the dark, imagining one could reach out and touch them. We are assured that as the village moves towards its brighter future the Lodge will remain in the dark!

The pictures show the solar panels arriving on Chole, and installation on the Health Centre. The full story is at www.solar-aid.org.

THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND

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WELCOME

Welcome to the new Chole Mjini Trust Fund's first Newsletter. For five years The Tribes Foundation has provided a wonderful service to the Chole Project. Now however the time has come for a dedicated team, so the Trust has been set up to support the people of Chole in their quest for self sufficiency.

Our Newsletters will try to keep the growing community of generous donors up-to-date with developments on Chole, and we welcome your comments and suggestions, either to the Trust or directly to Anne and Jean de Villiers, whose contact details are on the next page.

Chole means many things to many people. Anyone who has stayed at Chole Mjini Lodge will of course have memories of a unique experience, going beyond a simple holiday. There may also however be the memory of seeing at first hand the poverty and lack of power over their own lives which afflicts so many people, on Chole as in so many other parts of Africa – but on Chole there is obviously also hope.

In 1993, when Anne and Jean de Villiers started planning the tourist lodge which they opened in 2000, they wanted to support the local community not only as ethical employers, but also by facilitating the community's own organic progress, fostering its self sufficiency and independence.

There were some obvious priorities, such as schooling and healthcare, and a process for education for everyone followed. One characteristic of the Chole project has always been the breadth of its vision, so there has also been a sustained effort to empower women, to care for the environment and to conserve the local culture and history, and the traditions that go with them, all so essential to

dignity and sense of identity. This holistic approach is unique.

The conservative, hierarchical and very democratic structures on the island meant that a complex set of relationships had to be navigated. Underlying everything though was a philosophy of the local community making its own decisions.



It is of course utopian to think that a project like this, over such a timescale, can succeed without outside help. From the very beginning the generosity of guests staying at Chole Mjini Lodge has been a vital factor in providing the funding needed to build and maintain the momentum behind the project. The objective of the Trust is to act as the UK focus of this support.

The photograph shows a young man who has benefitted from a Chole Project secondary school bursary. He has returned to teach in the Learning Centre whilst waiting to go up to University - one of the first in all of the history of Chole to have such an opportunity.

LEARNING CENTRE GRADUATE TUTOR



Sophie Mottram, who visited Chole on holiday in 2006 and has just graduated in economics from the University of York, is spending six months teaching in the Learning Centre. The Learning Centre offers remedial education to children failing exams, helping them to re-take, and offers tuition in English language and computing skills. For the many, who never had a formal education, it may provide the only opportunity to access any education.

Sophie, who captained the University Women's Rowing Team, has considerable language skills and is learning Swahili. Whilst in Chole she will also develop a longer term plan for the Learning Centre, examining what opportunities the new solar power system may offer.

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Visitors to Chole may well have visited the haunting Shirazi ruins of Kua, on Juani island, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries. Kua is a reminder of the great pre-colonial trade routes that stretched down the Swahili coast long before the European narrative of East Africa began when the Portuguese arrived at the end of the 15th century. Kilwa, the next port south, featured in episode 60 in BBC Radio's fascinating *History of the World in 100 Objects*, presented by Neil Macgregor, Director of the British Museum. It is still available on the BBC website.



The trade route also featured on C4 in *Lost Kingdoms of Africa - Great Zimbabwe* in which British art historian Dr Gus Casely-Hayford explored the history of some of Africa's most important kingdoms, shining a fascinating light onto a rich and powerful civilisation that encompassed Chole centuries ago.

CHOLE IN YOUR HOME

SUPU YA PARACHICHI

There is something decadent about being able to eat as well as you do at Chole Mjini Lodge, without the fear of putting on weight!

Try this avocado soup at home

Ingredients

Avocado
Lime
Salt
Black Pepper
Red Chilli
Cold chicken or vegetable stock
Fresh coriander

Method

Wash and peel the avocado
Blend the avocado until smooth
Mix in lime juice, a little at a time
Add salt, pepper and hot chilli to taste
Add the cold stock
Pour into bowls and garnish with fresh coriander

TAYARI KWA MLO ... ENJOY!

More recipes next time



CHOLE MJINI LODGE

The Chole Trust is of course about helping others - but we know there are many other reasons for visiting Chole!

An internet search quickly brings up the virtually unanimous praise for Chole Mjini Lodge as a destination for a very special holiday, but why not see for yourself at

www.cholemjini.com

which also has many wonderful photographs?

You can contact the Lodge at

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PO Box 20
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Tel: +255 787 712 427
+255 784 520 799

Email: 2chole@gmail.com

Most good travel agents specialising in Africa can also give you extensive details about Chole Mjini Lodge.

Please also do not hesitate to contact Anne de Villiers at anne.k.dev@gmail.com about the Chole Project

WHY CHOLE?

With so much need around the world one donor explores why Chole merits support

“Charity”, we are often told, “begins at home”, which certainly has a seductive ring when so clearly there is poverty and deprivation even on the streets of so-called rich countries. But it is a philosophy which in a global world carries the implication that a child in say the tenements of Glasgow is somehow more worthy of help than one in the favelas of South America, the slums of Mumbai, or in an isolated African village.

So why should anyone chose to support the people of Chole, and what is there about the Chole Project that marks it out?

First of all Chole is an island. The importance of this is often overlooked, but it means there is a physical limit to the challenge, and that progress can be seen and success imagined, not only by donors, but also by the people of Chole themselves. By comparison, in so many other parts of Africa and the world the scale of the need seems to be a bottomless pit.

Progress is central to self sufficiency, because it fosters hope and confidence - and the greatest obstacle to self sufficiency is a lack of



hope and confidence. By the late 1990s only one child from Chole had ever progressed beyond Form 4 in secondary school; this year 67 are in secondary school, supported by bursaries from the Trust. Because Chole is a small, physically limited community everyone knows someone benefitting from this progress.

A second huge reason for supporting Chole is the holistic approach that Anne and Jean de Villiers have fostered.

There are many wonderful projects delivering healthcare and education in the third world; many others focus on environmental concerns, and sometimes, when managed remotely, even create conflict between the environment and the needs of the people living in the environment. Elsewhere academics study cultures and histories, and feminists promote women’s interests with varying degrees of sensitivity to local structures.

Chole is one of the few examples with the potential for all these things to be brought together. The local community has control of its own destiny, sets its own priorities, makes its own mistakes and is building its own future. This can probably only happen in a small community, but it might become a model that could be adapted to other small communities.

This may sound idealistic but there is another more prosaic reason for supporting Chole. The

Harambee Committee which allocates donor funds takes its duties very seriously, ensuring funds really are allocated with local priorities in mind. And the Committee is also vigilant, ensuring that once disbursed all funds are properly accounted for and applied only for the purposes for which they are intended.

And finally, the differential purchasing power, the brute reality of the global economy, means that very small amounts by western standards go a very long way, and individual donations always make a real difference - as you may see for yourself.

Note: The Harambee Committee’s report for 2009 and the 2009 Audit Report are both available in full on the Trust’s website.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Chole Trust’s objective is to become redundant as the people of Chole achieve self sufficiency. However the road to self sufficiency is challenging, needing investment, especially in education, healthcare and facilities, which is beyond the capacity of a poor community, however hard it tries.

You can help this ambitious project in any number of ways:

- By becoming a monthly standing order donor. Regular donations are especially valuable, giving children entering the schooling system confidence that they will be able to complete their education.

Just £25 / month funds an annual Form 5+ secondary school bursary for a child.

- If you can make a larger commitment the Trustees will be happy to discuss specific projects. For example, the Kindergarten is largely funded through the generosity of two long term donors.

- If you - or perhaps a family member or friend - is planning an adventure such as climbing Kilimanjaro, then doing it on behalf of the Trust can be a very effective way of fundraising.

One benefactor, **Al Crawford**, is taking part in the **Coast to Coast Challenge across Costa Rica** in November 2010 on behalf of the Chole Learning Centre. To sponsor him, visit the Trust’s website at www.choletrust.org.

- Practical help; a few months teaching on Chole, or donating equipment to the Learning Centre or Health Centre can be rewarding and can contribute a great deal.

If you would like to help the Chole Project then please contact us at:

chole@rech.co.uk
or
+44 (0)20 7228 9864