

CHOLE CHANGING

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND
Issue 3
www.choletrust.org



LEARNING CENTRE IT

Last November Al Crawford, CEO of 192.COM, took part in the Coast to Coast Challenge, a gruelling race hiking, climbing, mountain biking and canoeing across Costa Rica.

We were extremely fortunate that the Trust was Al's chosen charity, and that the generosity of his sponsors raised £2,600. This allowed us to plan a small IT network in the Learning Centre. The main objective is computer based English Language tuition, and business, computing and IT skills.

The Learning Centre has a solar power system provided by



Solar power offering a new future

SolarAid, and it has taken a long time to identify suitable computers with a low enough power

consumption. However a supplier in Moshe, near Kilimanjaro, has now proposed a small 4 workstation wireless network with meets the specification.

We are now awaiting a final report about the performance of a very similar system and the outcome of a supplementary funding request that we have made. All being well we expect to give the go-ahead in early September for a project which should have a big, long term impact on the education of Chole's children.

THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND

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FROM THE FRONTLINE

Robin Cooke-Hurle, Chairman of the Chole Mjini Trust Fund, has just visited Tanzania and spent a couple of days on Chole. Anne de Villiers arranged for him to meet the Harambee Committee, members of the Chole Society for Women's Development and the Village Council. This is his report.

My preparations began a couple of weeks before leaving London, with a frantic hunt through an overfull inbox for relevant emails and packing an enormous range of Montessori teaching aids donated to the Kindergarten. Luckily an old suitcase could be pressed into service, and the weight fell just within the limits for the international flight. But I had forgotten the weight limits on Coastal's flights to Mafia. Fortunately Nicola Colangelo, the owner of Coastal, was in the Dar Domestic terminal, and with characteristic generosity arranged for the items to be carried, and waived the excess baggage fees.



The Red Herring coming into view!

Arriving on Chole was magical as ever, with the stress draining out the closer one got to the Red Herring, where a lovely surprise was waiting. Some members of the Harambee Committee, including the Chair, Riziki Serenge, and Anne de Villiers, were there to greet me, intent on thanking everyone associated with the Trust for their support, which I am delighted to pass on to you.

Then it was time to be shown to treehouse no. 5 by Lyndsey Fair, who manages the Lodge for AfrikaAfrika (see over). Beyond some remarkably effective solar lanterns in the treehouses little seemed to have changed, with Chole Mjini still a unique, wonderfully comfortable 'chill out' spot!

Next morning began with meeting Form 4 students supported by bursaries. I was told five or six might turn up, but the Learning Centre was packed. One pupil pleaded eloquently for vocational training for those failing Form 4 exams and therefore having to leave school, but the consensus was that the limited funds should still be allocated as a priority to secondary schooling.



Meeting students in the Learning Centre

Immediately afterwards I met the Harambee Committee and representatives of the Chole Society for Women's Development, which is responsible for the Kindergarten, using funds the Harambee allocates. A vital aspect of the Kindergarten's work is to ensure that every child receives at least one balanced, nutritious meal a day, and it was agreed that the budget should be



Preparing lunch. Every child receives one meal a day, prepared on these facilities

increased to take account of the increasing price of food. The increase is not yet finalised, but is expected to be about Tshs 200 (less than 10 pence) per child per day. We also arranged that in future the Kindergarten's accounts would be audited alongside those of the Harambee, and the decision to make loans to university and other tertiary education students was re-affirmed.

However for me by far the most significant moment came when I asked, naively, how many of the children in the community attended the Kindergarten. I got a puzzled look and was told they all did. Not only does this have an enormously beneficial impact on the lives of the mothers, but it also seems to indicate that starting out on the path to education has become the norm on Chole.

The next day started with a meeting with the Village Council, whose support is vital if the Chole Project is to succeed. It was interesting to hear very difficult decisions on allocating scarce resources being debated, and the level of support from the Council was very heartening. However perhaps the best thing of all was discovering that the Village Council itself has awarded vocational learning bursaries, from its own funds, to three people, to study carpentry, agriculture and motor mechanics. This seemed to be further evidence that it is becoming normal on Chole for young people to be educated.



The Village Council Chairman Marbruki Sadiki front left

With nothing planned that afternoon I headed off for a ferociously contested football match between Chole Mjini and Barcelona [sic], about which probably the less said the better – the phrases 'sick as a parrot' and 'the ref needs a guide dog' came to mind, and the offside rule clearly doesn't feature as an educational priority!



Chole Mjini players as sick as parrots at the final whistle while Barcelona celebrate

Next morning, before heading back to Dar es Salaam, there remained one more visit, to the Kindergarten to present the wonderful collection of donated teaching aids. The look on the teachers' faces as they unpacked a wealth of material said it all, and there is no doubt that the already positive impact of the Kindergarten will be enhanced further. And the timing was perfect – the teachers are about to receive Montessori refresher training.

DONATIONS IN KIND

On the front page the Chairman mentions taking teaching aids to the Kindergarten. These are a wonderful asset, but donations in kind are not always the most effective way of helping, and we would ask you to contact the Trust for advice before deciding. The general advice is:

- Gifts to the community generally as opposed to a specific individual avoid jealousy and ensure that those in greatest need benefit.
- Plan getting your gift to Chole. Unless it can be carried as a genuine gift by a visitor it risks getting caught up in import formalities and possibly incurring handling and import charges. Remember the weight limits on internal flights (unlike our Chairman!).
- If you want to help with medical supplies especially, which are always in short supply, please consider donating money. If funds are available, then Tanzania has an efficient distribution system for basic medical supplies, and the Trust will ensure that your donation is used as you intend.
- Similarly, Chole can be a harsh environment for mechanical or electronic items. Power availability is very limited, and spares and maintenance may be difficult. For example, a computer very at home in a UK office environment may not last long. It may be better to commission a local purchase.

CHOLE MJINI LODGE

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

A web search quickly brings up virtually unanimous praise for Chole Mjini Lodge as a destination for a very special holiday. The Lodge was built and is owned by Anne and Jean de Villiers (see www.cholemjini.com for the full story) but since January 2011 it has been operated by AfrikaAfrika, who combine it with their other small, stylish safari lodges in pristine wildernesses.

You can contact AfrikaAfrika at

www.afrikaafrikasafaris.com

Tel: +255 769 204159
+255 754 642232
+255 753 005442

Email: info@afrikaafrikasafaris.com

All good travel agents specialising in Africa can also give you extensive details about Chole Mjini Lodge and AfrikaAfrika's other lodges.

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

A MZUNGU ON CHOLE DURING RAMADAN by NICOLE MITCHELL

Nicole Mitchell, after finishing design technology studies at 'A' level, volunteered to spend seven weeks on Chole before university, helping design new craft products to assist the community's self sufficiency.

I've been on Chole for three and a half weeks, hoping I can make a difference to the island's craft business. My objective is to explore the potential for new craft products with the existing artisans (mat and basket weavers, woodwork makers, and artists) and to test their appeal to the tourist market. I also hope to work on presenting the products and to create surroundings in which tourists are more likely to buy. Finding new products that sell



Sample of a clutch bag, designed by Nicole and made up by Riziki

could develop a sustainable income for the people making them. As soon as I arrived I met many talented craftspeople using palm leaves to weave, coconut shell to carve products like belt buckles and bowls, or a soft canvas to create gorgeous paintings.

I also spent a week in the village to learn about Ramadan, a significant part of Islamic culture. Ramadan was, initially, a shock to the system. As an adolescent, going without food and water for over two or three hours is unimaginable, let alone thirteen and a half hours, from five o'clock in the morning until sunset at six thirty; I arranged to 'break fast' with the family of my temporary roommate, Fatuma, in the village every time the sun set.

Two days into Ramadan one could sense the village slowing down as lack of sleep took its toll. At two o'clock every night, drums ring round and Chole rises for breakfast. Nobody eats past five o'clock in the morning - leaving three hours to eat. Two o'clock may seem too far before dawn, but apparently people are more likely to wake up at two than four thirty. After eating and falling back to sleep, the village is woken again by the mosque call for prayer at five thirty. This lack of sleep, combined with no drink or food during the day - every day - wears the village down continually throughout the month.

I was very lucky to eat with Fatuma's family. Bi. Riziki, her mother, was thrilled to have a guest and we also got lots of work done as Riziki helped me create new designs to sell on to guests from the lodges in Chole and Utende. Fatuma's sister was constantly entertained by my lack of Swahili. Her children were gorgeous and, like all the children on the island, endlessly intrigued and entertained by my pale complexion, much to my amusement.

During my week with them, I learnt that the younger children don't fast, evidently, so as

not risk ill health. Men and women ate separately, just as they prayed separately, and worked separately, and only the men were allowed in the centre of the village, while the women either avoided it or covered their faces while passing. Cutlery tends not to be used, and traditionally only the right hand is used to eat; watching Fatuma eat noodles and beans, and rip chicken off the bone one handed, kept me entertained. I was given a spoon, and carefully used only my left hand to hold the bowl. After asking why they don't use the left hand, I really wished I hadn't! Fatuma, through embarrassed giggles, subtly told me that the theory was that the left hand was used to wash themselves after going to the loo*. Lovely.

** An established principle in Sharee'ah is that the right hand is considered more noble and honoured, influencing many everyday behaviours in Muslim society.*

Mzungu is Kiswahili for 'white person' or 'tourist'

Please contact the Trust to find out more about these designs, which might make wonderful Christmas presents, or if you know a retailer who may stock them.

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 a level of investment, especially in education, healthcare and facilities, beyond the capacity of a poor community, however hard it tries.

You can help 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.

- The Trustees will be happy to discuss specific projects for larger commitments. For example, two long term donors generously fund the Kindergarten.
- 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.
- Practical help; for example a few months teaching on Chole, 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
+44 (0)20 7228 9864**