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PART ONE:

The Teachers' Report

The participating schools are:

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KENYA

Preparations

This was our third visit and we felt that both Melhus vgs and Timbila High School find planning easier and more efficient – even so, we experienced that things don't always go according to plan, and bureaucracy changes its routines...

The visit in 2002 ended with the report in June, and when school started again in August a new group of students started our course "International Work" (which we plan to change into Global elective course). During the autumn they were busy organizing the "Operation A Day's Work" (OD), but our students also read Kenyan newspapers on the Internet to get up-to-date on the Kenyan presidential election. By January 2003 we knew which of the students who were going to participate, but which of the teachers were not yet decided. In the spring term we communicated through letters and also fax, since they now have a fax machine at Timbila (financed with money from "Learning by doing it together-prize" money). We exchanged pictures as well.

By the autumn term a few changes were made. We had originally planned for 6 students, but were afraid there wouldn't be enough money, and decided to reduce the number to 4 – 5 students and 2 teachers. Thus, we had letters of application and interviews to select the exchange students. Our students were very disappointed that one would have to stay at home, as they were now 6 in the group. They found out that they would try to do some fund raising to make money for the sixth student, which they did with varying results. After meeting with the parents it was decided that they would also put in some extra money. At school it was decided that Merete Wishman (in charge of the elective course) and Svein Inge Simonsen (who had contributed a lot during the return visits) would be responsible for the exchange in 2004. Kristin Melhus and Astrid Gynnild have been our very important co-workers during the whole process.

Apart from the fund raising work the students did (selling tea for the organization FORUT), and their own share, we were given money from NORAD through the FNS, and we also expect some money from the county of Melhus. Still, this is not enough, and Melhus vgs has to spend quite a lot on substitutes, living expenses, sundry costs and other. This might become a problem, since Upper Secondary schools are given less money and we are always forced to cut back on expenses. Again we used our winter holiday to keep the costs of substitutes down and also to prevent the students losing too many lessons.

The autumn term of 2003 was again busy with the OD, but the students also worked with fund raising, they had a meeting with two of the students from the 2002 exchange, they wrote letters to the Kenyan students, and they had two lessons of Kiswahili with a Kenyan lady who attends our school this year. The teachers organized meetings with the parents, as well as tickets, vaccination programme, accommodation and programme in Nairobi – and were regularly in contact with Timbila. We discussed further development of the "English Project", and two of our colleagues had their classes write contributions for this project. Jens Arne kept working on the Water Project, and Timbila sent the results from their tests. We also came up with a new idea of a small project: making a herbarium, where each school makes its own to show a representative selection of plants to exchange between the two schools. We can also make posters for decorative purposes also to be exchanged. This idea was later welcomed when we discussed it at Timbila during our stay.

The students who participated were

Øyvind Eriksen (2nd form)
Jahn Langland (2nd form)
Nils Jørgen Selbekk (2nd form)
Eli Midtaune (3rd form)
Magni Narjord (3rd form)
Linda Podsada (3rd form)

Again we booked the tickets for the return visit through Kenor Safaris for practical reasons, as tickets can be booked and payed from Norway. However it turned out that they are in the process of reorganizing, and had no office in Nairobi until late spring. For the trip to Kenya we used Flyspesialisten AS. There is now a direct flight Trondheim – Amsterdam, and we could travel to Kenya with only one stop: Trondheim – Amsterdam – Nairobi.

Two days before departure we had a letter from Timbila that contained our program for the stay. We welcomed that very much, since we could then inform the students' parents before we left.

Melhus's visit to Kenya

We departed from Trondheim Airport Vaernes very early in the morning February 15 and arrived at Kenyatta International Airport the same evening. We were heartily welcomed by both Gilbert and Samson (Who also uses the name Chege) at the airport, and we all went to the Boulevard Hotel, where we were going to spend two nights.

We had three aims for the stay in Nairobi: See to practicalities (like train tickets, visit Kenor Travel Agency, accommodation in Mombasa), visit the I.M.L.U. Center and a little sight seeing in Nairobi. Because of new regulations for vehicles (i.e. safety belts in all matatus), a lot of busses and matatus were taken out of traffic, and more people therefore travelled by train. Thus, first thing in the morning we went to the railway station to get tickets to Taveta for the next evening. Finding Kenor turned out to be more difficult, and after some searching and a lot of telephones, we found a representative who told us they were reorganizing, but could handle the tickets. We finally decided to settle for this. The rest of the day was spent queuing in Barclay's to exchange travellers' checks (to use travellers' checks is not to be recommended), walking the streets of Nairobi and having lunch. We also had our first occurrence of sickness among our students – it wouldn't be the last....

Timbila had planned for us to go to Mombasa before returning to Nairobi and Norway. We were very happy about that, since Svein Inge had a special mission at the Reef Hotel, Mombasa. Mrs Sondhi, owner of the hotel (together with her husband and son) is a childhood friend of Svein Inge's mother-in-law, and he had brought greetings, pictures and letters. After some difficulties we got through to the hotel and after telling them our story they also had rooms – it would be crowded (and cheap) – but that was fine with us.

On Tuesday we were collected at the hotel and brought to the I.M.L.U. Centre. We had a thorough introduction to their work on documenting cases of torture and helping victims of torture. They are also engaged in the work for Human Rights in Kenya in general.



Together with the staff at I.M.L.U

In the evening we entered the train for Mombasa, we got off in Voi in the middle of the night and changed to the local train to Taveta. Dinner is by the way no longer included in the ticket fare on the Mombasa train, and we had to pay extra at the train to get a meal. Shortly after arrival in Taveta Anne came to greet us, then Stephen with the bus and the boys. Merete noted that the old hotel was renovated, and was told that a new one was nearly finished! (A few days later she actually saw two back-packers too!) Ruth and Joseph also turned up, and it was really wonderful seeing them again!

Our Stay in Taveta

The programme (see appendix) for our stay was well prepared and was carried through with only slight adjustments. Small changes were made to comply with our wishes, and also because of unforeseen events, like sickness among our students. The latter resulted in Øyvind, and particularly Jahn, having fewer lessons than planned. Since Merete mostly was the one to see to the sick, she missed lessons too, which was a pity since she had been determined to attend more classes this time and to spend some more time in the staff room. Svein Inge and Merete also spent some hours in Taveta town twice during our stay. We visited the Mayor to whom we had greetings and small gifts from both Melhus vgs and the Mayor of Melhus County, Erling Bøhle. Bøhle had also asked us to bring greetings and some money (from the sale of cassettes with a Tavetan church choir) for Mr Colletta, eldest son of Penina Colletta, former Mayor of Taveta, so we visited him and his family. Then there were greetings, letters, pictures and drawings from Gimse Lower

Secondary School to be delivered at Timbila Primary. This was follow-up work on behalf of our neighbouring school in Melhus.



Timbila Primary

We had to go to the bank once, which was rather time consuming, and we went to the Nurse's office because she had invited us, and to pay her for her kind services when Jahn was at his sickest and Magni also needed treatment for her urinal infection. We also spent a few hours at Taveta General Hospital with Jahn, where we were well taken care of. These tasks/missions resulted in fewer hours spent at school for the grown-ups than for the students. Apart from these excursions we spent our time with our own and the Kenyan students, with Gilbert and Chege – and “the ladies at the back”, as Svein Inge named our colleagues who catered for us and saw to it that we had lovely meals every day. Thank you Munga, Anne, Cecilia, Ruth and Patience!

Leaving Timbila, Taveta

We said our good byes early Wednesday morning and arrived in Voi before lunchtime. There we were going on a safari and catching the train for Mombasa. Gilbert had booked rooms at the Distarr Hotel – same as 4 years ago – a good and very cheap hotel. In the ground floor café Merete was surprised to see familiar faces, as Jessie and John, two of the students from the exchange two years ago, suddenly rose and greeted her! John even greeted in Norwegian, he kept up his Norwegian vocabulary by reading local Melhus newspapers on the Internet! It was really lovely seeing them again.

Before the safari Svein Inge, Chege, Gilbert and Merete saw to practicalities like money and train tickets, while the students were allowed to have a look at Voi on their own. Our chauffeur Tito and assistant Godfrey repaired an electrical problem in the bus, so that they could bring the Kenyan students and (?) back to Timbila in the evening. But first we all had an exiting safari in the Tsavo West, Voi gate.

We arrived in Mombasa the next morning, and at the Reef Hotel we were given excellent rooms (for the price of cheaper ones!), and they said Mrs Sondhi would be there any minute. Svein Inge had a short chat with her when she arrived, and he presented greetings and pictures from back home. Our students were allowed to have the next hours off, while the teachers went to Mombasa to buy train tickets for Nairobi the next evening, and to get application forms for passports. This done we went for a guided tour of Fort Jesus, since it was situated just next to the emigration office, and it is really worth a visit.

During our stay in Mombasa we all went to the Bombolulu handicapped Center and we visited the SOS Children's Village, situated within walking distance from the hotel. The grown-ups had discussions on practicalities of the return visit and on further development of the Exchange Programme. Mrs Sondhi joined us at one point and it was really interesting to listen to her story about how she, a young girl from Levanger, Norway, came to marry a Kenyan Indian, move to Kenya and build a hotel. She was now in her 70ies and had lived in Mombasa since her early 20'ties.

Back in Nairobi we did some shopping, bought more medicine for Magni, and Svein Inge took those of the students who wanted it to the City market. At the Hotel Boulevard Merete discussed the possibility that the hotel could serve as an intermediate concerning the tickets for the return visit. It was agreed that this would be ok and we would make bookings for rooms and arrangements for the tickets by e-mail later.

PART TWO:

The Students' Report

Sunday 15.02.04

All students and teachers except Øyvind met at school at 04.30am, and together we drove to Trondheim Airport Værnes. Øyvind met us there. We checked in, and got on the plane to Amsterdam. The flight took 2 hours, and when we came to Schiphol, we found the gate where the plane to Nairobi was going from. We waited there for an hour, and then we went on the plane. The flight took 7 hours, and we watched movies, listened to music, slept and ate. We landed in Nairobi in the evening, and we met two of the teachers, Gilbert and Samson, from Timbila high school there. After we had said hello to each other we went to the hotel where we checked in, had dinner and then went to bed.

Monday 16.02.04

We got up at 9.00, ate breakfast, and then we changed into swimming suits and went outside to the pool. The teachers went to town, to the railway station to buy tickets and to talk to someone in a travel agency about tickets for the Kenyan students for their visit to Norway. Later the teachers came back, and we all walked to town to eat. After we had been eating we walked around in the city looking on different things, like the Jomo Kenyatta Conference Centre, the park where Kenyatta is buried, and we also passed the place where the American Embassy used to be, it has now been made into a memorial park. When we came back to the hotel, we just relaxed until the dinner later that night. After dinner we went to bed.

Tuesday 17.02.04

We got up at 8.00, had breakfast and went to pack our things. We had to check out of the hotel by 10.00. At 11.00 we went to the I.M.L.U-Centre, (Independent Medico Legal Unit). We went into an office where we talked with a woman called Dinah. She told us what kind of work they do, how they help people, and other practical information about the centre. It was started during the Moi period to help people that had been harassed by the police. The Centre could offer both medical treatment and legal help. After she had been telling us what the centre does, we listened to one of the lawyers at the centre, who told us about some cases and the process of solving the cases. He showed us pictures taken of people who had been exposed to torture, and it was really shocking to see.



We also gave a donation to the centre. After we had talked to some of the people working there, we went outside and took pictures with the whole staff. After that we took taxis back to the hotel. The taxi trip was scary, they drove really fast and they didn't care about the people trying to cross the streets.

Later that day we went to eat lunch in town, the same place as the day before. When we came back from town we relaxed by the hotel pool. Around 6 o'clock we went to the train station, the train left at half past 6. We were supposed to have dinner at the train, but when we sat in the dining car a man came and checked our tickets to see if we had paid for the dinner. It turned out that our tickets said that we hadn't paid for it, and the teachers started to negotiate with the man. After a while we got the dinner. I've never been so anxious about eating something as I was on that train, because we cleaned the forks, knives and spoons with the napkins, and the napkin got really dirty. We didn't quite believe that they had been properly washed. After we had been eating, we went back to the compartments, where we relaxed for a while, and then we went to bed. Around 11 o'clock the night watch opened our door, and he was a bit angry because we hadn't locked the door properly. We told him that we had tried, but it didn't work. He asked if he could give it a try, and he made it on the first try! We felt a bit stupid, and he asked us if we didn't lock the doors in Norway. After he left we managed to lock the door, and we fell asleep again. At around 4 o'clock we woke up, because we were going to change train in Voi. At 6 o'clock the train was in Voi, and we got on the train to Taveta.

Wednesday 18.02.04

In Voi we changed trains, and went to Taveta. The train was slow and the distance was long, and we were tired, so most of the students spent a lot of the time travel sleeping. But when we didn't sleep, there were a lot of things to watch. Beautiful nature, wild animals, masais, and local people.

When we finally reached Taveta it was really HOT. And there were a lot of people staring at us. Wednesdays are always market day, and we got one hour at the market. The Kenyan students who were going to come to Norway showed us the market, and told us about the articles the people were selling.



In the Taveta market you can buy almost anything!

It was everything from fruits and fish to shoes and clothes. It was very different from the stores in Norway! After one hour at the market we went to the school, in a very old buss on a very bumpy road.

There, at the school, we introduced ourselves to the teachers, and they told us a bit about them selves and which subjects they teach. Then we were shown the house we were going to live in the next week. The house was small and looked really nice. But the toilet was in the garden, and was very different from what we are used to from Norway, because it was in a tiny little house, and there was no seat, just a hole in the floor. After carrying the luggage to the house, we went for lunch. It was served in the chemistry lab at school, and there were a lot of people there to great us welcome. All of them introduced themselves and some of them gave a speech, to wish us welcome. It was really nice, but none of us ate so much, because we were feeling very tired and a bit sick.

After that we went bathing. It was a very, very bumpy road, and we were afraid the bus would turn around. But when we came to Njoro Springs to bathe and look at a biology project, it started raining.



The water project in Njoro Springs

And since the road was not a proper road, Tito the driver, was afraid that the road should get too muddy to get home again. Therefore we dropped the bathing and went back to school. There we got tea, and wrote in our diaries.

Thursday 19.02.04

This day started really early. Actually we woke up at 05.45. It had been a special night, with a lot of noises. Especially the dogs outside our window made a lot of noise. They were barking almost the whole night. So, Linda and I were very tired of listening to them. But, the breakfast made it all better. It was some sort of porridge, and cookies. After breakfast we went for morning assembly. There we all had to present us self. It was really scary! Then Gilbert preached about the bible, Adam and Eve, and temptation. It was interesting to hear other peoples' views on the bible. The principle also said some words to welcome us again, and about the new week. Then it was time for English lesson. Anne, one of the ladies that was cooking for us was the teacher. In the lesson she was dramatising a story about 3 silly cows. Anne was and old grandfather. We also took part in the story: Me and Magni were listening grandchildren, and Øyvind, Nils and Jan were her learning young sons. It was funny and interesting. The moral in the story was that if you stick together you are stronger than alone.



English lesson with Anne as the old man.

After the lesson the Kenyan boys wanted to take pictures with us. It was really crazy, and they didn't let us go before Anne, the teacher came and rescued us. After the English lesson, it was Kiswahili with Ruth. It was interesting, but difficult to learn, cause it's so different from Norwegian. The topic was how to greet in Kiswahili. Kenyans are more polite and respectful than what we are used to. And there were a lot of different ways to great people, depending on whom you were going to greet.

After the Kiswahili lesson we went for tea and Øyvind became sick. We all were very afraid that it was something really bad that had happened to him, because he was just lying on the floor shaking and having cramps, and he couldn't breathe. He said he needed to drink and was given coke and Svin Inge massaged his stiffened fingers and legs. After a while he got better, but he didn't follow us to class. It was only I, Linda and Magni that went, because the boys wanted to rest. This class was a History class, and Linda and I were going to have a presentation about Norwegian political history. It was really scary. But we did it! After the presentation, we had to answer a lot of questions. It was supposed to be about Norwegian politics but turned out to be about our families, addresses and so on.

Then it was lunchtime. It was spaghetti with meat. I think most of the students were very sceptical to the meal, but it was ok. After the lunch we went to Njoro springs. In the bus to the springs Wilson, one of the Kenyan boys gave Magni a letter about how much he liked her, and how much he appreciated our stay in Kenya. In Njoro springs the Kenyan students showed us their work on the water project that Melhus vgs and Timbila High School take part in. After looking at the water project we went bathing. It was fun, but not all the Kenyan students bathed, because they had never learned how to swim.



The Norwegian students found the water quite pleasant, but I think the Kenyan boys thought it was too cold. After being there for a while, we went back to school. And at 8 pm Linda and I went to bed!

Friday 20.02.04

I woke up to the sound of Jahn throwing up again in the next room. It was another day here in Kenya. I didn't feel so good myself either. But today it was scheduled participation in a CRE (Christian Religious Education), which I was looking forward to. So, after breakfast everyone except from Jahn went to the CRE class. The teacher informed us that the curriculum for the 4 years the subject was taken was as follows: Year one: bible studies, year two: the church, year three: African religious heritage and the fourth year: contemporary Christianity. The teacher then focused on the latter subject. She mentioned some of the things that the class dealt with: Abortion, divorce, mercy killing and corporal punishment. She also asked us for our opinion. This was a bit tricky because I disagreed totally, but in Kenya it seems you're not supposed to disagree with your teacher. I felt I couldn't speak my mind, so when asked I just said "interesting", which was true anyway. I suppose I was experiencing a cultur clash.

We were also to attend the physic class, but I was so tired that I went to bed after the tea break, while Jahn who was feeling a bit better, attended this class. After the classes we had some lunch. During the lunch the Kenyan students came. Then we had a kind of meeting outside of our house. They had some questions about Norway and some letters to give us. It turned out that they had studied Norwegian with the help from some "learn Norwegian" tapes the students from a previous exchange had brought. So some of the letters were actually in Norwegian. I was quite impressed. Such commitment seemed extraordinary to me. We also wrote in their note books. They had made forms in some notebooks, forms like we have in our school-organizers. I used the opportunity to check out what the Kenyans had written. It was similar to our writings, except from the "Hates:" part. We Norwegians were somewhat shocked to see that some of the Kenyan hate-lists were made of "people who don't follow the word of God" and "prostitutes". We were more focused on things like "a flat soda" and "getting up early". I encountered religious influence here.

After the lunch and the chat with the students we all entered "our" bus and drove to see a Maasai-village. One of the students at Timbila was son of the chieftain in this "village" or homestead. It consisted of an enclosure with about 5 huts, one for the chief and one for each of his wives. The chief was the father of all the children in the homestead. "The village" was in other words his family; a very patriarchal way of organizing a society. The chieftain was also one of this region's richest men, with 3000 cows. The cows were herded by the young men in the family. Many of homestead's women were sitting on the ground outside the enclosure making jewelry when we arrived. We learned that some of it was for a wedding. The girl who is to be wed was there. She was very young, and wore a triangle on her forehead to symbolize that she was circumcised. The village was also surrounded by some baobab-trees. The biggest trees I have ever seen. And nearby was "Slaughter-hill", where a fierce battle took place in the First World War, between the British colony Kenya and the German Tanzania. Then I thought of how the colonies were used as pawns in the imperialistic game, and how this had impoverished the countries.



Maasai women making necklaces

We were shown around in the village. The standards were something of another world. The houses were made of cow dung and clay. Inside the houses it was as dark as it can get. And the number of flies was impressive. Apparently, the Maasais believed that the cows could find back home, when the flies were around. And as the tour was coming to an end some Maasais started to dance. I participated a little at the end. It was fun. And the old woman there thought it was very funny. Suddenly she gave me a hug. Then some of the older boys came home. They showed us a little Maasai-jumping. And as we were leaving in our bus the old woman came into the bus. And she wouldn't leave before she was given some money.



Young Maasai men. The third from the left is a student at Timbila High School

In the evening Magni, Linda and myself joined some of the students in a basketball match. Linda hurt her finger and Magni scored a goal. After the match the students took pictures of us. And on our way back from the court I was invited to eat dinner with the students. But I preferred eating the food "the women at the back" had prepared for us. After dinner I went down to the school to join them in their night preps. That's when they do their homework. I wanted to speak to the other students and find out more about everything in Kenya. I went from classroom to classroom speaking with as many I could, and in every classroom there were three students who wanted me to come to THEIR classroom. A few asked for things. There was one in particular who wanted me to send him a camera from Norway. Others asked for my pants or shirt. But they all respected a no, so there were no big problems.

After my visit there it was time to go to bed. As usual it was too hot to get any sleep. And as I lay there the dogs started to bark. And I knew that the cocks would start making loud noises in a short time. I lay there feeling the heat and thinking about different ways of killing animals. And then, somehow, I fell asleep.

Saturday 21.02.04

The first thing I did when I got up was to start worrying about the African night. This was the day we were going to spend the night with somebody's family. Two students only. After breakfast we had to wait while Jahn was taken to the hospital for some checking. Before they returned the bus picked us up and drove us to Taveta, to visit the market. The size of the thing was still impressive. You could really get anything there. We were shown Chege's shop. He was selling Tupperware-like items. Then we walked around with the Kenyan students as guides. Chege had once again mentioned to the students the hats that I wanted. So they took me to a hat-shop. There I got my hands on five nice hats for 200 shillings. This was, as Chege had told me, A LOT cheaper than in Nairobi, where they wanted 1000 shillings for two hats. I was a bit touched by how much effort he put in getting me these hats. I can't say anything but that I felt as a king. The only problem was my possibility to repay the service. I hope that he has some wishes that I can help him fulfill when he comes to Norway.

Then we were loose at the market again. We once again passed the fish-shops (as we did on our arrival). The smell was extreme. The fact that people ate it was unbelievable. We also passed a shop that was playing pop-music, exactly the same pop-music that we have in Norway. I noticed that Magni wasn't feeling so good. Her bladder was hurting so much that tears were running. There wasn't so much I could do with that, but we tried to figure out what was best for her. The Kenyan students took her to a toilet, then Merete came and they went to the chemist's. Eventually the worst pain passed. Then we stopped at some clothing-shops, where we got some skirts and kangas. Øyvind was busy getting hold of a masai-knife.

After having dropped Jahn and Magni who weren't feeling too well, and Merete, at school, we started on our long journey around the countryside.

We ended up at a huge farm. This was the farm of the youngest of Jomo Kenyatta's wives. We stopped by some office buildings, where we had our packed lunch, cake and bananas. After the lunch we drove further. We passed some of the housing for the workers. We also had a little stop at something that looked like a HQ for goats. I don't know if they have periods for mating as the Norwegian farmers, but it seemed like the goats had just finished their pregnancy period. There was a small compound with dozens of baby goats. We even got to see some 1-hour fresh ones!

After this stop we drove some more. I was getting pretty tired of driving now because it was bumpy and noisy. But the landscape was beautiful and the company uplifting, so I managed. We drove and drove until we got to a "tented camp" at the east-end of Tsavo. This was a camp for tourists. It looked exclusive. We got a guided tour around a pond in the camp. Here we got quite close to crocs, hippos and some strange birds.



We came quite close to the crocodiles!

But perhaps the most spectacular was that we found a WC. It was I who figured out that such a place had to have a WC, and when I got my suspicions confirmed, everybody suddenly felt the need to use the toilet.

I was a bit puzzled by the fact that the Kenyan boys seemed to have little knowledge about the African wildlife. They were amongst other things wondering if the hippo was a flesh- or plant-eater. There are not many Norwegians who don't know the diet of elks, bears or reindeers. Another thing was the fact that the climatic differences between Norway and Kenya seemed incomprehensible to them. They were frequently asking if we had lions, baobab-trees or elephants in Norway. I think this difference can be explained with the Norwegian tradition of nature-documentaries and the focus on wildlife, foreign and domestic, both in school and in other mediums, such as the Norwegian children's TV.

Then it was back in the bus for more driving. This time we drove to a lake called Lake Challa. This is an old volcanic lake. The crater of the old volcano has been filled with water. We were not allowed to swim here, because Merete had heard of a croc-attack. Sharif, who lived nearby, ensured us that there were no crocs, and that that the last attack took place several years ago. But we were still not allowed to swim. But the view over the lake with the surrounding forest-covered hillsides was quite spectacular. Then some more driving! Only this time it was back to the school. There we had a short break to prepare for the African-night. I was a bit nervous. Øyvind and I were going to spend the night with Vincent's family. Vincent assured me that there was nothing to be afraid of several times. I was still somewhat afraid. And suddenly it was time to go. Jahn and Merete stayed home. Jahn was too sick, and Merete had to be the nurse.

As it turned out there really was little to be afraid of. I guess I had a picture in my mind of mud-huts and bugs the size of footballs. But Vincent had a big brick-house and the bugs were much smaller than footballs. We met big parts of his family.



Øyvind and Nils Jørgen visiting Vincent's family

His father and mother, of course, his blind grandmother, a couple of his elder brothers and a aunt I think, in addition to several neighbors. We were served stew for dinner. Quite used to that by now. After dinner I had to use the toilet. It turned out that he was renovating his current toilet, so a temporary one was set up on the nearby field. This was difficult. A hole in the ground with some boards surrounding it is very different from what I'm used to. But if you have to go, you have to go. I could elaborate this event in many pages, but this is hardly the time. But I can mention the feeling of invincibility that came after the incident.

The rest of the night we spent listening to Vincent' father's stories. He had stories of masais stealing cattle, undercover-work in the police force and wild safaris. It turned out that Dando was an old police officer. At the IMLU centre we had heard many bad things about the Kenyan police, but Dando had to be the exception that confirmed a possible rule. Before we went to bed we exchanged gifts. The family gave us a plaster-picture and we gave them a book, a calculator and a model of a troll. We spent some time explaining to them that it was a creature of the imagination, not something that we had to look out for when wandering in the forest. It was so quiet here in comparison to the school. No dogs, nor roosters. I slept as a log.

Sunday 22.02.04

Waking up after a good night sleep at Gilbert and Patience's house we were ready for a new day in Taveta. We had spent the African night in their and their three sons' home. It was very interesting to experience an African family in an African home and we had the opportunity to have interesting conversations about life generally in Kenya compared to Norway. We shared experiences and a lot is different. At breakfast this morning, Linda and I presented some gifts we had brought from Norway, drawing equipment for the kids and a book about Trondheim for the parents. We started to look in the book and we totally forgot the time. Mr Gilbert is coming to Norway and he thought it was very interesting to hear about the city and to look at the pictures. Then, when we suddenly looked at the time, it was almost half past ten, and we were meant to be in church at ten. But the question about time is not an issue in Taveta, as in most parts of this continent.

Going to church is very important for the majority of the Kenyan citizens. The social feeling you meet there is almost as important as the message the minister is serving. We walked a fair bit before we arrived at the church; it was a very different church from what I am used to here in Norway. The room was an open house made of corrugated iron; people were standing there and praising the lord. On stage, there was a choir lead by a lady singing so loud you could hear it from far way. The atmosphere was amazing. Everybody were singing, talking and dancing. It was so full of life, and as a non-Christian, I found myself dancing and repeating the words the choir was singing. At the end of the service, Gilbert went up to the stage and wanted us Norwegians to say something. We were not prepared, but it did not matter. We introduced ourselves, said the words we knew in Swahili and everybody was listening to us. That was the only moment during the whole ceremony it was quiet. When we were finished, everybody clapped and prayed for us. It was such an impressing moment, it was very touching and I really felt the spirit of humanity and friendliness you can feel in this society. After church, we went back to school. On the way back we visited the market to buy some bananas. We ate a lot of bananas!

One of the Norwegian students had become more ill during the night and a helpful nurse had arrived to check on him.



A sick student, a worried teacher and a soothing nurse

It was a little bit scary when he was so ill, but at the same time I felt that we were taken care of and it was going to be ok. Unfortunately the illness took many days from him, and he missed out on experiences. The other students tried to film everything and take pictures to tell him everything when we came back. In the afternoon, we were going to have an international football match between the Norwegians and students from Timbila high school. Unfortunately some of the Norwegian students felt a bit sick, and they could not play. But they were a fantastic support to the ones who were fighting for the ball. The sandals were flying, people were playing barefoot and the energy was on top. The students amazed me; they are very fit, strong and run really fast. I tried to conquer some of them, but I had to give up, before I had run ten meters they were on the other side of the field. We had dinner and then an early night.

Monday, 23.02.04

Today we were going to lessons again. First there was flag-raising at assembly, an important and solemn ceremony. The scouts march before and after while singing the national anthem, and all of the students attend. It is a bit different from home, where you often can see Norwegians standing with their hands in their pockets while singing the national anthem. In Kenya you have to show respect for you country and its history. I can still remember the first lines of the song, "God of all creations, bless our land and nation" It was a song sung with dignity and it made a big impression on me.

First class was CRE, Christian Religious Education. We had chosen this subject because we knew that the religion has a very important role in this society, and we were curious about how they teach the topics and how the students look at things that concern the questions about it. Today's topic was marriage and that it was a part of the rites of passage together with birth, the invitation to adulthood and death. We heard about different views on marriage and how it is meant to be. Some of the expressions were strange for me, and I do not know if I could accept them. But I know I have to think that this is another culture and other things are important and have a value. For example that a man can have more than one wife, that most of the boys wanted a wife that had gone through circumcision, and that the man had to be older than the lady. This is not relevant in the Norwegian society, but very interesting to hear about.

Next class was SEE, Social and Ethical Education. A social science where we thought we could look more into the Kenyan society and how things are working there. The topic of the day was drugs. It was a general overview on what drugs there are, what is the most common in their country, why people are using it and what the consequences are. The teaching was very similar to the one we have in Norway. And the regulation in Kenya is also very strict, as we have. The difference lies in how the rules are being followed up. In Norway this is strict, while in Kenya it is not it seems. Many people grow narcotic plants, even though it is illegal, and many people use it.

The third lesson we had that day was an economic class. Unfortunately I was not feeling too well and had to relax a little bit. But I think the lesson went very well. One of the students from Norway had a presentation about oil and the environment in Norway. The students of Timbila found this very interesting and asked a lot of questions about the topic.

After lunch we went to visit a factory that processed fibers from the sisal plant. We saw how the plants were grown and how the fiber was extracted, dried, cleaned and packed. The fiber was a useful raw-material. Out of this people could weave anything from rope to purses. Unfortunately the factory was old in comparison to the newer factories and was facing closing, since their old and inefficient machines didn't allow them to compete with the prices of the bigger, newer factories. The impression was that safety wasn't as important as it is in Norway. About 10 people, with no safety equipment, operated the machine that extracted the fiber. Nor the machine had any form of emergency-stops, safety-bars or similar safety-measures that I know from Norway. But the factory was also selling tobacco. That was going to replace the fiber-production. The smell in the tobacco storehouse made the most of us a bit dizzy.

Later that day we went up to the local water works, where we had a swim in the clear spring water. It had a Norwegian temperature and it was very refreshing after the hot day at school. We became celebrities for all of the gorgeous children that gathered around us to look at the pale Norwegian bodies. When we came back and had our dinner we decided to go down to the school area and participate in the student's preps. Every day after school until about nine o'clock at night the students sit at school and do their homework. When we were there, I do not think a lot of homework was done. We were dragged into classrooms and asked about everything. We talked and asked, answered and laughed. We had a nice time and it was interesting to see how they were working with their assignments.

Tuesday 24.03.2004

After breakfast, we had some spare time before the program. We all thought this was a very good opportunity to wash our many and very dirty clothes. After this quiet start, we were going to a nearby farm, which was a banana plantation. I think it was Michael's parents who owned this plantation. We saw how the workers lived, and how the plantation was. We also looked at some other plants that grew between the banana trees. Among them were chilli, pow-pow, avocado, lemon, cassava and many more. I tasted some of them: lemon, cassava, banana (surprise!), chilli and more. I really regret that I tasted the chilli, because it was extremely hot!



Workers at the banana plantation

We were told that the workers, who carried banana bunches, were paid 5 Kenyan shilling for each bunch, or 10 shillings if they carried them a little bit further. Imagine that: carrying 30 kilos with bananas for 10 minutes, and only get 10ksh. Then 10 minutes back, and repeat the job all day long! The world is so unfair. They work much harder than many in Norway, and still they are so underpaid.

We had lots of spare time before the "fare-well-party" and we spent some time with the Kenyan students. The party took place in the dining hall where we were seated along the sides in the front of everybody. I think it was very frightening, because everybody was looking at us. The scouts had a little performance and everybody sang the national anthem. Then the drama group at Timbila performed a play, then Merete presented Melhus VGS, and Magni had her presentation about the pupils' council. Then a boy had a little acrobatic performance, followed by my and Nils Jørgen's Norwegian rap. Then the drama group performed a traditional dance. After that, all the Norwegian students sang "the

ko-ko-song", then episode II of the drama group. Then we sang "Se torsken", and the Head Master, Mister Kimaro, held a speech afterwards. We were given a kanga each as a present. Then Svein Inge held a speech and gave presents to different persons. Eli and Linda went up on the stage and told Sharif to come up. They gave a brand new football and a pump to the students at Timbila. Then Mister Kimaro was given a medallion from the county of Melhus as a greeting from the mayor. After the performance we sat down under "our tree" and talked with the Kenyan students. We gave each a wallet and a t-shirt as fare well gifts.



Magni talking about the students' council

Wednesday 25.03.04

We got up early, because we were supposed to leave Timbila and Taveta and head for Voi. The ride took 3 hours, and the roads were extremely bad. I was very happy when we reached some tarmac, but the road quality didn't get so much better. When we arrived in Voi, we carried the luggage to the hotel room and went down in the restaurant to eat. I ordered beef curry, but this time it was much hotter than it was last time I ordered that.

Safari! Oh how I had been looking forward to that! To see lions and rhinos and giraffes! We were picked up by to Toyotas and headed for the Tsavo West National Park. When we arrived, the driver went in to fix the tickets or something like that. After a while, I began thinking that if we had to wait a little bit longer, we weren't able to visit the park before nightfall. Fortunately I was wrong.

5 minutes after arrival we saw an elephant, and I went crazy with excitement! I thought this was so great! I had only seen Africa's animals on TV before, and this went beyond all my expectations. There was a rumour that a lion was eating a prey, so we checked it out, but the lion was gone. Then some long, hot minutes followed without any interesting animals, and I thought the rest of the safari would become very disappointing. The driver brought us to a waterhole, and on the way we saw extremely many elephants, and some other cool animals. At the waterhole we saw some more animals, but not so many. On the way back towards the gate, we came across some female lions that were hunting. I just say one word: awesome!



Hunting lionesses

When we came back to the hotel, it was time for the last good-byes, so we just sat there talking for a long while. Gilbert and Chege were coming with us to Mombasa. We also met one of the former school exchange students in the hotel restaurant.

Thursday 26.02.04

I woke up at 03:25am. I had overslept! There was a lot of stress to get out and get inside a taxi. All this for no use, because the train was 2 hours delayed. After some trouble with the tickets, all the students were placed in a compartment meant for 4! Around 11 a.m. we arrived in Mombasa.

My first impression of Mombasa was, believe it or not: HOT!!! We found a taxi, and headed for our hotel. We drove for a long time in an area with a lot of luxurious hotels etc before we arrived at Reef Hotel. I couldn't believe my own eyes

when I saw it. It was the greatest hotel I've ever seen. "Unfortunately", they had only one room at hand for the students: the Hotel Suite! We were so happy that every hour we had been awake in the nights, every hour with malaria, and every single degree of discomfort was worth it. It reminded me of paradise or something. It was so great! The best thing about the suite was the air conditioning. I think we had around 15-20° C in our room. Outside there were several pools, two bars, jacuzzi and a huge snow-white beach as long as the eye could see.

After having washed, bathed and relaxed for a while we went to visit Bombolulu, a workshop where handicapped persons learn a craft and make handicrafts that is sold in the centre shop. I thought this shop was so good, that I bought all my souvenirs there.

I spent the rest of the evening having dinner and relax. Marvellous!



Making leather sandals at Bombolulu

Friday 27.02.04

When we woke up this morning, we were still in Mombassa. The same place we went to bed last evening. We got up at eight thirty and went for breakfast. The breakfast was very good. We had to be out of the rooms at ten, so after breakfast we had to pack our things. We got another room we could use to store our things for the rest of the day.

The teachers got up earlier than us and left after breakfast to go to the city to arrange some papers that the Kenyan students and teachers needed to get to Norway in April. In the meanwhile, we, the students, relaxed at the hotel, mostly by the pool. Nils took the opportunity to get his hair fixed with dreadlocks. It took about three to four hours. The others relaxed in and by the pool.

Most of us, I believe, skipped lunch. This would soon prove to be a bad thing to do. Around a quarter to three we all, students and teachers, walked to the SOS-children's village that was not far from the hotel. There we got a guided tour around the "village" and got to see how and where the children lived, what kind of children that came there, their education system, some information about "SOS-mothers" and other information about what they did there. At the end we all donated some money to the children's village. The impression I got from the children's village was that the children there seemed to be very lucky. It looked like they were better off than many children in Kenya, even though they didn't have a real mother and father. They seemed to be very happy and that's nice.

The tour around the SOS-children's village lasted for about two hours and we were suppose to take a taxi from the hotel to the train station, and travel by train to Nairobi at six thirty. When we got back to the hotel it was only one hour before we were supposed to leave, and they weren't exactly quick at making food at the hotel lunch bar, so though we didn't have time to have dinner. Nils and I took the chance and ordered dinner. We asked if they could speed it up. And they did. But the others didn't have dinner.

Before we left some of us bought some bottled water to drink on the train. At the railway station we said our farewells to Gilbert and Samson. They were going to stay in Mombasa another day to fix some papers needed for their trip to Norway. There was a lot of paperwork needed to get the Kenyans passports and visas. The train left at about seven.

Besides skipping lunch and almost missing dinner, it was a great day. The visit at SOS-children's village was really interesting. It was nice to see how the money donated by people and companies are being used.

Saturday 28.02.04

A guy walking through the train striking a triangle woke us up. It was the breakfast signal. It had been an uneasy night. I'll never get used to sleeping on a moving train. The breakfast was good: Eggs, bacon, a sausage and bread. After breakfast it was just to sit and wait for the train to arrive in Nairobi. From the train we saw lots of animals, ostriches, antelopes, giraffes – and some of the slum areas in the outskirts of Nairobi. It was a very big area. From the railway station we took taxis back to Hotel Boulevard. One of the taxi drivers was also a priest.

At the hotel we (the guys) had to wait for around one hour before we got our room. But at least we got one. Then we relaxed by the pool and did nothing until lunch at two-three o'clock. We had lunch in a restaurant in the city, and afterwards some of us did some souvenir shopping at the city market. It was a complete chaos! People were practically hanging over your shoulder trying to sell you things. But we managed to buy something and get out of there in one piece. We also stopped by some quieter souvenir shops.

After dinner we had a meeting where we talked about what we had experienced on the trip and what impressions we were left with. We also divided the days between us for report writing.

Sunday 29.02.04

We had breakfast at nine thirty. After breakfast we had to pack our things and be ready to leave the hotel rooms at ten. We stored our things in the hotel luggage room. After packing and moving our luggage we rented a car and went sightseeing in Nairobi. At first we went to the rich areas and saw how the rich people in Nairobi lived. We also saw the house of ex-president Moi (or the property at least, there were a lot of brick walls and trees blocking our view). Some of the houses were relics from the time Kenya was colonized by Great Britain. Walls surrounded the properties, with barbed wire on top. On some walls there were shards of glass molded on top to keep trespassers out.

About 750 000 people live in the Kibera slum in Nairobi. For tourists it's dangerous to go out of the cars, so we had to stay in the car and keep the windows shut. It made quite an impression to see so many badly build houses and so many poor people. 750 000 people are a lot of lives. Some of the areas we drove through were former slum-areas. These were areas that were in the progress of becoming ordinary areas. There were companies building apartment houses and most of the people living in these areas had some form of work. It wasn't the government that was building houses or was trying to fix the place up. It was private companies who took the initiative.

After the sightseeing we visited the Kenyan National Museum. Here we saw different African animals, different Masai tools and other things from the Masai culture. We also saw an exhibition about the first human beings and our evolution, geographical conditions in Kenya and Kenyan art. There were a lot of different things to see. For instance I noticed there was a giant bust of Mahatma Gandhi there. The museum was only a hundred meters from our hotel, so we walked back.

There was a small inner conflict in our group about where we were going to eat lunch. Some of us wanted to eat at the hotel restaurant and others wanted to go down to the city to eat. It ended up with Merete, Magni, Linda and Øyvind eating at the hotel restaurant, while Svein Inge, Nils, Eli and I went into the city to eat. On our way back from lunch we visited a mosque. Then we went back to the hotel and relaxed for a few hours before we took a taxi to the airport.

At the airport Svein Inge had to bribe a security-guy to get his Maasai-knives into the airport building.

Thoughts and Reflections

The People

I think that the western culture can learn a whole lot from the African society about how to treat other people and how to relax. People were always friendly, and took their time to greet every person they meet. You can't tell anyone about Kenya without mentioning the incredible hospitality we experienced. The Kenyans did everything in their power to make us feel at home.

I noticed their attitude towards the female participants in this project. Eli, Linda and Magni all, to some extent, felt that the boys were somewhat pushy. I also got a lot of questions about their status at home. "Does she have a boyfriend?" "Is that your girlfriend?" I believe this has something to do with the separating of gender in Kenya. This was a all-boys school. The only friends they have are boys. Then, the interaction with the opposite gender has only one purpose: get a partner. This is different from Norway. Here boys and girls interact in all fields. So the Norwegian girls of course found the Kenyan boys to be quite aggressive and single-minded. This was no surprise, Merete had warned them before we left. I think some of the girls paid little respect to this. Even I thought that they were out of line on occasions.

The Kenyan people's behaviour is admirable and that helped us Norwegians to be a bit friendlier. The Kenyan people are friendly, and open, and caring. One of the many good memories I have is the wakening up sound, the sound of the ladies happily talking and laughing while making breakfast. They were called "the ladies at the back" because they were there the whole day (except when they were teaching or taking care of their own family) making our day wonderful. The atmosphere around them made everybody happy. Also, if someone of us didn't feel well, the caring and help was very good.



Nils Jørgen, Cecilia and Magni

I also noticed that the Kenyans' understanding of time is different than us in Norway. The people in Kenya are much nicer than people in Norway.

One of the biggest impressions I'm left with after the trip is that the people are very friendly. They took good care of us, they spent hours cooking our food, they sacrificed their spare time just to make sure that we were ok and had everything we needed.

The best thing about the Kenyans is their positive way to look at the life and their polite attitude.

But, maybe they have a too laid back relationship with time. Kenya in one word is, believe it or not: waiting.

Another impression I got was that they took their education dead seriously.

Politics and religion

Some said that even if the government changed, the corrupt system under the government never did. This I think is scary, but I hope it will change in time.

Something that I became aware of during the stay was the role of religion in Kenya. I hadn't given this any thought before leaving. But as we attended the CRE class, spoke to the students and noticed all the churches and other expression of being religious I started thinking about it. I think that the many problems Kenyans face make them seek religion as a comfort. An explanation for things. Everyone seemed to have a very solid religious platform. Every student attended a special church, knew a lot of their religion and had adapted some values and ideas from their religion. But then, in the next minute, they were listening to Eminem and talking about their many, many sexual relationships. But they all were surprised to learn that I was an atheist. It simply wasn't an option in their traditions.

The poverty

One of the things I was anticipating to see and understand was what poverty is and to experience a development country first hand. I particularly remember the street children in Nairobi. How some of them were just lying on the street sniffing glue. And the difficulty of saying no when they begged. How sad their eyes were. We saw East-Africa's biggest slum. But we also saw that there was progress. How former slums were developing. I was perhaps hoping that we would see more of the poverty issue while in Kenya. Visit some kind of project or organization who work with such an issue.

What struck me and gave the biggest impression was the poverty in Kenya. There are a lot more poor people in Kenya than in Norway. Like when we visited the slum in Nairobi, Kibera, it really gave us a picture on how bad the conditions are.

What made the biggest impression on me was the slum. I didn't realize the truth about it before some weeks after I came home, but now when I think about it I could see it all clear robbery, hunger, poverty, rape, ... I can't imagine that it was real. But the worst when we visited the slum, was to see Moi's huge palace with his "great" view over the slum.

The School Exchange Programme (SEP)

I think that this travel to Kenya has taught me a lot about how lucky we are to live in Norway. I also learned that even if things are different from Norway, they don't necessarily need to be worse.

The thing that made the biggest impression was the differences, the differences between Kenyans, between me and Kenyans, between Norway and Kenya. What perhaps surprised me the most was the way I eventually coped with much of the material differences. As it turned out, the food was no problem, I became so tired that I was able to sleep and I got used to the sanitary conditions.

But in many ways, I felt that we arrived Kenya the day we came to Taveta. The friendship we made with the five students that were going to return to us in April, became close and warm.

The last night the Norwegian group came together to talk the trip over. I thought it was very hard. I didn't know why, but today I think I know more. I was so full of new experiences, that I couldn't find the words.

One remarkable thing was that my view on this part of the world, the third world, is totally different now than earlier. The life happiness and the quality of life of the people are enormous. I also reflect more about their life situation compared to ours, the opportunities and possibilities we have that they don't and vice versa. One point I miss terribly in our society is the African friendliness and care. That everybody says hi to each other, asking about their family and showing respect. In Norway we talk about quality time instead of quantity time, I don't believe in that. All the time you spend with others is quality and therefore worth doing.

I think I've gotten a more relaxed relationship to insects. And I survived malaria (or so they say). That's an experience worth bragging about! But besides being ill most of the time I think it was a very memorable trip. Just being in Kenya is something, and we have experienced something few others get the chance to experience. To see how people nearly 8000 km away, in another country with another climate and a different culture lives. It is an experience worth taking with you.

I think that a lot of people have a lot to learn from their way of being and their lifestyle. They didn't care if their bike was 20 years old, as long as they could use it. They are also better at repairing their things if it's broken; in Norway we just buy new things. Money doesn't necessarily make you happy, they had friends, a home and a family that cared for them, and that's what is important in life.

I'm very glad that I was given the opportunity to participate in such a special trip. Experiencing a new country and a very different culture. Everything I learned about myself, other people, that no matter where they are from, they are ordinary people. Everything I learned about Kenya, the culture, the country, the people, traditions, environment, nature etc. My experiences are very valuable, and I think it's important to share them with the people around me.

During my stay in Kenya, I learned to appreciate everything I have, like water closet, shower, and money. I was shocked of how much they mean to me. Still, I got used to the "primitive life" much faster than I thought.

If I see all the cultural differences overall, I think Norway has more to learn than the Kenyans. How often do you ask a fellow student how he's doing? I always felt very welcome. People that always care for each other, and their relationship with time is the things I admire most.

PART THREE

Follow-up Work

The students have written letters to the Kenyan students since they joined the elective course. They partook actively in the planning of the return visit, divided the different tasks among themselves and took responsibility during the visit, thus being good hosts and hostesses. During our stay in Kenya they took their diary writing seriously and finished their part of the report writing soon after our return.

The time span between our return and the return visit was short, and there was the Easter Holiday in between. The whole group + previous participants in the Programme, Astrid and Kristin mostly, worked together to prepare a programme for the return visit. Kristin and Merete made an exhibition of our Friendship work at the ISAK culture house in Trondheim when several organizations marked the UN Anti Racism Day March 23. Svein Inge and Merete edited the digital pictures taken during our stay in Kenya, and the students and their parents were invited to a slides presentation via a video projector and we watched one of the video tapes from our stay (not yet edited....)

When planning the programme for our visitors, we aimed

- to make it varied
- to involve a reasonable number of classes and subjects
- to involve subjects that were related to our projects (English- and water-)
- to make it flexible as to comply with our guests' wishes
- to make room for breaks where the students could mingle more freely with other students at our school
- to give the teachers time with our counsellors, since this was an expressed wish
- also to give our Kenyan friends opportunities to experience the Melhus community and family life in Norway

See appendix for details.

We still work with the water project. Jens Arne Meistad and Ingeborg Slettahjell are responsible. Tests were carried out during the stay. When it comes to the English project it is still in the beginning. We have received students' works from Timbila/Anne Kigo, and some of the Melhus classes have also contributed, but the editing work has not yet started. During the return visit we also had further discussions on the herbarium project. Chege at Timbila and Ingeborg together with Grete Berge Owren will be the ones trying to carry out this idea of exchange work.

Before we went to Kenya there had been contact between Astrid Gynnild and the Melhus branch of the Norwegian Women's Public Health Association, where she had been invited last year to talk about our friendship work and show slides/photos from the 2002 visit. They wanted us to link the Association with a suitable group or organization in Taveta. We suggested a church choir since they take on many types of social work in the local community, and it was decided to ask if Anne Kigo could ask her church choir if they were interested. We brought brochures and pictures of the Melhus group, and contact was organized during our stay. Melhus vgs was in this case only an intermediate – whether contact will develop further will be up to the two parties.

Another task, for Svein Inge and Merete mostly, was the paper work concerning insurance, tickets, passports and visas for our guests. This turned out to be extremely time consuming, since a more rigorous regime on visas has been put into force by the Norwegian authorities. For a while we were afraid we wouldn't be able to welcome our friends in Norway because of lack of the necessary papers. Because of this a lot of extra travelling in Kenya was necessary and there was a lot of anxiety (we're not all of us very good at hakuna matata!). They finally received their visas the day before their departure from Nairobi! Any way, a detailed manual for how to get the necessary papers in time was needed, and this was one of the topics in a summing up meeting between the Exchange teachers. (See appendix)

All in all we think it would be fair to say that Timbila is getting steadily more present in our school. It started with our small showcase of woodcarvings and jewellery after our first visit/return visit, and now we also have a meeting room called the Kenyan room, since it is decorated with kangas and other souvenirs from our visits. We also have small exhibits in some of our offices and in the staff room. When we present our school to future students there is always a very colourful stand for the SEP. Then there is the computer slides show and a power point presentation.

PART FOUR:

APPENDIXES

Teacher's meeting 29.04.04

Summary of general discussion

Our Kenyan colleagues expressed that The School Exchange Programme (SEP) is supposed to be educational – and it is. As teachers we have spent our time well, some of the time in classes, and other fields of interest, especially counseling. All in all they felt that together we have achieved the EP's objectives.

The students are also very satisfied. They have had successful discussions with their fellow students. They have felt relaxed, and so have their teachers "even when we don't know where they are, we feel they are being well taken care of". It is good that they have spent so much time in the classrooms. The teachers have not been to many lessons, "so that not to hamper free discussions between the students". The talks with the counselors were very good. Also interesting to see Magni as chairman of the Student's council, and learn about that field of work. Samson said that he now had a very clear picture of what the water project is, and what they are supposed to do. There are some limitations back home, since Njoro springs is the only water source available. However students can bring back water samples from their holidays – only then they have to wait for holidays. Samson has had a meeting with Ingeborg, and discussed the project of the herbarium. They have agreed on how to go about it.

We also talked about the possible effects on the students' personal lives. Our societies are very different, and as Samson said, "here the students are more free, hugging, kissing, smoking. What effect will it have, change them for the worse? Our students notice that some of the Norwegian students don't listen to their teachers. Some times we feel uncomfortable about how the students interact." Kenya abolished caning 2 years ago, one doesn't know what effect this will have, what this freedom will do to the students. In Norway we try to make them learn without punishment, Svein Inge says, but there must be a balance. "Ask them whether these students that didn't pay attention, did they learn anything? Who will it affect in the long run, when they don't listen to their teachers?" We agreed that the students from both schools should ask themselves questions about their own – and the other – school system.

We also see that we are very different! Therefore it is important that we are informed, for instance about things like the "matpakke". Gilbert and Samson said they felt they had acquired the skills to meet with people from any where in the world.

We had a long talk about cultural differences in general, like for instance that in Kenya you spend more time making meals, eating together, socializing in connection with the meals, while in Norway our schedule is so tight, and ending up in a discussion about gender roles and working hours for the African woman. Merete remembers vividly a discussion with female colleagues in Kenya, where they concluded, "African women work a lot". Her male colleagues now however, claimed that since most families have housemaids their wives are not overworked. But changes are on their way in Kenya, because housemaids have become very expensive especially in the cities. Today many Kenyan families need two incomes.

We need perhaps more time for free discussions about general topics. It is a problem for the Norwegian teachers that we, in addition to the hosting, have to keep all our classes/lessons. Could this be arranged in another way? This should be discussed further.

Merete Wishman

