

PART 1 – THE MELHUS VGS REPORT

1. The Teachers' Report

Preparations

In August 2004 new students assigned for Melhus vgs's Global Elective Course. More students than earlier were interested this year, and the course counted 12 participants. As usual most of the autumn term was spent organizing the Operation A Day's Work (OD). From January 2005 we concentrated on The Human Right's Declaration and we started focusing on Kenya. After our long summer holiday some of the students in the course decided that they would not continue, but new students joined in so that the group now counted 10 plus two who would only work on the OD-project. It had been decided that Merete Wishman and Grete Berge Owren would be the teachers in charge and that we would bring six students to Taveta, even though that would strain the budget. It was also decided that the headmaster of Melhus vgs Helge Bjørn Bæverfjord would join us. The additional expenses would be covered by Melhus vgs. Kristin Melhus was again a helping hand to the project when needed. Early autumn term 2005 those who wanted to be part of the "Kenya-group" had to hand in written applications. The selection would be made on the basis of effort and achievement in the elective course during the previous year, as well as the application and an interview. It turned out that only 6 applied, and as all of them qualified, we dropped the interviews. When the main part of the OD-project was brought to a close, the Kenya group could start their preparations for the SEP. Some of these students were also engaged in other internationalisation projects during the autumn through the local branch of the The United Nations Association of Norway (UNA Norway)¹ and the EU (EYP, European Youth Parliament). The teachers worked hard to conclude the "Being Young Today" project and also kept in touch with Melhus Municipality. We will return to this later.

Early March 2005 the first letters were sent to Timbila, but because of the Easter holiday and arrangements/engagements at Timbila, we did not hear from them until the end of May. There were also letters in June to which we received responses in September. Apart from this the teachers had some contact by fax in the following months mostly concerning practicalities and paperwork. At Timbila they worked with necessary documents like birth-certificates, parents' permissions and passports, while at Melhus we racked our brains over how to get the cheapest flight tickets and cheap but acceptable accommodation in Nairobi. We finally settled for the Y.M.C.A. Central Hostel, cheap and in walking distance to the city centre – and there was a pool. A vaccination program was arranged with the public health centre at Melhus, we planned what to do the two days we were staying in Nairobi, were in contact with the Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi and we had two meetings with the parents. We also booked tickets for the return visit as doing it early means cheaper tickets – even if this is risky business, since we never know if we will be granted money till after Christmas. Unfortunately the tickets didn't get as cheap as we had planned for, because they had to be changed quite late in the process. Again we used Kenor Safaris, and again we had some difficulties – we will try another travel agency next time.

¹) An independent information centre, which provides information on topics related to the United Nations, and relevant international issues.

Just before we left Norway we learnt that the Mombasa train was scheduled only three times a week, and there was no Taveta train any more. That meant that we had to rearrange our plans for the stay in Nairobi and make new appointments.

We had prepared a folder for our colleagues containing useful information, an updated manual - which Merete forgot at home! Her family being on holiday, a good neighbour was good enough to find it and send it express to Taveta. It arrived just after we left.

As usual one of the two weeks spent on travelling was our winter holiday to keep costs down and avoiding too many lost lessons for the students. For details of our costs see the balance sheet.

The students who participated this year were:

Thea Dahlberg, form 2

Ragnhild Drøyvold, form 2

John Eivind Helset, form 2

Lars Kristian Selbekk, form 2

Lars Magnus Utne, form 2

Jorid Vikan, form 3

The students were between nearly 18 and 19 years of age.

The Journey

It was snowing heavily when we left Norway on February 26, quite a contrast to the warm and sunny Kenya. Peter and Jasmina met us at the airport and soon after we were installed at the youth hostel in State House Rd together with the kindergarten ladies (see page 4) from Melhus. The next morning one of the boys had fleabites, but otherwise the hostel was ok, and the students really enjoyed the pool. We spent the morning getting Kenyan shillings and buying train tickets for the evening train. At 12 o'clock we met at the office of the International Red Cross, IFRC where Ragnhild's relative Per Gunnar Jenssen and Norwegian representative Trude Bang gave interesting lectures on their work in Eastern Africa. Peter and Jasmina spent their time getting necessary papers for the return visit. Traffic jam, a hired bus that never turned up and the fact that Jasmina and Peter were staying at another hotel, made us nearly miss the train and Jasmina actually did miss the train, but came by taxi to Athi River seconds before the train arrived there. Happily reunited we continued to Voi where we bordered a hired bus at dawn.

Our stay at Timbila was as usual well planned (see appendix for program) and the plans were mostly carried through, only some small adjustments were made. We spent most of the time at school, joining lessons, having our meals or just socializing. Merete had several meetings with those in charge of the program, a meeting about receipts and money transfers with Mr Kimaro and one meeting with the SEP committee where we discussed future plans for our work, possibilities and difficulties (for details see appendix). Timbila now has a computer and a computer teacher, Mr Temesi, and though the school is not yet connected to the Internet, it is the first step towards modernization. At the post office in Taveta there are now four computers that are connected to the Net and they can be used for more than an hour for 100KSH, and Mr Temesi sometimes brought his students there for computer lessons.

We had a wonderful time at Timbila, meeting old friends and making new ones, it was therefore sad to say our goodbyes. Our last evening, we sat together enjoying a delicious meal, talking and laughing. We handed out presents to all those who had contributed to making our stay a comfortable, informative and lovely one.

On our last morning Grete and Merete had a meeting with Mr Kimaro. He had promised us that we would have the receipts for money spent on paperwork in connection with the return visit, but the accountant had not shown up, so we agreed that Peter and Jasmina would bring the receipts in April. He assured us that our co-workers would get the necessary money for paperwork and that there was still money left from the amount we had sent for this purpose.

Then it was time to say our goodbyes. A sad moment! But new adventures waited: We experienced the busy market in Voi, wild life of Eastern Africa in Tsavo West National Park and one day in Mombasa (where once again Mrs Sondhi at the Reef Hotel saw to it that we got rooms, and she even ordered a free dinner for us!) before returning to Nairobi.

For further details of our stay in Kenya, see part two, Students' Reports.

Challenges concerning the visits

We were hoping that this time we would not have difficulties with the paper work in Taveta, since we had written a detailed manual after the last visit (See report from 2004), but problems of other sorts arose, resulting in delays and higher costs. Some of these difficulties could probably have been avoided with better communication between the different parties involved at Timbila, for instance getting information from headmaster to teachers in Kenya, seems to have been a little difficult at times. This created problems concerning money transfers, something that resulted in difficulties for the teachers in charge to get to the money when they needed it. This was discussed with all parties in the SEP committee at Timbila and we also talked about it at Melhus. The suggested solution so far is to open a separate account for the SEP in Taveta, where the chairman of the SEP and one of the teachers in charge of the current exchange, have access. This requires good book keeping routines, but this ought not to be a problem, and seems to be the best alternative.

We have also found it difficult over the years to get proper receipts for all the Timbila expenses. This creates problems with bookkeeping and it also makes it difficult to keep expenses under control. Could this be done in a better way? Perhaps we ought to have some kind of bookkeeping on the Kenyan side as well, which shows how the money has been spent. Anyway we think it is important that we discuss and agree on how to do this before the next exchange. Both parties can probably improve when it comes to keeping everyone informed, securing routines for receipts and being quick to respond to letters, faxes and so on, though this work comes on top of all the other tasks to be done in the daily life at school. Good communication is vital to the project, and will also keep the expenses down.

Due to slow mail, fax not working, bad telephone lines, holidays and the like communication is often frustratingly slow, but we manage! It should be emphasized though that it helps starting the preparations as early as possible and try to keep to the proposed time schedule. Since the post office in Taveta now has computers connected to the Internet, communication may be a bit easier in the future.

Some of the positive side effects of the Elective Course and the SEP

The Municipality of Melhus has been our good co-worker, a co-operation that goes both ways. Five ladies working in four different public kindergartens in Melhus were going to Taveta to check out linking possibilities. It was only natural that they should benefit from our experience; Merete therefore had meetings with them and also kept in touch by e-mail. The group would go to Taveta together with us, but otherwise have their own program worked out by the community people in Taveta.

In the spring of 2005 Grete, Kristin and Merete started the final editing of the "Being Young Today" project. The aim was to have the booklet ready for the yearly "Kulturdåggån" ("Culture Days") in the Community of Melhus that lasts for one week in the beginning of September. The county group that has international relationships as one of their fields had suggested that internationalisation should be one of the recurring issues for the Kulturdåggån 2005. We were therefore asked in what way we could contribute, and the publishing of the booklet was one way of doing so. The county council granted some money for printing expenses, for which we are very grateful. During this week we also had an information stand for two days at the two shopping centres at Melhus. It was decided that Merete partook in some of the planning of these days, and Kristin and Merete presented the booklet during the opening ceremony at Hovin Bygdetun. Since then we have sold quite a few copies at different arrangements and at our school, Melhus county has bought several copies and used it as presents for guests and contributors on different occasions. About 50 copies were brought to Taveta to be sold there. The profit will be put into our new projects.

The contact with our neighbouring primary schools has also increased. Kristin and Merete had a meeting with Gimse Primary School in the late spring of 2005 and Merete had a meeting with the teachers of form 9 at Gimse Lower Secondary. Both these schools were in the process of becoming linking schools with schools in Taveta. Challa Secondary has now been linked with Gimse Lower Secondary, and in the beginning of May 2006, Merete was invited to talk to the four form 6 classes (twelve year-olds) at GP, which was then linked with Timbila Primary. It is very rewarding to see that the ideas of the SEP spread like this.

Some of the students from the Global Elective Course have also attended other arrangements than those of the SEP. Five students, four of them from GEC, were picked out among several other groups of students from all over Norway to be one of two groups representing Norway at the European Youth Parliament in Italy in October 2005. Karen Ludvigsen was the teacher from Melhus vgs in charge of this. Others were twice involved in different role plays arranged by the UNA, once at Melhus for groups in Sør-Trøndelag, and once in Oslo where they acted being representatives of our Parliament discussing and deciding on whether to send Norwegian soldiers to UN operations in Afghanistan. Melhus vgs was also asked by the UNA to contribute to the yearly UN arrangement on the Anti Racism Day on October 24 and agreed to be in charge of catering. Colleague Janne Nordang and students from the cooking class were responsible for this.

Undoubtedly our cooperation and friendship with Timbila leave its very positive mark on our school in general, and on those involved of course even more. There is no better way of learning about diversities in culture and nature, tolerance and flexibility, about the practicalities of travelling and practicing your English! In other words being a part of linking

work like this helps developing an awareness of the world outside the county of Melhus and shores of Norway! More about the students' views on these topics on pages 16-18.

2. The Students' Report

Day 1, Sunday February 26

Our Journey to Africa and Kenya started one very early morning on Sunday the 26 of February. This morning we all met at school and we had our last goodbyes with our families before leaving Melhus and Norway. We were six students from Melhus vgs, and two teachers, of course our principal and a group of six nursery-school teachers from Melhus. I have to say that our Journey to Kenya and Africa actually started many days and months before what we could call the final day, because of the preparations and the work connected to this task and the trip. A bus took us to Værnes Airport, this morning and our aeroplane was a bit delayed, because of the snowy weather, but after about half an hour we were back on track. The trip from Trondheim to Amsterdam, Schipol lasted for about 2 ½ hours. We arrived at Schipol at about 10.30 AM. On the plane to Nairobi from Amsterdam we all took some time to work on our projects and presentations. We, the students, were a bit nervous at the time, and scared by the thought that we were going to present these tasks to the Kenyan students at Timbila High School. It was very special to finally be on our way to Kenya and Taveta, a place we have nearly not dared to dream of! Everything was a bit surreal. After about eight hours on the plane to Nairobi Airport, we landed in the evening. Here we got to meet our two guiding teachers from Timbila for the first time, Jasmina and Wahome. We got our bags and went to the Y.M.C.A youth hostel. We checked in and hit the sack after a short group meeting.

Day 2, Monday February 27

We woke up this morning at 07.15 AM and had breakfast in the dining area. At 9 AM, we checked out of our rooms. After this the boys went for a swim in the pool, while the teachers went to the railway station to pick up train-tickets for the evening. The rest of us spent some time writing on our reports. After the teachers returned we went on a visit to the Norwegian Red Cross in Nairobi where they gave a most interesting lecture about their work in Kenya and East Africa. We also got to look at the President's Residence, from outside the big fences of course. At 6 o'clock PM we went to the railway station and boarded the train to Voi. We got a closer look at the city of Nairobi, on the way from the hostel to the station. The train journey made a great impression on us, because of the huge differences we got to see and experience especially with the slum areas. It was the most surreal feeling one could ever feel, because it is so strange and completely different from everything we know. We could barely see anything but the sounds and screaming, and small children throwing rocks at the train, they were right outside the window, a completely different world, so close, but yet so distanced from us.

We got to eat dinner on the train and then we went to bed and got some sleep before arriving in Voi.

Day 3, Tuesday February 28

Early in the morning we were in Voi, and our transport was there waiting for us. In Voi we got to meet John, former student of Timbila High and the SEP. He spent some time talking to us and teach us some basic Kiswahili Words. That was very nice. We had to wait for about one hour before leaving Voi, because it is not safe to travel when it is dark outside. But when we got on the bus after some waiting, we started the trip to Taveta and Timbila High school. We were all much excited and a bit tired. On the road we got to see a greater part of the Kenyan wildlife, with impala, baboons and even elephants!! That was Splendid. We also had a flat tyre on the way but that was easily taken care of by the drivers. After about 2 ½ hours with bus we finally made it to Timbila High. And it is such a nice place! We got to sign the Principal of Timbila High's guestbook, and meet his staff and teachers, and afterwards we had lunch. After lunch we got to check in at the Principal's house, he was so generous to lend us his place. Then we had a treeplanting-ceremony, where we got to meet the exchange students for the first time! Indeed a moment to remember. We went to bed at 8 o'clock, after working on the finishing details of our project.

Day 4, Wednesday 1 March

I woke up to find a few new mosquito bites. I washed my face and parts of my body, made sure that Lars Magnus and John had woken up, before I went to breakfast. Since everyone still was full from the lunch and dinner from the day before, and the day before that, no one really ate as much as we usually do. I was as always hoping for some more of the lovely passion fruit we got the first day, but had to settle for some of the delicious pineapple.

We started the school day with an assembly by the flagpole, a bit later than planned, but we were told this was the Kenyan way. We introduced ourselves again, this time with John and Lars M, since they were missing last time. Helge-Bjørn gave a short speech, which he started with calling himself "holy bear" again. The first lesson we attended was Geography with Mrs. Patience. We learned about both inland and marine fisheries in Kenya. We now know of the biggest rivers you can fish in, ponds and lakes in Kenya and Taveta. We know of the most common species you can catch and the methods they use to catch them. She told us about the drawbacks in Kenyan fish industry, how the coast is divided into three sectors, that they have aquaculture and that Kenya fish around 150 000 tons of fish every year. Mrs. Patience seemed like a great teacher, who asked the class a lot of question, to make them contribute to the lesson.

The last fifteen or ten minutes of the lesson were given to John and me, so we could try teaching the Kenyan students about something from Norway, that would in some way be connected to geography. I started off with the Norwegian climate, where I told them about the four different seasons in Norway, (since Kenya only has two) with the differences in temperature, sunlight (with the globe's position) and the fascinating subject snow. John followed having a short lecture about the Norwegian animal the musk ox.

After the English lesson we went on to business studies, where we would have a lecture about money and banking. The teacher (I do not recall his name) told us about the five different

types of money and payment: Commodity money (hides, skins, beads), metallic money (copper, gold, silver), Coinages (in Kenya they have coins for 40, 20, 10, 5 and 1 shilling and 50 cent), paper money (Notes for 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20 and five shillings) and representative money (cheques, notes and credit cards). After we had gotten the opportunity to see some Kenyan money, Grete wrote on the blackboard what kind of notes and coins we have in Norway, before showing the class some Norwegian “kroner” and a credit card. The reaction to the credit card from the Kenyan students was fascinating. For us, the Norwegian students, it’s unusual not to have a credit card, but here it seemed like they had never seen a credit card before. This was one of the first times we experienced the differences, instead of just imagining them.

The last class we attended today was Agriculture, something I was really looking forward to, since we don’t have this back home and it is something I am interested in. Mr. Samson had brought a small collection of weeds, which we were going to identify, discuss and look at. He started off by defining the term weed, different other botanical terms and the problems weeds causes on crops and for example the problems a weed causes on the cows’ milk. When the class ended I was a bit sad, it had been so interesting that I wanted to come back next class, but sadly I couldn’t.

My disappointment passed fast, because I knew we were going to the market. We had a coffee break followed by lunch, or dinner by Norwegian terms. I don’t really know what had caused it, but somehow we were delayed, so we only got one and a half hour in this huge market. We took a bus, which looked kind of a like yellow school bus, and arrived Taveta town. Ragnhild, John and I went with Johnson, Collins and Joseph who took us through the market and to the planned airstrip. From there we could see over to Tanzania and if there hadn’t been any clouds we could have seen Mount Kilimanjaro. Then they took us through the market and to the other side of the town to the post office, where we found Merete had Temesi (the Computer studies teacher) surfing on the Internet. The last thing they wanted to show us was the hospital. It was a nice hospital and it looked big. We could also see the apartments that were given to the nurses and doctors who worked there, something that’s not common in Norway. After we had seen some of the most important buildings and spaces in Taveta they took us into the market again for us to look and buy. John saw some pears, which he wanted to buy. He tried to buy two, but ended up with two bags. I bought a piece of cloth. We went back to the bus, at the time we were supposed to, but the teachers did not, so we were allowed back in to the market for 15 more minutes. Then some of us bought cotton fabrics in Masai pattern and were very pleased with the day’s catch.

Back “home” dinner was nearly ready, so we washed and showed each other what we had bought. Dinner was served, and first we were served a soup. Ann told us it was ox tale soup. There was a sudden silence around the table. All the Norwegian students looked at each other then at the soup bowl. Ann then opened the lid and revealed the soup, still it was silent. Our teachers entered the room and started serving bowls with soup. We tasted and we ate it all. It tasted like the sauce we have on the Norwegian meatballs, so it was quite good. After soup we got the main course, which was a stew. We guessed that this was the rest of the ox. We started serving, when suddenly John and I found something in the stew, what we thought was an eye, but it turned out to be a piece of bone. We ate the lovely stew and mashed potatoes, when we got the message that the Kenyan students were there, and they were setting up a TV and some chairs in the boys’ apartment for the planned movie evening. The first movie was about a girl who was very much in love with her boyfriend, but the boyfriend wasn’t satisfied with the relationship, he wanted to have sex. They did, and the girl got pregnant. Then they discussed

abortion, which was followed with a lot of anti-abortion propaganda, advices to not engage in such acts and the advice to listen to God. It was an interesting film, but it was more like a class or like listening to someone discussing this theme, and that may be the way it was supposed to be. After the film, Collins wanted to hear how abortion is looked upon in Norway. Although none of us really do know that much about numbers of abortions in Norway, we managed very well answering the questions they might have. Then they put on a new movie, this was the sequel of the first one. Now we could see the girl with her child, together with another man. This man drank a lot, and then he would hurt the girl and her child. So the theme was abuse, and to listen to God. This was a better movie than the first, although I am not quite sure why. After the movie it was getting late, so the Kenyans went to their rooms and we went to bed, after looking at new bugs coming out of the sink and getting the ones inside our mosquito nets out.

Day 5, Thursday March 2

I woke up, freshened up and then I went outside and washed some clothes. This was a fun thing to do actually. I felt like I could live here on my own, I felt really responsible. Wake up early and wash clothes was something I wanted to do more while I stayed in this wonderful place. I don't recall the breakfast, I was probably thinking about my laundry hanging outside in the sun, but it was probably fruit.

After breakfast we went to have English with Steven. This day he was discussing a book by a Kenyan writer. The book was called "Coming to Birth", and the class had just finished reading it. "Coming to Birth," we were told, was a book of three kinds of births, the birth of a nation, a child and woman empowerment. It was a class similar to our own English class, so there were no big surprises or disappointments.

The next class was Kiswahili, something we had been looking forward to the whole morning. The teacher was Mrs. Ruth, and the class was from form 1, I think. Today's theme was greetings, and we learned how to greet friends, elders, how to say good morning, good evening and good night. The time passed by so quickly that we had to pursue the learning by ourselves. But before we went, we were asked to tell them some Norwegian greetings, which Thea was set to do. She did a good job.

The last class for today was History. I was hoping for some really old Kenyan history, but it was about the structure and functions of the government of Kenya, not that it wasn't interesting, but it was really similar to things we have learned before.

After a coffee break and lunch, where we ate pasta and mincemeat, we took the bus to a Masai village. With us came the Kenyan students, a Masai student and two other students. One of the first things I did when we got there was to take many pictures of the really big trees, called Baobab or Mboa in Swahili (not sure). When I was taking pictures, I suddenly heard whispering behind me. It was three Masai men, who were looking at my camera with great fascination. I had to leave the conversation with the men, when we started walking in to the first village. The first thing we got to see was the inside of a Masai hut. It was really dark, so we didn't see a lot, but we could almost understand how it was to live inside one of these huts. When I got out of the hut, Masai women had started gathering. They had already started dressing up people with Masai necklaces, hoping that we would buy something. Merete said we had to buy things when we left, or else they would keep on stalking us, so we waited. We

went on to the next hut, where the student showed us his bed, which was some sticks with cattle hide stretched over. They also brought a few spears, which they used for hunting, and they said they could throw it 200 meters, but we thought it sounded a bit long. We also were shown a lion's tooth from a lion they had killed a few days ago. Then it happened, the thing I had feared from the time I heard we were going to a Masai village, they came out with a wooden "bottle", and I thought they were going to offer us goat milk and blood mix. It turned out to be just milk, and Merete said that we couldn't drink it, due to health precautions. Afterwards they took us through the village and to another one, where we saw new huts, where they put their cattle at night and by the village was "Slaughter Hill", where a battle between the colonies Kenya and Tanzania had taken place, fought by the natives, who had been one people before the colonies. It had been a really exciting excursion. To see the way they live with your own eyes instead of a documentary on TV was an experience. We went back to the school, said goodbye for the day to the Kenyans and went getting ourselves ready for dinner. Today's dinner was Chapatti (taco wrap looking thing) and lentil stew, which tasted great. When we had finished eating, we just sat talking for a long time. Ragnhild and Thea went to bed, where they lay laughing, while the rest of us stayed in the living room and talked about everything from alcohol, weddings, our families to the intrigues in the teachers' lounge. After Helge-Bjørn had told his stories, Merete was sleepy and everyone was tired, I went in to the girl's room, to get some clothes that had been put there by mistake. I stood in the middle of the room without socks. Suddenly I saw a creature run past my feet and under the bed. I thought "A lizard, cool", so I started looking for it. Then I saw it, the creature, but it was no lizard, it was a huge beige spider with incredible speed. I screamed by the sight and jumped in to the bed. Neither Ragnhild nor Thea believed me; they just told me to stop joking and called me stupid. They didn't believe me until John came in the room and screamed as well. Then Ragnhild started screaming really loud, and didn't stop before Merete came and killed the spider with her foot, and I think she didn't kill it because it was bothering her, but to shut up Ragnhild. Another day over, another day in Kenya.

Day 6, Friday March 3

We woke up at Timbila High school and it had been the hottest night so far. We hadn't had so much sleep that night. We got up at 07.00 am in the morning. We ate a quick breakfast that the ladies in the back had made for us (Ruth, Ann, Jasmina and Patience). The assembly was outside the principal's office. All the students were standing in lines. They raised the flag and sang the national anthem. Gilbert, teacher, said a prayer and read some lines from the Bible. At the end the Timbila principal came and gave a few messages to the students. The whole assembly was over in 10-15 min. After the assembly we (Norwegian students) went to the classroom and prepared for a physics lesson. Wahome (teacher) divided us into groups, because we should have a practical experiment about electricity. We connected wires between an ampere meter, a voltmeter, a switch, a resistance wire and two cells. We opened the switch and read the voltmeter. We adjusted the resistance wire so we could have the different results. When we found the results, we drew a graph. Wahome explained the results on the blackboard, but I didn't understand so much because I don't have physics at school.

After the physics lesson we had a tea break at our house. Ate some cookies and drank some tea. We also got some time to wash some of our dirty clothes. We hung them up so they could get dried in the sun. We had a new chemistry lesson at 10.00 am with Jasmina. She had prepared for an experiment with acids and base indicators. We were split into new groups. We had eight different solutions, litmus (red and blue paper) and phenolphthalein as indicators.

We observed the different colours in the different solutions when we added the indicators. And finally we concluded that some of the solutions were acids, some were bases and one was neutral. I felt that the chemistry lesson was very interesting because I could see similarities between what we do in Norway and what they do in Kenya. They used the same indicators as we do and the same solutions. I was asked if I could come up at the blackboard and tell the whole class what we call the different solutions in Norwegian. Like H_2SO_4 (sulphuric acid) we call Svovelsyre. It was time for a lunch break and the ladies had made a lot of delicious food for us. After the lunch we had a bit of singing practise preparing for the presentation at Monday. We decided 3 typical Norwegian songs that we wanted to sing, the national anthem, hainn hoinn i bainn (a song in dialect) and Norway in red, white and blue (the old national anthem). After the lunch we went to a banana-plantation in Taveta. The Kenyan students came with us and one other student. His father owned a part of the plantation and he showed us that place. We walked for a long time. On our way we saw a lot of banana trees, mango, sugar, potatoes (kind of), avocado, lemon, orange and a lot of other fruits. The student cut some sugar canes that we could taste. It tasted sweet, but it was like chewing on a branch. A different candy than what we have in Norway. Suddenly it began blowing and we saw that the clouds turned red. It was time to go back to Timbila before the rain came. It blew so much that a teacher at Timbila nearly was "killed" by a mango that landed close to his head. We all got a good laugh. We came safely back to Timbila. We Norwegians got a bit of a rest before the dinner was served. After dinner Collins and Joseph came for a visit. We went with them back to school where they sat doing their homework. We sat there and talked for a while. I read in Collins' Chemistry book and I found similarities with my chemistry book in Norway. I did some exercises in organic chemistry. It was funny. It began to be late in the evening and we went home for bed. When we stood outside and brushed our teeth, we saw a strange man in the bushes. We wondered and were a bit worried. He came to us and told us that he was the security guard the school, with his bow and arrow. This was a situation that we had just seen in a movie in Norway.

Day 7, Saturday March 4

We woke up at 07.30 am. We got a kind of cake for breakfast. There was no school program today, and the morning was quite calm. We decided that Thea and I should go with Merete to Ann's house on the African night. The plan for today was to visit Lake Challa, but we had to go to Taveta market first, because the teachers had to fix some things. The students walked into the market and bought some things like silk cloth, coffee and tea that we could bring back home. We climbed into the bus again and started on our trip to lake Challa. The road was in very bad shape, and after a while we had to walk the last piece up to the hotel. When we came on the top of the hill, we saw the beautiful hotel lying there, deserted. Unfortunately there were too many clouds so we couldn't see Kilimanjaro. We ate lunch at the hotel terrace and enjoyed the view over the lake and Tanzania. We took many pictures of the beautiful nature before we went down to the bus that waited for us at the bottom for the hill. We survived the "shaking" trip back to Timbila. The ladies in our house waited for us with lunch. When the lunch was finished, we started to pack our bags and prepare for the exciting African night. We (Norwegian students and teachers) had been divided and sent to different families. Thea, Merete (teacher) and me, was sent to Ann's house. She and her family lived near the centre of Taveta. We met her husband, and her cousin. We got our own room and we were served a delicious dinner with rice and meat. We brought some presents from Norway, to show that we were very grateful to be there. Near the house were two churches. It was a kind of American gospel music, playing loud so we could hardly sleep. Quite irritating! When we finally fell

asleep, we heard a strange sound, and in the morning Ann told us that their goat had given birth to a little “goat baby”. So sweet! When the breakfast was done, we got dressed in nice clothes. Since it was raining we took a taxi to the church.

Another student's report from
African night (Saturday March 4)

It is Saturday and the day where we are going to spend the night with either some of the teachers or the students, which means that Grete and I are invited to stay with Patience and Gilbert. So after we visited Lake Challa we went to school to get our luggage, and then we were transported to the different homes.

Gilbert and Patience live in Taveta in a big house that they built themselves some years ago. They have three sons, a nephew and a housekeeper living together with them, so when we came we were introduced to many nice persons at once. We were invited to come inside for a cup of tea, and when we came into the living room, the table was set with cookies, fruit and African tea. We sat there and relaxed while Patience started preparing the dinner, and Gilbert came to talk to us. He told us that he went to Norway two years ago, and he showed us some of the pictures from that journey. At dinner we got lovely food that Patience had made all by herself. As usual it tasted very good and when we had finished eating we sat there and talked for a few hours. It was very nice being there and several times they told us “this is our home, I hope you feel welcome”. And I can promise that I have probably not felt more welcome ever before. African people seem to know how to make their guests feel comfortable, and Patience told us that in Africa it is an honour to have a guest visiting them. When you get a guest, you shall forget all of your other duties to make your friend feel welcome. It was an enjoyable evening. We talk a lot, about their lives and ours, about our countries, similarities and differences. I found it exciting and also very interesting.

At 10 o'clock it was time to go to bed, and Patience was showing us our room. It was one of the boy's room, and it was not very surprising that he was a football fan like so many other young boys. When we went to bed, we heard music from the churches in the neighbourhood. There are a lot of them and the people were singing loudly. But it was far from bothering me. Suddenly there was something familiar with one of the songs, and after a while I realized that it was “Kombaya my Lord” which we sang sometimes at primary school. What a coincidence. But in spite of the religious music from the churches nearby, I fell asleep and did not wake up until 8 o'clock the next day.

The next day turned out to be a cloudy day, which means a comfortable temperature for us Norwegians. As we got up from bed, our African mother told us that she would bring us some hot water so that we can have a wash. I found it wonderful since we had washed ourselves with ice-cold water so far, and when she also came with a tub and a new, green soap I felt very grateful. After the wash it was time for breakfast, and every member of the family greeted us by shaking hands. I am not used to this custom but I like it. It is a very polite way of starting conversations and it shows the mutual respect you find among people here. At breakfast we got Kenyan food, among other things fruit and tea, and also a delicious cake that dear Patience baked for us while we were sleeping. While we ate the photographer of Taveta came, Gilbert and Patience had ordered him, and he took some photographs while we ate and also some outside the house. Patience said that she was going to buy a frame for it and put it up on the wall.

After breakfast Grete and I went for a walk in the garden. It is an idyllic garden with a lot of flowers, hens from the neighbourhood and a kitchen garden at the back of the house. The kitchen garden is especially of interest to me. There were mangos, bananas, watermelons, oranges, limes and so on. And some of the plants, like the watermelon plant, I have never seen before. Patience told us a lot about all of them, and we understood that she is a good gardener too. After a while she went inside to dress for church, and her nephew Donald came outside to have a chat with us. He asked a lot of questions about Norway, and as always it is nice when people are curious about our country. He also heard me giving the lecture about the Sami people, and asked me to tell him more about them. But time was running, and suddenly it was time for us to leave Patience and Gilbert's house for this time, and we started walking to church. As we walked through their neighbourhood, I figured out that teachers in Kenya most likely live above the average standard of living. But in spite of that everybody was walking around in lovely dresses and formal shirts. Patience said it was because they were going to church, and that everybody is wearing their best clothes in that connection.

The church lies not far from the centre of Taveta and at first sight it looks more like a house than a church. But as soon as we got inside we saw benches and decorations that are typical for churches, and in this church the decorations consisted of yellow and green velvet and flowers. Patience found two free seats for Grete and me, and we sat down and enjoyed the service. It was very different from anything I have ever seen before; the clergyman was so engaged and he focused on love and charity, instead of referring to the Bible all the time, like I am used to. Another thing is that we had to hold the hands of the people next to us and tell them we loved them. The lecture was then followed by Gilbert telling the church about the visitors from Norway that were with them that day, and he explained about the SEP. Grete and I had to walk up there as well, in the front of them all, and I said my name, which form I am in, how nice it's to be in Taveta and that I liked their country. I found it a bit challenging since I have never been standing in front of a congregation before, but it was ok. After that they went on reading local announcements in the church, which was about vaccinations and the coming services. At the end of the service it was time for singing, and a group of ladies were entering the scene and they started singing and dancing. And so did the rest of the church, even children and old people. Some were also dancing with their younger brothers or sisters in their arms, and it was fascinating to see brothers and sisters taking good care of each other. But the best of it was the music. It was like the roof was about to lift itself when they were singing, and even though I never go to churches, I didn't really want to leave, because I liked it so much. The ladies were singing very beautifully, and later on we spoke with one of them who is married to Peter.

But then it was time to leave and a minibus came to pick us up. There was a football game waiting for us, so this was the end of my African night. I had a great time, and I feel that Patience and Gilbert could not have welcomed me in a warmer way.

And a third version

A short summary of African-Night and the days thereafter:

After a scary bus-trip up to beautiful Lake Challa and a just as scary bus trip back again the time had come for the infamous "African Night", where the Norwegian students and teachers were to spend a night with our Kenyan counterparts and their families. Lars Kristian and me were placed with Harun. After another bus-trip and a short walk through the neighbourhood we arrived at a small, pretty-looking and completely sky blue farm with a lot of animals including "Pakka", the cat. On this little farm lived a grandmother, a grandfather, a lot of

little toddlers and a maid. Ye' old man worked far away and was only to be found in his cosy residence during some weekends. Working as a mechanical engineer he most probably earned a relatively fair amount of money. After being introduced to the "nje-nje", we were shown to our quarters. Me and my ever-happy companion Lars Kristian shared a huge bed in a big, blue room, in a small blue farm, on a big blue planet, and so on. After unpacking we ate dinner with Harun and the guy who watched over the cattle. All Harun needed to do was to snap his fingers and his little sister and her followers came jumping about with plenty of food and tea. The tea was marvellous, with its two parts milk and one part hot water. The meal consisted of chicken, rice and fruit, everything very tasteful. Then we gave the gifts we brought to Kenya to our hosts. The kids loved the balloons. Before we went to bed we took a shower (not together) and brushed our teeth.

Day 8, Sunday march 5

The next morning we ate a good breakfast with the newly arrived Collins participating in the exchange program, and Harun of course. They followed us to a church on the top of a hill where we teamed up with David. The priest talked a lot of gibberish, or Kiswahili and everybody sang a great deal, not unlike the services in Norway, except the Kiswahili part. Then the Norwegian part of the church had to say our names to the community, we said it in Kiswahili and flabbergasted quite a few! We received a prayer before scurrying off to another church in an attempt to see the crazy dancing and screaming we had heard so much about, and could hear from hundreds of meters away from the church we were heading towards, but just as we entered the door everything stopped, and the only person making noise was the priest. We bought some sodas in Taveta before we went back to campus, ate, and prepared ourselves for the soccer match. The score ended at 0-0, a diplomatic result. My feet were covered in red dust so the following rain was a relief. After the game we ate a bit and went scouring about for big insects.

Day 9, Monday 6

We started the day with a visit to Timbila Primary, where a class for handicapped kids and one for normal kids sang for us. Then we visited a tree nursery founded by "The Greenbelt Movement" where some of us bought small trees and ate coffee beans. Next stop was an arboretum with only indigenous Kenyan wildlife. Here many scientists from different countries lived while exploring the Kenyan fauna. There we observed two types of apes, one small and one big, we saw a chameleon and an enormous worm-like insect with a huge amount of legs. Vi played a bit with it and found that it left a trail of orange goo wherever it crawled. Ragnhild and I went climbing around like Tarzan before we ate a bit and left in a hurry. When we arrived back at school we prepared ourselves for the ceremony, which took its time. The Kenyans rapped, sang, danced and read poems, we sang and danced. We also tried to pull through a role-play, but lousy casting ruined it. Our teacher Merete played the table and our principal did an excellent job as the cat. Zooming around on the floor like a big Gollum on Red Bull. He almost zoomed into Merete. Then we got presents, before the adults talked a lot. Later that night all of the exchange program students ate together. We finally got to see Mount Kilimanjaro, as the perfect finale of a wonderful stay.

Tuesday March 7

This day started off awakening and preparing to leave Taveta by bus. The luggage was packed and we started saying good-bye to the ones who was not to follow us to the town of Voi. Leaving was quite sad, after all we had been there for two weeks and gotten to know our new friends well. The head principal at Timbila, the exchange programme students and several teachers wished for us to have a pleasant trip back home and wished to see us again.

The bus trip endured for about four hours on bumpy roads and a damp, crowded environment. Still, the trip went very well for all of us. Bumpy rides were by now quite familiar to us, and besides we had brought food and water with us. We also took the opportunity to look out for wild animals though there were only a few to see.

We arrived in Voi early in the afternoon before lodging ourselves in the Hotel Distar in the centre of the town. After a short rest in our rooms, we headed for Tsavo National Park where we were to go on a safari, something we had looked forward to for a long time. Another bumpy bus ride, but this time through the national park. We looked out for animals with expectation to spot "the four greats". The tour ended off with a stop to watch the beautiful sunset. Afterwards the bus drove back to the hotel, and we had dinner before going to bed.

Wednesday March 8

Early in the morning we woke up after a magnificent night's sleep. We ate breakfast in the diner and once again were seated in the cosy, colourful bus, this time taking us to Mombasa. Before this, we had said farewell to our companions from Taveta, which was sad. The roads between Voi and Mombasa are far better than the average road we had been travelling before. But this distance was also far longer than our previous travels, and it turned out to be a tiring voyage, but still quite ok. The trip lasted for about five or six hours, and in the end, we were happy to see the port of Mombasa!

Even happier were we to arrive in our hotel, a luxurious beach hotel containing all sorts of goods. We carefully saw to relax and rest the rest of this day, considering the hard travelling we had been doing the whole day. We really deserved to do nothing but dozing off by the pool. The evening was wonderfully finished eating an immensely good meal while watching a Masai dancing group in the garden.

Thursday March 9

This day was indeed one of the most interesting days of our stay, at least in my case! We enjoyed a nice breakfast in the dining hall before getting ready to visit the Bombolulu Handicap Centre, which is a centre that offers work and help for handicapped by producing merchandises that later on are exported or sold locally. We were given a great tour around the different buildings of the location where we got to see the employees at work, we met the children attending the special school at the centre, and got to know a great deal about the different products and the ones who buy them. After the tour, we were given the chance to buy items at the gift shop. After the shopping, we were served lunch at the restaurant, and were entertained by a local dance group performing African tribal dances, which was very fun!

Day 13, Friday March 10

I slept very well tonight, in spite of the heat, the sounds from the train rubbing the rails and noises from the railway stations during the night. And I also woke up soon enough to catch the African sunrise. So now I sit up in my bed and watch the sunbeams lighten the landscape from its early morning mist. It is a beautiful sight and I am very excited about this. It is just how I imagined Africa before we arrived in Kenya. As we approach Nairobi we see small villages, students, prairies and savannas. It seems like we are witnesses to an African morning, and from the compartment we see zebras, giraffes, antelopes and impalas running away from us. Some also try to hide themselves in huge bushes. We missed this when we travelled the opposite way, since we travelled by night. Therefore I experience this as a great adventure.

Not far from the capital we drive through a part of the slum, Kibera, which is the biggest slum in Eastern Africa. It is a terrible sight. Children are playing next to the railway, and the houses are also dangerously close to us. Or what is supposed to be houses. It is more like poles covered with plastic and in some cases sheet iron, and they are not bigger than 3-5m². It is unbelievable that people actually live like that, and even though I had prepared myself for this, it makes a deep impression on me. A lot of thoughts and feelings show up, and no words can actually describe how it feels driving through this area. I realize how lucky I am, and how protected I am in the society I come from. I get a bad conscience from this, especially because I know how incidental our destinies are. I mean, it could have been me standing there smiling to the train. It might be strange, but I feel bad because I am the lucky one of us. Half an hour later we arrive in Nairobi and a Taxi driver is already there to pick us up. He drives us to the "Y.M.C.A" where we stayed the first night, and we get four rooms. And just like last time, Thea, Jorid and I are sharing one of them. Now we get some hours off, to do whatever we want to. I prefer sunbathing and reading next to the swimming pool, so that is also what I do. After some hours we meet again, and head for the IMLU-headquarter (Independent Medico-Legal Unit). It becomes a very interesting meeting, and I find their work extremely admirable. They teach us a lot about torture in their community, and how they are fighting it. Merete tells us that they got to see pictures of torture victims when they visited IMLU two years ago. I find it bad enough to hear about it, and having in mind what we saw the slum earlier today; I don't really know how I would have handled another challenge. I am probably not as strong and prepared on this as I thought I was. On the way back to the Y.M.C.A we saw the Norwegian embassy, which is huge! The rest of the day we rest and in the evening we have dinner before going to bed.

Day 14, Saturday March 11

I woke up at 8 this morning, which is late comparing to the other days so far. I find it a bit sad that this is our last day in Kenya, and I make up a list about things I will miss back in Norway. The pineapples we got every morning, the palms, Timbila High School, the heat, the hospitality, Taveta, the culture and last but not least our new friends. I realize that it is actually a lot. After breakfast we relax for two hours, some of us pack our rucksacks and some of us write in our diaries.

At 10 o'clock we meet in the reception, and go for a walk in Nairobi. There is a lot of traffic in the capital, and we find out very quickly that we can never be too careful in this city. Not only with reference to the traffic, but also because of the poverty and the crime. Some places we also face beggars, many of them are children or handicapped people, and I find myself very selfish who am shopping souvenirs this day, when others are struggling to get enough food. On the other hand I know that tourism is one of their most important incomes. We walk around for a while, and end up at Kenyatta Avenue. I find it exciting to see places I have heard about back in Norway. We buy lunch before we go back to the youth hostel. On our way back it is getting warmer, and I am almost shocked when I notice some Kenyans wearing down jackets!

The next hours we are sunbathing next to the pool, and for the second time during this stay, we have got nothing particular to do. Some of us find it boring, but I think it is a great opportunity to calm down before school starts in two days. At 4 o'clock all of us meet in the restaurant for a meeting. We are summing up the two last weeks, both positive and negative things. The meeting lasts for two hours and surprisingly I realize that I really needed to talk about all the adventures too. It seems like I do not understand yet, everything we have gone through these days. At 8 we eat our last dinner in Kenya, we get chicken and vegetables. It tastes good. After that we go to bed, we are all tired, and we have to rest before the long trip back to Norway

Thoughts and Reflections

(Based on the Norwegian group's meeting at the YMCA the last evening in Kenya, and supplied with some reflections from the students' reports)

The people

What made the strongest impression on me, and the main reason for putting Kenya into my heart, are the people. The Kenyan population is on average very friendly and welcoming, they have a good sense of humour and it seems to me that African women are laughing all the time. While the female teachers were cooking at the back of the house we always heard them laughing even though they were very hardworking, and just the sound of them made the rest of us feel happy too.

The students were also friendly and like the rest of the population they were always shaking our hands when they met us, which says a lot about how much they respect each other. All this is something we can learn from the Kenyan people, how to respect and enjoy each other's company, instead of stressing around all the time.

What I liked the best was all the people I met. This is probably what everyone else is saying as well, but that was really an experience, to be greeted with smiles and with warmth everywhere you went.

I am so glad that we got to see Kenya with a visitor's eyes and not a tourist's. I am very happy that we got to meet so many new people and that we all got so many friends. They taught us a lot about their country, culture and so on; by just coming with us at different excursions and the places we went to were so amazing, I have very special memories from the Masai village, a banana plantation, the lake Challa!!

The nature

I liked the Kenyan nature, the different varieties of landscape, the good temperature and the animals. We saw lakes, savannas, mountains, beaches, forests and so on, and many different types of plants, fruits and vegetables. During the stay we also saw elephants and other African animals, which I found very special. But the best memory is probably when we saw Mount Kilimanjaro coloured by the sunset, the last evening we had in Taveta.

I really loved the scenery. The African savannah and forests are truly beautiful. I could sit inside the bus and just look out the window for a long time. I caught myself staring at the sand for several minutes. And to be allowed a trip in to the national park was fun. It was fun to see the animals in their own natural habitat instead of in a zoo.

The nature made the biggest impression on me. I have seen a lot of "Animal Planet", but experiencing it myself was great, being able to touch it. The trip up to Lake Challa with the worn down hotel singles out as the moment I remember the clearest.

The school exchange programme (SEP)

I experienced so many new and good things, and I have great memories from the two weeks. For example from the Masai Village, the Safari, the market, the African night, the church, Lake Challa and the plantation. A good thing is that the Kenyan exchange students joined us at almost all of our excursions so that we could get to know them better. For some of them the experiences were as new to them as they were for us, while others could tell us a lot about the different places. I think that it was good to see that some of the excursions were of interest for them as well. One of the places where none of them had been before was the forest where we planted trees to symbolize our co-operation and the new friendships, at the same time as it contributed to maintain the forest. The co-operation, which creates friendships in spite of borders, is one of the things I appreciate the most when it comes to the exchange programme. It kind of makes us dependant on each other and makes people communicate, which is a good thing when it comes to today's community and our global future.

We experienced so much everyday, so it was good to have some time off during the evenings where we could relax and rest before the next day. But the absolutely most interesting experience was taking part in lessons, and especially in subjects like "agriculture" and "Kiswahili" which we don't take at Melhus. And the experiments we had during the chemistry lesson and the physic lesson were the best ones. The experiments were quite similar to ours; the only difference was the equipment. I do wish we could take part in more lessons, and also one in maths.

Throughout the trip I have got to do many new things and I have experienced a lot. I also have learned a lot about Africa, Kenya and about myself. I have learned that it isn't so hard to go to a completely unknown place and perhaps I'll go back and work, something I realized I really wanted to do during the time I spent there.

I think the students should be allowed to influence the program during the visit, because the schedule was too packed sometimes. I believe that the exchange program is an experience for life, and a perfect way to build bridges between cultural gaps and to fight prejudice.

I will say thank you to everyone that is in this school exchange program, NORAD, VNS, Melhus county and Melhus Videregående. They gave me this experience and this opportunity for life. I will always remember it as a good memory.

I found a lot of similarities between the Kenyan students and us: The interest for music, sports, school and “what would I like to do in the future”.

The poverty/ the contrasts

The biggest challenge was to face the big contrasts. We saw poverty, the slum and beggars, and especially in Mombasa we saw poor people teeming in the streets, having nothing to do. Both this and the fact that we had become used to managing without so many things, was mainly the reason that I never felt comfortable when we at the end of our stay lived at a luxurious hotel in Mombasa. I felt very selfish who did not enjoy it as much as I should, but I guess I liked being a guest better than being a tourist in Kenya. But all the contrasts we saw and the differences from Norway we found also became the topics of conversations and discussions we had with the other exchange students. They were discussions I appreciated and I think they made both parts reflect more culture-wise and gave a lot of impressions for reflection. Even if we came from two totally different parts of the world, those situations were situations where we in spite of that discovered similarities between us. The differences between us, on the other hand contributed in that way that we learned a lot from each other, for instance about the African culture and their way of living.

The only big thing I disliked was that we had to leave Taveta so soon. And then come to Mombasa wasn't as nice as I thought, not that it wasn't an ok city, and it was nice to relax a bit in the pool, but it wasn't like being in Kenya anymore. Taveta had been Africa; Mombasa was like being on vacation on a vacation island.

To see the African culture, and to see not only the differences between Kenya and Norway, but also the greater differences in Kenya, was interesting and sometimes difficult. We could see how lucky we really are in many ways, and we could see that we miss things in Norway when it comes to culture. We got to learn so much about ourselves, Kenya and the cultural, economical, political and social differences in the two countries.

It was interesting to experience the differences in living standards close-up. This became very clear when we left the nice hotel in Mombasa and took a train through the slums surrounding Nairobi.

PART 2 – THE TIMBILA HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

1. The Teacher’s Report

Selection

In the month of ? the School Exchange Programme Committee under the leadership of Mr Gilbert Mwakwasha selected the group of participants from the teachers and students.

These were:

Teachers

Peter Ndirangu

Jasmina Marawi

Students

Joseph Mtamu (form 4)

Collins Mulungo (form 4)

David Warisanga (form 4)

Harun Sulaya (form 3)

Edwin Nyambu (form 3)

Fundi Johnson (form 3)

This list of participants was handed over to Mr Kimaro (Principal) for the final approval. It was passed without any changes but with a word of caution that the number of students might be reduced from six to five depending on the availability of funds.

The preparation

North-South Friendship workshop

In the month of ? the co-coordinator Mr Komeja organized for a workshop in Timbila High School for the teachers and later for the students. The aim of the workshop was to review the exchange programme activities done so far. It also served to prepare psychologically and otherwise the participants in the SEP for the year 2006. It was successful.

The water Project

The water project was still set up at Njoro Springs and despite all the effort made to come up with useful results there was a big setback by heavy rains which resulted into floods.

Passport

The process for applying for the passport was vigorous as it has always been. The application forms have to be delivered to the Mombasa immigration office by the individual participant. While there we learn that a student above 18 years old they had to be a holder of National identity card in order to be granted a passport for 5 years before renewal. For one of the students the birth certificate had some alterations and was not accepted. This warranted the student and one of the teachers go back to the Wundangi office for a new birth certificate.

Visa

Application of the visa started off fairly late and this meant that the two teachers involved had to work very closely to make sure that the process was completed on time. While at the Embassy the letters of permission from the parents which were sufficient at the immigration turned out to be insufficient then. It was demanded that for each student, there had to be permission letter from the father and mother. Despite all this we were still able to get the visa on time thanks to the Norwegian Embassy staff at the Lion's place, Nairobi. It is important to note here that as opposed to previous groups the embassy did not require the application of visa to be done individually.

The journey

On 14th we received a call from the travel agent and several text messages from Grete to the effect that our departure from JKIA on 18th had been rescheduled to 19th April. This meant an extra day of stay in Nairobi as we had already booked for departure to Nairobi on Monday, 17th April. While in Nairobi we spent one night at YMCA and another at Town Down Hotel. On 19th we left the hotel at 4.00pm for JKIA. After the long procedure of checking in and waiting we boarded SN Brussels flight 418 at 2105h. We arrived at Brussels at 6am and stayed at the airport until 14.14h when we departed for Oslo.

Arrival in Oslo

At Gardermoen Airport we were received by Merete, Nils (teacher), Lars Kristian and Thea. It was a cold evening and even more cold for the sick Jasmina, who with a lot of medical support and care from Merete and Nils felt a lot better and was able to recover after two days.

From the airport Nils drove all of us in Melhus vgs van to Melhus with a stop for dinner. By about midnight we arrived at Melhus and settled in for the night at Trøndertun which hence forth became our home during our period of stay in Norway.

2. The Students' Report

Friday 21st April

After our breakfast at Trøndertun, we were taken to the school by the school's minibus. On arrival we went to the staff-room, then the principal welcomed us to his office. He showed us some of the gifts and presents he got from Kenya. He later introduced us to the whole Melhus vgs community at the school canteen.

We attended a PE lesson at the sports hall where we rehearsed for the match of the following day. We later had a common lunch prepared by the second year cooking class at the school's kitchen.

After lunch we attended an electronics class where we did some practices on soldering and circuit systems. Later back at Trøndertun we went sightseeing after which we went for dinner at Jorid's place. After the nice dinner we were back at Trøndertun the rest of the day.

Saturday 22nd April

The day started with very busy preparation for the match and the teachers were busy with the paperwork. On this day some of us and the teachers missed breakfast and they had no other alternative than to stay without breakfast that day. Luckily enough Ragnhild and her friend Ingunn came to visit us and they were told that some of us had missed breakfast. The two girls felt very bad, and had to use their own money to buy breakfast for us. When they brought the breakfast, the ones who had missed breakfast took it. Ragnhild and Ingunn told us that they were leaving. At 12.30 pm Grete arrived to pick us up for the football match. The teachers didn't join the football match because they were still busy with their paperwork. When we arrived, we went to change our clothes and after that we divided into two teams. The teams had both Kenyan and Melhus students combined. The two teams were named the red and the blue team.

At about 2.00 pm the match took off and we played for two short halves, and in the end the red team won two goals to nil. After the match we changed our clothes and went to pick up some clothes for the stay at our friends' homes.

Joseph and I went to John's home and David and Harun went to Lars Magnus's home. All of us were welcomed very well by the parents of our friends and they cared for us very much. We had dinner at our friends' home. In the evening we all met at Lars Magnus's. We had supper there and played some games. At about 10 pm we went back to the homes of our respective hosts.

Sunday 23rd April

On Sunday Joseph, Harun, David and I went with the host family to see the waterfalls, while Collin and Johnson went to the mountains. We had a great time, and about 4 pm we went to our host homes for dinner. At about 5.30 pm all of us were taken to Trondheim to watch a movie called Ice Age 2. We enjoyed the movie very much. At about 9 pm we were taken to Ragnhild's home to see some pictures from Kenya and told stories from both Kenya and Norway. At about 11pm we were taken by the bus to our host homes.

Monday 24th

On the 24th we woke up early and had our normal breakfast. After that Grete came and picked us from Trøndertun to Melhus vgs. We attended an English class with Anne Chatrine. The lesson was very interesting because we had already covered the topic of which they were studying. There was also a meeting that our teachers had to attend, and thus they missed the English lesson.

The lesson only took an hour and then we break for lunch at 12 noon. After taking packed lunches we rested for about five minutes and then Grete took us to Øysand where we were supposed to try horse riding. By the look of the horses we couldn't imagine whether we could

ride them because the horses were very huge with projecting muscles on their legs which caused more fear in us.

The teacher who was in charge of the horses ordered us to at least try riding, and after several attempts we found it quite interesting and enjoyable. We also walked around the buildings and saw how they kept the horses and we found that they are kept indoors almost all the time. They also said that they just feed them while they are in there, which is quite different from Kenya where we just leave them outside to look for their own food. When we were done with the sightseeing Grete took us back to Melhus vgs where we were supposed to attend a computer class, but we didn't. And the best reason is that we were a bit tired and we had been late, so we had no alternative but to go back to Trøndertun to have a rest while we were waiting to go for a dinner at a restaurant called Mama Rosa.

Merete came and picked us up to take us to the restaurant where we were to have dinner with Komeja and the Mayor of Melhus together with the other group who visited the town council.

Tuesday 25th

The day started well. It wasn't cold as the previous days. We were collected by Grete at Trøndertun and taken to the agricultural school close to Melhus called Øya. We were taken round the school by students: to the green house, cows, sheep and pets, and then to the classrooms. We had our lunch there and then left for Gimse school where we played a friendly basketball match and met a boy from Burundi who actually spoke Swahili.

After that we had our computer lesson at Melhus by Nils. We then studied some historical sights like the Cathedral in Trondheim. We had our dinner at Trøndertun, and it is where we first ate codfish. Not a bad experience. After dinner we watched pictures at Melhus vgs from Kenya where we met the parents of the Norwegian exchange students. We had cakes prepared by John's mother and they were very nice!

Wednesday 26th

It was just an ordinary school day. We attended class for mathematics, and the topic was on "index" which was the same as we had in our Kenyan secondary school syllabus. We were so surprised to hear some of the students were unable to speak English, and this led to a communication breakdown since they only knew how to speak Norwegian.

At midday we went to the orchestra class at Gimse School where small children aged seven to fourteen years of age were playing music using their instruments. The music was very interesting and we had wished to stay there and listen to more music.

After ten minutes we joined a biology class on biodiversity where Madam Grete taught us. The lesson was very interesting since we had a chance to use a computer to find out more about biodiversity and the various united organization. After a short break we joined Madam Ingeborg at biology practice whereby we dissected a squid and we found it very interesting since it was our first time dissecting fresh squid. The lab was very good since it contained all the facilities needed for the practice.

After that we took our dinner at school whereby students from both schools prepared it. The food was delicious and everybody liked it.

Thursday 27th

Woke up early and after breakfast we were given a ride by Grete to the school. We attended a chemistry class where we participated in carrying out some experiments. Edwin, Ragnhild and John made hydrogen gas and they were excited when they introduced a burning splint to it because a loud “pop” sound was produced. After the chemistry lesson, we jumped in the car and headed to learn skiing.

The experience was a delirious ecstasy since it was my first time. The 2IA students were very helpful in lifting us and giving us tips on how to minimize falling. As fate would have it, Edwin fell and fractured his arm leading to a mare of a little fear of the game. We had hotdogs and tomato soup for lunch and after the delicious meal we made a snowman assisted by the 2IA students. We went back to Trøndertun where we had our dinner and prepared for the cultural night.

We drove to Melhus Town Hall where we met the other exchange programme students with their parents. A local television journalist interviewed Joseph and Lars Kristian. I received a present from Lars Kristian’s sister.

The event was officially opened by speeches from the Mayor of Melhus and the principal of Melhus vgs, and the performance kicked off. There was exposure of talents by participants which marvelled me. The agility of the dancing troop of girls from Trøndertun, the jazz and the captivating rock music really excited me. Ragnhild and Thea also presented a nice song, and the Kenyan students participated by singing some traditional songs.

We were rewarded with T-shirts with a picture of all the exchange programme students pasted on it by Merete. We also participated in a raffle ticket draw where David won an electric hand drill. The cultural night ended up being a great success.

To me, the cultural event symbolized the end of my short but educative stay in Norway. We drove back to Trøndertun quietly and that night I slept heavily because of the magnitude of the day’s events.

Friday 28th

On this day, all the students attended the social science class while the teachers went to the Mayor’s office. In the social science class we had a tough debate about sheep and wolves. At the end the chairman (Lars Kristian) suggested that the debate had not brought a possible solution. After the debate we were given a five-minute break. After the break we started a lesson about crime and in this class we discussed very many issues.

After the social science lesson we were told that we were free to attend any class, and so we joined the PE class but no student from our school played on this day. After the PE class we went back to eat. After eating I was taken to St Olav’s Hospital by Kristin while others went for sightseeing in Trondheim. At the hospital my arm was found fractured and I had to get a cast. The doctors in this hospital took care of me in a very good manner. The other students

went to the science centre and saw a lot of things. They also went bowling and they told me that they enjoyed it very much.

After being treated in the hospital, Kristin took me to the library in Trondheim where I met the teachers. Here Kristin took me to the library hall so that I could find a book to read, but I found none that was interesting. After that Merete told us that we were going for dinner in a nearby restaurant, and the other students would join us there.

We went to a restaurant called Peppe's Pizza and the other students joined us therein five minutes time. The dinner was very delicious. From here we went to the Nidaros Cathedral for a short sightseeing. There we were told that it is believed that if someone walks around all the rooms of the cathedral he or she will die.

After the sightseeing we were taken by the bus back to Melhus where we attended the volleyball class. Here all the other students played but I didn't because my arm was in a cast. From here Ragnhild took us to Trøndertun on foot. When Ragnhild was sure that we could not get lost (just near Trøndertun), she bid goodbye to us and told us that she was going home. At Trøndertun we started packing.

Saturday 29th

Since this was our last night at Trøndertun we took an early breakfast so that we could prepare ourselves to leave for Haltdalen. Svein-Inge was supposed to drive us. On the way we visited one of the houses where old people were kept and it happened that one of our friends (Lars Kristian) had his grandfather there. After this we continued our journey which took about an hour and a half. Soon we were at Ragnhild's cottage tired and hungry. Merete prepared for us something to eat while we were sorting out our clothes for skiing. We had a lot of fun out there since this was our second time trying skiing.

At first we did not enjoy it very much because when we tried to go down the slope we fell down several times. There was also the tube which can be used to go down the slope and one of our teachers tried to use it. She was moving down the slope at a terrifying speed. She lost control and the tube was going directly towards a tree. She had no alternative but to shout for help, but fortunately she did not collide with the tree. This was very dangerous because she fell from the tube and somersaulted. We immediately ran to help and we found that she was all right. From there she didn't even dare try again.

Sunday 30th

We had spent a night in Haltdalen and almost half of the day was spent there. At about noon we left for Oslo via Røros. In Røros we drove through the main street, saw the ancient copper mines and the old buildings. We left Røros and continued with our long journey. We stopped at a gas station and had something to drink. We had our dinner at Rena. We reached Oslo at about 8 pm and we found our way to the youth hostel. We spent the night at Haraldsheim youth hostel. On this long journey Madam Grete drove us steadily, tirelessly and safely. She is a great driver!

Monday 1st May

It was a short night since the previous day when we travelled from Haltdalen to Oslo. We went for breakfast and then we had a meeting with the Norwegian teachers and students first and then with the teachers only. Among the things we discussed was the importance of the exchange programme to the individuals and the whole community involved. Students from Norway and us pointed out some importance.

After the meeting we were to go to the main street of Oslo. We boarded a tram to the place. Very busy the street was because of Labour Day Celebrations and various bands passed and people were following them in a parade.

We took our lunch at a restaurant and went to see the Parliament and the King's Palace. We learnt that the King had no political power since 1905 and he only led in the opening of the assembly. We went to the harbour and then back to our hostel. We rested a little while and then set off to Komeja's home. We had our dinner at his house and were lucky to eat an African dish (Cassava). Then we went back to the hostel to pack for our departure the following morning.

Tuesday 2nd

Some of us woke up at 3 am and the others at 4 am. This was to allow us time to be at the Gardermoen airport at 5.30 am for the check in at 6 am.

It was cold and drizzling and we felt colder inside as we were sad to part with our friends. At the airport Ragnhild could not hold back her tears as we hugged and said our goodbyes. Lars kept sighing heavily – he could not contain the sadness. The morning now became colder than it had been, and finally we waved goodbye and passed through the first gate.

Thoughts on the Norwegian society

Education

Children are educated from a very early age. When at kindergarten they are taught how to socialize with each other and accept their way of life. In the first level of education their interests and talents are keenly noted.

When at lower secondary they take general studies, but at upper secondary one chooses subjects according to interests. Unlike in Kenya where there is specific duration students are supposed to be in school, Norwegian students go to school according to what they have in their timetable.

Inside the classroom many activities take place at the same time: Listening to the teacher, answering questions, chatting, eating, admiring each other and so on. There are no preps for students and no uniform for them like in many African countries.

There are schools for specific studies. For example Øya Upper Secondary School (videregående skole) specializes in agriculture, while Trøndertun (post upper sec.) specializes in music and dancing. There are also universities in the country. An example is the university in Trondheim where there are a number of African students.

Mentally handicapped are also taken care of academically. They are being taught by qualified teachers. There are some in Melhus Videregående Skole. Generally education in Norway is highly valued and this makes possible for the development of the country.

Family life

The relationship between the man and woman in the house appears to be one that can be a lesson to be learnt by our African couples. Unlike in African homes, Norwegian couples do not have male superiority factor where a husband would not cook or wash dishes. House chores are amicably shared between husband and wife. Parents allow their children a lot of freedom. A girl can even freely invite her boyfriend home without eyebrows being raised. In a way this serves to guard the children against doing things “in the dark” leading to problems like premarital sex and unplanned pregnancies due to lack of guidance.

The level of respect between the parents and children is low. When the children attain the age of 18 years they feel that they are now grown ups and the parents should not make decisions for them. This has brought about frequent conflicts between the children and parents, making the family scenario rather unpleasant.

Materialism

The Norwegians own highly specialized materials to make their life more easy. Their houses are well furnished with household goods e.g. televisions, refrigerators, computers, heaters and ovens. Each family owns at least one car. Their roads are well built and maintained. Generally they are kind and generous. I find them jovial and welcoming.

Social life

Although there are sophisticated means of communication e.g. the e-mail, the interpersonal i.e. face to face communication is on the decline. The Norwegians seem to advocate for personal freedom and respect to individuals. This contributes a great deal to them being less social. All human beings opt to be social because no one can stand on his own. In contrast, a few Norwegians are very social and hospitality is a dominant feature in their day to day life.

PART 3 – FOLLOW-UP WORK (Melhus)

After the return to Norway we have been busy working on the report, the accounts, editing the pictures and most of all planning the return visit. The students have written their part of the report, and have contributed with lots of ideas for the program for our guests.

The program was planned on the same basis as previous years: We aimed to make a varied and not too tight schedule, emphasizing time in the classroom, but also time to socialize and see a little bit of the counties of Melhus and Trondheim. See appendix for detailed program. A new element this year was a meeting with the parents together with the students and our Kenyan guests one evening. Having such a meeting after the return from Kenya, talking about our adventure and showing the parents the pictures and videos that were taken, has been a tradition but after the previous visits we have had this meeting immediately after our return. This year we waited until our guests had arrived. We had a lovely evening all together, and this will definitely set a new tradition.

Grete and Merete also saw to practicalities concerning the visit. There were some difficulties with the paperwork and money, and in the middle of the Easter Week the travel agency called Grete to tell her there were no flight tickets for our guests! That got us quite worked up, because there was only one ordinary workday before they were supposed to leave Nairobi, and what if there were no tickets the next days? The lady at Kenor Safaris worked overtime and got hold of tickets one and a half day later than planned and with a lot more strenuous route than we had intended. We also had to rearrange the timetable for the visit.

New projects, new challenges

Because of the educational reform that is being implemented in August 2006 in the Norwegian schools, we shall have to find new ways to continue our work as linking schools, since the reform takes away the elective courses as we have known them. We have spent quite some time thinking about and discussing future possibilities before, after and during the visits. Since the water project is now concluded (though Timbila wants to continue on their own), as is the English project (Being Young Today) it is time to think of a new “doing-it-together-project”. Therefore we have tried to put these two challenges together: 1) What groups of students and 2) What subjects/curricula that can be used in a project after the reform?

The Idea

Basically the idea for a new project is Young Enterprise (YE). Melhus vgs has for many years had this as part of our curriculum for vocational courses. This means that the classes who join the program start an enterprise in September based on a business concept that the students agree on, run it through the school year, and close it at the end of the year (in Norway before the exam period in June). A possible business concept for a YE class at Melhus is to sell Tavetan products that they buy from a YE business established at Timbila. It is of course important that the businesses are run according to good business practice. The business will be started and run 2006/2007 and a selection of students from the enterprise will visit each other during 2007/2008. We have also thought about including students from social science studies at Melhus. They will focus on North-South topics, fare trade, globalisation and so on. They should specialize on these topics, which are part of their curriculum, and convey their knowledge to their fellow students in the YE class.

Possible products

We must find goods that are easily sold in Norway, preferably to young people. Purchasing price must be low and the merchandise must not be too bulky or heavy. Suggestions: Cotton materials from the market in Taveta, small items of woodcarving and possibly jewellery. Some of the materials can be sold as they are, but some of it could be made into products like handbags and purses. These must be made in Norway, since it is necessary to know the customers' likes and dislikes.

Gains

- The students learn how to run a business "for real".
- They will learn about global terms for business and the fair trade movement.
- Those who are selected to visit each other will have a unique possibility to experience cross cultural work and friendship.
- Possible profit that can be used in the schools and the project.

Challenges

- Make such a business profitable.
- Profits and norm of distribution (policy of distribution of the prospective profit).
- Convince the Norwegian students that this is a good idea, even if it's not their own idea, and it may be more difficult to make a profit with this concept than other kinds of business.
- Overcome the problems of slow communication.
- Red tape, customs.

These obstacles should not be underestimated! Going through with this project means a lot of work both for the students and their teachers, and it may not even be a big success money wise, but as an educational and adventurous experience it cannot fail!

Preparatory work

Since we are in the very beginning, not very much has been done so far. The idea is to run the business one year and do the SEP the following year. Therefore we hope to start the business in August 06, in other words there's no time to lose!

This has been done:

- Merete has had meetings with colleague Tone Høvik who is an experienced YE teacher. She fully supports the idea.
- There has also been meetings/discussions with the administration at Melhus vgs.
- While we were in Kenya we checked possibilities and prices for dispatching goods from Taveta to Melhus at a meeting with the postmaster at Taveta Post office.
- We also had a meeting with the SEP committee at Timbila where this was one of the topics (see minutes in appendix).
- During the return visit Jasmina, Peter, Merete, Tone and Anne Hox (also experienced YE teacher) had a meeting discussing the topic in more detail, and our colleagues from Timbila were given folders and articles about the YE

It is now up to the two parties to qualify as quickly as possible to be able to guide the students in good business practice and get them started. At Melhus the major challenge will perhaps be to make the students want this! On the other hand we have the benefit of more experience with YE.

PART 4 - APPENDIXES

Summary of meeting with Kimaro at Timbila, 06.03.06

Present: Mr Kimaro, Merete (ref)

- We agreed that having a separate account for the SEP would be a practical and sensible arrangement. The head of the SEP committee, one of those responsible for the actual exchange and Mr Kimaro should have access to the account.
- Grete needs all the receipts for expenses so far so that we know how much there is left for paper work, and how much more is needed. The receipts would be ready the next day.
- Getting the passports has been too slow. Getting visas is also time consuming, and if the passports are not ready very soon, it may create difficulties getting the visas in time for departure.
- Mr Kimaro would organize a meeting with the SEP committee as soon as possible to discuss the future development of the program.

Summary of meeting with the SEP committee, 06.03.06

Present: Mr Kimaro (partly present because of exams), Gilbert, Anne (ref), Ruth, Stephen, Jasmina, Merete (ref)

- Merete reported from the meeting with Mr Kimaro.
- Merete put forward the idea of a YE project at the two schools. We discussed practicalities, and agreed that Jasmina and Peter would bring some cotton materials and small woodcarvings when they come to Melhus. Some of these can be used at the raffles in The Town Hall in Melhus.
- Discussion of the possible problem of housing during future visits. The hope is that we could use the house that the boys used 4 years ago. It has not been used since and needs repairs before it can be used again. If there is a profit from the YE perhaps some of it could be used for this purpose.
- We agreed that the YE project was worth a try, and that both schools should plan for this.

Summary of meeting at Melhus vgs 28.04.06

First we had to make a survey of how much money our guests need for their return to Taveta. Grete had prepared this. There is also the problem of paying back to those who have bought materials for the YE. We agreed that Jasmina and Peter will open an account for the SEP, and they will put the raffles money there, and they can withdraw it from there.

We also discussed the insurance, since Edwin had broken his wrist.

Because of a delay in the paper work in Kenya, we had to spend more money than expected. This should be avoided in future. It will be easier when we have a separate account for the SEP. Prices in Kenya have increased substantially during the last year, and the fact that the railway line from Voi to Taveta is no longer operating, also makes travelling more expensive.

Grete will keep in touch with the air line/travel agency about the problem with the tickets that were suddenly not there!

The teachers want more time for computer lessons.

PROGRAM FOR OUR TIMBILA GUESTS (pr. 17.04)

	Wednesday 19/4	Thursday 20/4	Friday 21/4			
8.15-9.00			Welcome! (canteen?) Headmaster's office. Walk in the school building			
9.05-9.50						
10.00-10.45			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>PE Melhushallen (Astri/Geir Frode)</td> <td>2A/2B</td> <td>Teachers: meeting with Anne Hox/Youth Enterprise</td> </tr> </table>	PE Melhushallen (Astri/Geir Frode)	2A/2B	Teachers: meeting with Anne Hox/Youth Enterprise
PE Melhushallen (Astri/Geir Frode)	2A/2B	Teachers: meeting with Anne Hox/Youth Enterprise				
10.55-11.40						
12.10-12.55		Arrival Gardermoen Airport Oslo 16.20	lunch prepared by the cooking class (Arne) (Lunch break 11.40–13.00)			
13.05-13.50			ELECTRICAL STUDIES (Trond) 1el (SEP-meeting teachers.)			
14.00-14.45		Minibus to Melhus				
14.50-15.35		Dinner on our way to Trøndertun				
		Arriving at midnight (?)	"Sight-seeing" at Trøndertun <u>Students:</u> Making dinner together at Jorid's <u>Teachers:</u> Dinner at Grete's			

	Saturday 22/4	Sunday 23/5
	2 pm: Kombi-cup, Melhushallen, friendly match (football) with Kenyan and Norwegian students playing. The Mayor will introduce the match! Students: Stay with the Norwegian students until Monday morning Teachers: Jasmina stay with Grete, Wahome with Helge Bjørn, until Sunday evening.	Program up to host families Merete invites the teachers for dinner in the evening.

	Monday 24 /4	Tuesday 25 /4	Wednesday 26/4	Thursday 27/4	Friday 2 8/4
8.15-9.00	SEP-meeting teachers.			2CHEMISTRY (Hege) (107)	2SOCIAL SCIENCE (Gunnvald)
9.05 – 9.50		Visiting Øya (agricultural school)	Mathematics?		
10.00-10.45	2LA Chemistry/Youth Enterprise (Tone Lise/Svein)	Lunch at Øya	ENGLISH,1if b (Tone Lise)	Learn how to ski! 2IF (IF-teachers?) Lunch: hotdogs/barbecue	Teachers: Summing up talk
10.55-11.40	“Matpakke”		“Matpakke”		
12.10-12.55	1AB ENGLISH (Anne Chatrine)	Visit Gimse Lower Secondary School	Midtime		Trondheim (Nidarosdomen, Vitensenteret, Tyholtårnet.....)
13.05-13.50			3BIOLOGY (Grete)		
14.00-14.45		COMPUTER SCIENCE 1IFa (Nils)	2BIOLOGY (Ingeborg)		
14.50-15.35	Horseriding! Øysand				
	Computer lesson with Grete after horseriding.	Dinner Trøndertun at	Dinner at school	Dinner at Trøndertun	
	8.pm (Kenyan teachers and students) Dinner with Melhus Community and Komeja	Meeting with the parents. Pictures and video from Kenya	Volleyball, Melhushallen 9.30 – 11pm	Cultural Event in Melhus Town Hall -dance performance -jazz group -rock group -Kenyan group and more	Packing!

	saturday 29/4	Sunday 30/4	Monday 1/5	Tuesday 2/5
	Haltdalen to stay at Ragnhild’s family cottage Skiing, visiting Haltdalen stave church	To Oslo (via Røros)	In Oslo: Visit Komeja? Sightseeing	Leaving for Nairobi