

Amani UK Newsletter

UK Charity No. 1073357

Autumn 2023

From the Coordinator

We held our half yearly trustees and advisers meeting on the morning of 11th November and at 11 o'clock we stopped to observe two minutes' silence to remember the sacrifices made by so many people and their families due to past and present conflicts. It is good to reflect on the past and to learn from it. It also helps us to keep a perspective on life and for us on that Saturday morning, it brought into focus the suffering still happening all around the world, not just because of war, but because of the inequality and lack of opportunity which exists in so much of our world.

Amani UK can't change the world but we can help change things in the area of Western Kenya where we concentrate all our efforts and the good news is that there are very positive and encouraging things happening. Our meeting on that Saturday was probably the most positive meeting I can remember. You, our supporters, with help from a favourable exchange rate, have helped our finances move from a difficult situation to one where we can now provide additional funds to community groups before the end of this year.

We've had some good news on new grants and great comments from previous funding organisations based on the feedback reports we give. They are looking to partner with organisations like us who, with the amazing help from the Upendo Foundation, Kirongo and Hope for the Future staff, deliver what they promise to deliver. During the October visit we saw some fantastic progress being made on the ground and more and more people will be able to witness this as at long last we can report that larger team trips are resuming in January 2024.

As you can see on page 2, Amani UK's origins now go back almost 50 years and our present core model of funding community groups has been in force for almost 25 years. Our aim is to establish Amani UK's future for the next 25 years and beyond and so, as a team of trustees and advisers, we are examining ways to incorporate this sustainability in our organisation. This includes inviting people to get more involved with the work we do.

This newsletter will cover the latest news about many of the areas I have mentioned and I am sure you will be encouraged by what you read.

Contact details: Telephone: +44 (0)1494 716505 Email: contactus@amaniuk.org.uk Website: www.amaniuk.org.uk
Address: 14 Maxwell Drive, Hazlemere, Bucks HP15 7BX, UK f : search for 'Amani UK' i : @amaniuk_



*Peter Fish is International
Coordinator of Amani UK*



On the way to visit a group

of the link relationships, Kenyan schools often benefit from funds raised by UK schools. Our orphan support programme gives direct subsistence and educational support to the most disadvantaged orphans.

For a relatively small organisation, we achieve an amazing amount and we will continue to fund work in all these areas for as long as it makes sense to do so. However, now is the season to re-focus on the 50 community groups we support by funding the Kirongo and Hope for the Future community based organisations (CBOs) via our NGO partner the Upendo Foundation. The trustees are confident of the positive results which this re-focussing will produce in the years to come.

Concentrating on Our Core Focus— Community Groups

All of Amani UK's activities have strong links to our core mission which is to help the Kenyan people find a Kenyan solution to their challenges which is sustainable and capable of continuous development. The Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic provides vital health support to the community groups in the Kirongo area. The new Sino Grace Clinic will do likewise in the Sino area. Keep a Girl in School (KaGiS) helps thousands of girls, many of whom are from the community groups we support, to attend school regularly. Our School Links programme helps the education of many of the orphans we support as well as all the pupils in Kenyan and UK schools through the sharing of stories about their cultures. As a result



Sharing breakfast at a group funded by the Shalom Trust

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About Amani UK

The origins of Amani UK go back to 1986, when a project was established by Elizabeth Feilden to bring relief to the poor of rural Kenya. Through the late 1990s awareness of HIV/AIDS grew and the devastating impact on families and communities became a reality. By the year 2000 widows and orphans were forming into community groups to cope better with the consequences. Amani UK made itself part of this changing environment by reshaping the central project focus into one of guiding and directing the community groups into membership of Projects through which Amani UK is able to channel resources and expertise.

Amani UK funds the Upendo Foundation which is our Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partner in W. Kenya. Upendo delivers direct support via two community based organisations (CBOs). These are Hope for the Future based in the area around the town of Oyugis and Kironko which is located approx. 15km from Oyugis. Amani UK is a UK registered charity no. 1073357 and operates on a totally voluntary basis with the trustees meeting ALL expenses. Overheads are nil and 100% of money donated goes to help the people of Kenya. See the front page for how to contact Amani UK.

A Reflection from the October Trip

As I was sitting chatting to the Wedewo Widows group, I realised that there were many more successes to the Shalom funded pilot Economic Empowerment project than I had understood from reading feedback emails.

I had begun to notice things were looking positive at the staff meeting we held, where everyone shared successes and challenges, though there were some challenges that I didn't understand until I saw them in practice.



The Wedewo Widows Group

Some successes are hard to measure statistically; we learnt that there is unity and cohesiveness amongst the groups; the group members share resources and they act as each other's guarantors in the economic empowerment programme. Production and income have increased, and from this - and this is what the widows were sharing - they can buy food, fertilizer and seeds; they can buy writing materials for the students, pay schools fees, pay for health care and help support the orphans within their group. None of this was clear when I was asking questions of the managers like 'how many bags of sorghum did the first harvest yield' or 'have the bees colonised yet?'

The women shared that other groups are interested in the project, but I believe that these groups may not realise how hard the Shalom pilot groups are working. They have not simply accepted the money as a gift; they are all engaged and working very hard to ensure their pot of money grows. Indeed, now they are learning to re-invest, one of the next steps, we've been told, is to discuss saving.

Having spent time with the Wedewo widows, we then asked different questions as we visited other groups. They all shared success stories. Yes, there are challenges, not least inflation and the unpredictable weather patterns. As this is a pilot, we will all learn from the challenges.

I had arrived in Kenya wondering if the pilot was a success; I am pleased to say, it certainly is.

Sue Smithin—Amani UK Trustee

News in Brief

We visited the new **Sino Grace Clinic** in October, meeting Dorine (the area county assembly member), health officials and the area chief.

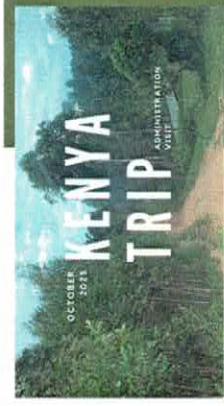


Unlike the Ted Rayner Memorial Clinic, the operation of this clinic will be funded by the Health Department. Dorine has budgeted KES1M of funding from November 2023 and so, when the January 2024 team visits, we expect it to be fully up and running.

The work we fund can only be delivered effectively via the staff in Kenya. To help fund their salaries and other costs associated with the work in Kenya, we apply a Kenya Local Operating Cost (**KLOC**) levy of 15% to donations (except orphan support @ 5%).

Safeguarding remains a priority and we are pleased to report that Seline Ndinya has been appointed as the safeguarding lead person for the Upendo Foundation

After the early **January trip**, our next trip is planned to leave immediately after Easter. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining the team. You can get a flavour of what a stay in the Oyugis area is like by having a look at the video which has just been posted on Facebook and Instagram and in any case, please follow our regular posts to keep up with what's going on.



Seline (**Healthy Choices** lead staff member) reports that there have been a number of Healthy Choices outreach events to young people. A significant proportion of the local population is HIV+ and these outreaches use sporting events to offer a safe environment for young people to be tested voluntarily and also to receive counselling. There is a pressing need for this programme to continue and further funding has been applied for.



Concentrating on Our Core Focus—Community Groups (continued from page 1)

Support of the community group model was adopted by Amani UK over 20 years ago because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We don't hear much about this pandemic nowadays but over 18% of people we support in community groups are HIV positive. The difference nowadays, because of the availability of antiretroviral drugs, is that HIV positive people are able to live productive lives. Being stigmatised is still an issue but HIV positive community group members are able to contribute to their group just as effectively as those who are not infected.

Amani UK is now focussing strongly on the Group Empowerment Programme where, rather than spread our financial resources too thinly by trying to provide support to all the groups at the same time, we will look for a number of partners to help us provide concentrated funding to the groups over a short period of a few years. Those groups which are not yet part of the programme will still receive annual support from Amani UK. There are many groups wanting to join the Group Empowerment Programme and at the appropriate time we will ask the CBOs to recruit more groups. We know from external studies that this approach works and we now have substantive results verifying this ourselves from the trial done with 10 groups using the initial £5,000 donation from the Shalom Trust. Everyone has probably heard the saying "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" and this is exactly the principle of the Group Empowerment Programme.

Individual Economic Empowerment

It is easy to forget that many community group members, whether they are HIV positive or not, are elderly. Even so they work in their own farms and in the group farm but it would be unreasonable to expect them to scale up these activities a lot because of the amount of extra manual labour which would be required. One very effective solution to this is to give the group some funding so that each member can borrow from that fund on the basis that they pay back the original sum plus 10% in weekly equal payments over a 12 week period. At the end of the first 12 week period the member can borrow 10% more and will pay back a slightly higher weekly amount because of the increased loan. In this way, the original funding given to the group increases by over 50% p.a.

We witnessed this model, which has been developed by Bernard (Kirongo Manager) and his team, during our October trip. Group members have been able to make their weekly repayments and use additional profits from their activities to fund orphans going to school, medical costs etc. The activities undertaken are varied but they include buying foodstuffs in bulk to sell them in smaller quantities at the many local markets and making and selling local fast food such as mandazis



Mandazis—a Kenyan fast food



The Onyigo farming group

annual return of around 50% (except for one group where their crop was badly affected by birds). Beekeeping is an activity which generates no initial returns because it takes a year or so for the hives to get fully established. However, the three groups which have invested in this activity are now harvesting honey which will generate about £380 pa from an initial £335 investment.

Group Economic Empowerment

It suits other groups better to receive a donation, all of which is used towards a group activity. These are mostly farming groups but some groups have, for instance, bought chairs which they hire out for functions. The farming activities include growing maize, beans, sorghum as well as keeping bees.

The results so far show that the groups who have been growing produce are also generating an annual return of around 50% (except for one group where their crop was badly affected by birds). Beekeeping is an activity which generates no initial returns because it takes a year or so for the hives to get fully established. However, the three groups which have invested in this activity are now harvesting honey which will generate about £380 pa from an initial £335 investment.



Spot the beehive!



Staff sharing experiences on Economic Empowerment during a training session

You can Empower a Group

In the last newsletter we mentioned the possibility of creating opportunities for people to be a community group sponsor or be part of a sponsoring team. Because of the amazing success of this empowerment model, we are now looking to source more funding from individuals as well as other charities. The good news is that we have just secured another £5,000 grant from the Shalom Trust and detailed planning of how these funds will be awarded to the groups and how many groups will benefit is currently in progress. This will still leave 30+ groups looking for support so, if you are interested in funding a group with a single donation or by setting up a monthly standing order, we will include additional groups in the Group Empowerment Programme as soon as we reach the required fund value to add a new group. Depending on which economic empowerment model is suitable, the required funding is £500 - £1,000 per group. Please get in touch with us using the contact details on page 1.

Snippets from Kenya

We are currently working with the staff in Kenya to update the Upendo website (www.upendopartnership.org). This should be completed before the end of the year but here's a preview of their articles which are to be added.

FOOD SECURITY—is the backbone of the Upendo Foundation and affiliate projects of Kirongo and Hope for the Future. All the groups Upendo works with ranging from widows, farmers, self-help groups and people living with HIV/AIDS have the food security component as key among the activities they undertake.

Each Group strives to have their households put food on their tables every day. Upendo Foundation through the projects has managed to provide seeds and fertilizers to the groups every year both in the long and the short rains. This is aimed at enhancing the crop yields per household. Maize and beans are the staple food crops but some of these groups plant other crops like sorghum, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, cassava, millet etc.

Alongside the farm inputs, Upendo provides livestock e.g., chickens, cows, sheep and goats and ploughs and oxen. Beekeeping and fish farming are some of the activities undertaken by some of the groups as a diversification of their enterprise and these generate extra income to the groups which is invested in other viable livelihood activities for sustainability of the groups.

The technical Field Officers train these groups on good agronomic practices and do regular follow ups to ensure that the groups follow instructions up to the harvest period for good crop yields. The pass on pass back of livestock concept has thrived well having members of these groups receive livestock from other groups and from members in their own group. This has seen over 50 cows distributed among the group members through the scheme.

We desire to see a food secure community and to reduce cases of malnutrition among the community members we support.

Leonard – Upendo Programme Manager

PUTTING A SMILE ON A WIDOW'S FACE—Grace Atieno Otieno is a member of Onyigo Women Group, a group that is running a community nursery school supported by Amani UK in a remote area of Homabay County in Western Kenya. In the year 2015, a team from Amani UK visited the group and met Grace for the 1st time. She was teaching as a volunteer even though she was not trained. She invited the team to her house to come and pray for her husband who was very sick. After the prayers she was given money for her husband's treatment but unfortunately he died a few weeks later leaving Grace, a young mother of three, in a very pathetic house and children to raise on her own without any income since he was the sole breadwinner.



Grace's shop

Grace was very desperate but thank God Amani UK through Upendo Foundation restored her hope by taking her to college to pursue a certificate course in early childhood development, building her a new house and a start-up capital for a grocery shop.

Phelix—Hope for the Future Manager

GRADUATING BEULA ORPHANS — The Upendo Foundation reaches out to the larger community through affiliate groups of widows, women, farmers and youth groups among other similar vulnerable groups of people living with HIV/AIDS and disability. Through the Beula Women group way back in the

year 2008, the child headed Adidi family of 5 siblings Bernard, Benter, Kevin, Dominic and Moses were introduced to Upendo Foundation. Bernard, the eldest son and head of the family is now a university graduate working as a hospital nutritionist but was then in primary school. Bernard was in the difficult and hopeless situation of trying to balance between going to school, putting food on the table and babysitting the youngest sibling Moses. Following a visit by a team from Amani UK, the Upendo Foundation was able to support the family with farm inputs, monthly stipends, school fees and extras with the Beula group giving them moral and spiritual support. Each one of them was given a custodian who was a member of the Upendo Foundation staff and who further walked with them looking to their personal needs, giving them counselling, mentorship and guidance.

Today we are proud of them and very grateful to God Almighty and Amani UK for the continued support. Bernard, Benter, Kevin and Dominic have all graduated and are either working or "hustling" in different areas of work and are able to help their younger brother Moses who joined college this year 2023.

Priscilla—Hope for the Future-Field Staff



The Aimo community group



The Adidi family orphans (centre) in Jan 2009