

SCAW NEWSLETTER



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A registered Canadian charity founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

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TANZANIA: August 1 - 19, 2005: 5,000 Bedkits

BY RICHARD HRYNIW
LAKESIDE, ONTARIO

The decision is made: 5,000 bedkits for Tanzania. Thus starts a half-year process that will result in that number of extremely poor children in Africa receiving not only a bed upon which to sleep, but netting for protection from malaria-carrying mosquitoes, and clothing and items that will assist them to attend school. With excitement in my heart, I e-mail Mama Wandoa Mwambu, our contact in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to relay the good news. She is equally elated to know that the total number has been increased by 1,000 and, in anticipation, has already begun the organization for this August 2005 distribution.

Untold miles and hours will be spent over the next months as suppliers are contacted, prices negotiated and confirmed, children selected and listed, distribution sites located and nearly 50 volunteers assembled. In addition she will arrange for the Canadian team's accommodation and transportation. There are some wonderful surprises. As usual, Alfred, one of Mama's sons, plans to join us for the entire distribution. He also has a delivery vehicle and two men available to provide for the bedkits' transportation. Abdul Othanian, the supplier of the mattresses, is going to store them free of charge, plus provide two trucks and four men, asking only that fuel be supplied. It is clearly understood that costs such as these will come from other sources. The \$150,000 CDN that will be transferred to the Tanzanian account is solely for the 5,000 bedkits. In Canada, we too are preparing for the trip as we



review the policies and procedures, begin to gather the six member team and book flights. Arranging airline tickets is critical as there are only limited flights into and out of Tanzania. After much searching, our agent finds the best and cheapest route. This year it is Air Canada to England, Kenya Air to Nairobi, switch planes again and on to Tanzania, also with Kenya Air. After the initial meetings to lay out the dates, plans and logistics of the trip, the Canadian team now waits until mid-July when they will sort, categorize and carefully package the donor labels. All 5,000 labels will be equally shared with the team members to become part of their carry-on luggage. The labels will be guarded like diamonds until finally used.

A confirmation e-mail, in early July, from Mama Wandoa confirms everything is in order. On August 1st, we, the Canadian team, meet in Terminal One, Pearson International Airport in Toronto, to commence the three day, two sleepless nights, long-haul flight that lands us in Dar at 9:00 a.m. (2 a.m. Canadian Time) on August 3rd. We will need to get used to sleep deprivation. Mama has arranged to assist families in many isolated and depressed areas where there is no place for us to stay. We will need to drive from and return to Dar each time. Our days will start around 4:00 a.m. and not end until the sun has long slipped past the horizon. Despite the long hours, torturous roads, and dirt, dirt, dirt, and more dirt, the distributions are completed with very few hiccups due to Mama's excellent organization.

With the labels used and the photos taken, the experience calls us to shift modes. We now have some time to relax and visit the national reserve parks and observe animals in their natural surroundings while we remain "fenced" in our four-wheel drive land cruiser.

Our work, however, is not yet complete. Before we return to Canada, we need to meet as a joint Tanzanian-Canadian Team to review the good and not-so-good things about the distribution, confirm and record all financial details, discuss plans, changes, and improvements for the next trip. In addition, we must write and submit all our reports and documents. Finally, all the volunteers, Tanzanian and Canadian, celebrate together with a meal and some entertainment. Some of the Tanzanian volunteers are dancers and drummers. By August 18th, when we board the Kenyan plane, we are exhausted but hardly realize it as we are euphoric about the 5,000 Tanzanian children who now have a comfortable bed because you, as a donor, sent the money, and we, as a collective volunteer team, made sure it happened. Please enjoy your photo, your gift – it is only the tip of the iceberg.

BY JOAN HRYNIW
LAKESIDE, ONTARIO

There is NO food bank, NO soup kitchen, NO welfare, and NO safety net to assist people in need in Tanzania. In the villages outside the few major cities, some people exist on as little as \$1.20 day; however, many earn less!

A farmer will make charcoal and grow some vegetables and fruit on a small plot. The charcoal takes six weeks minimum of hard work to produce 15-20 bags at a time. This is sold for 3500 TZS (\$3.60) a bag or \$72.00 every six weeks, or \$650.00 a year. Fruits and vegetables are sold when they are in season – but bring in very little money as everyone else is selling them too. Hence, this farmer might make the equivalent of \$2.40 a day. In the city, the minimum wage is \$1.20 a day.

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MURRAY'S DREAM 1,000,000 BEDKITS - TO DATE 781,850!

(Tanzania by Joan Hryniw, Lakeside, Ontario, continued from page 1)

Considering that people have to buy water, food, and pay rent, they are no better off moving to the city. **THIS IS THE WAY IT IS!**

A typical village day begins for Mama Wandoa at 6:00 a.m., sunrise – there is no hydro here (only 7% of Tanzania has hydro). Small sticks are gathered for the fire (all charcoal is sold), and the fire is started. Water is skimmed off the top of a pail or carefully poured out of an old two-litre cooking oil can into a battered pot. (Water would have been carried up the hill from as much as three to four kilometers away the night before in order to let the sediment settle to the bottom of the container.) The water is NOT clear. It is brownish red due to the dust still suspended in it. The well is simply a two metre deep hole with two feet of water in it. It has no covering. It is the only source for the village of 100 people. Once the water starts to heat up, Mama makes *Uji* as she slowly adds the grains of millet, maize or cassava root that she has ground in a stone bowl with a club-like stick, until it becomes the consistency of thick porridge. If they had to buy the ground meal it would cost 500 TZS (60¢) for an amount sufficient to feed a family of five. On a very special occasion a touch of sugar might be added as a treat. The meal is eaten and the dishes are cleaned off with the “well water”. There is no soap. A cake of soap – small matchbox size – would cost 100 TZS (10¢) and there is no money for this luxury.

At this time, Mama sweeps her dirt floor and the area around her hut with a homemade hand broom, fetches more water, and launders her clothes as best she can in whatever water is available. Around 3:00 p.m. the main meal is prepared IF they have the ingredients. *Ugali* starts out like *Uji*. Water is boiled, ground meal is added until this time it becomes quite thick. It is virtually tasteless and of a thick sticky paste consistency. This is doled out onto one battered large tin or wooden plate that everyone shares and which also holds leaves of wild spinach, bean pods (the beans themselves are sold) or okra. Sometimes unsold vegetables are roasted in chunks on a stick, for example, pumpkin, cassava, or white yams. Many families are unable to afford the luxury of *Ugali* at night. The distended tummies and thin limbs of both children and adults signify, to the onlooker,

these unfortunate families. **THIS IS THE WAY IT IS!**

Some families are fortunate enough to have a few chickens. These are raised to produce eggs: all of which are sold for 150 TZS (16¢) each or used to hatch more chickens. Occasionally a chicken is slaughtered and sold – rarely is it enjoyed as a meal. If they have a goat or a cow, the milk is NOT used by the family but is sold to earn another few measly shillings. When in season, their diet can be augmented by fruits that they are unable to sell such as oranges, tangerines, papaya, mangoes, passion fruit or pineapples. They earn little from this as the market is usually flooded with the produce and it sells for little. Coconuts, when available, are ground up and the juice is added to the cooking pot. Rice is a luxury, 4500 TZS (\$4.70) and eaten maybe once a year.



Life is a constant struggle. In spite of all their challenges, these people greeted us cheerfully and warmly, and welcomed us into their small homes. Orphaned children are folded into the community and cared for as best they can. Their caring and love for their children, their extended families, and their community is an example to all of us. The Tanzanian people are to be commended for this. We can surely learn a great deal from them. **THIS IS THE WAY IT IS.**

BY TOMBELTON OTTAWA, ONTARIO

Aaaaaaahh! To be able to return to a comfortable and dry bed for a good night’s sleep after a hectic and action filled day. There just is nothing like it.

A bed is one of our possessions we all take for granted. Why not? The vast majority of us use “our bed” every day or night without a thought. It should be one of our most cherished possessions when you think of it. Every time we go somewhere, or have guests visit us, we check on the availability of a bed. The number of beds usually determines the number of guests.

But for poor children in Tanzania, and indeed throughout the world, they do not enjoy this so-called “privilege”. Usually, they sleep where they drop or lie down. The vast majority

of children we saw here in Tanzania used the ground: the hard, damp, uninviting ground. We saw with our own eyes the small pieces of foam rubber – hardly large enough for a child’s head let alone his or her body – or the little mats – reminding us more of hemp doormats well past their usefulness – that were used for a child’s resting place. We saw rumpled cardboard, or simply bare ground which exhibited nothing other than a nest-like depression where a child had lain.

To complicate the situation, sleeping on the damp ground contributes to numerous respiratory illnesses, sapping the already weakened body; malaria-infected mosquitoes ravage the unprotected; poisonous snakes regularly visit anything on the ground; and various crawling and flying insects create their own form of havoc.

At one of our distribution sites, Azimio, we visited a small home where we saw first-hand the terrible toll AIDS is taking as an all-too-familiar occurrence in Africa. Living in this small home was a family, plus an extended family of six children whom they had taken in. Can you imagine adding six children to your family’s daily budget and life? A brother and sister-in-law had died leaving their children to the care of a relative. In one small room these six children slept, or tried to sleep, in the conditions described above.

This stark and dramatic example, regrettably all too common, hammered into my consciousness and heart, just why we were here. One bedkit per family was given on your behalf to each of the family units in this household.

Bedkits are ESSENTIAL to the survival of the children here in Tanzania — they bring a sense of well-being and comfort. A ten- to twenty-kilometre walk for these children was not too far to go for these valuable items. With a “*Yako*” (this is yours)...small dirty hands grasped “their new bed” with anticipation and gratitude.

With the 5,000 bedkits distributed, plus the countless others who will share them, we are content that we at least made some difference to those in need.

BY SHELLY BURTON HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

This was my first distribution with SCAW, as well as my first trip to Africa. I was not

quite sure what to expect on my first journey to a developing country, yet it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. It was educational from a variety of perspectives, but what most astonished me was the strong sense of community here in Tanzania. I was astounded at how Tanzanians will go out of their way to help others, even though it may inconvenience them. In Tanzania, people share what they have. The extended family (which also encompasses the community) forms an essential support network, necessary in the absence of government social security systems.

Tanzanians emphasize including others. I believe this plays a major role in the development of this sense of community. For example, during collection at the local Lutheran Church, everyone walks to the front and puts their hand in the collection basket. The idea is to include everyone, regardless of their financial status. Those who do not donate money can donate a prayer to the collection basket.

The existence of this sense of community was also evident during our distributions. First of all, the older children were very protective of, and helpful with, the younger ones. They were invaluable to us in guiding the younger children through the steps of the distribution. Mama Wandoa's volunteers further illustrated this commitment to helping others. They did not have much, but were working very hard to help the less fortunate. Some would drive up the night before with the mattresses and sleep in the truck. All Mama's volunteers were busy rolling the mattresses by the time we arrived at the distribution sites, despite the fact that we had been getting up at four a.m.! All they received for their efforts was approximately 60 cents – enough for bus fare and water. Moreover, the gentleman from whom the mattresses were purchased offered Mama two trucks and four men to help with the distribution. It is clear that the Tanzanian people are dedicated to helping each other. This is just one of the reasons why I have a great deal of respect and admiration for their citizens.

As one would likely expect, they also extended their hospitality and kindness to us. One of our many instances of car trouble was a prime

example. When we got a flat tire on our drive up to Bagamoyo, the local village people immediately came over to help. They removed the flat tire and hitchhiked to a repair shop to have it patched. When they returned two-and-a-half hours later, they put it back on for us. We honestly didn't have to do a thing! On top of this, Richard was later approached by a driver who had passed us on the side of the road. He wanted to apologize for not stopping to help! It is truly remarkable how this society places such a tremendous value on helping others.

Overall, I feel that the Tanzanian people have a spirit of life which has been somewhat lost in Western society. They may be poor in materialistic terms, but have a very rich sense of community. These remarkable people have made me realize what is important in life, and for this I say "*a sante*" (thank you).



BY KATIE SANDIFORD STOUFFVILLE, ONTARIO

Having just completed my Bachelor of Education this past May and about to start my first teaching job in September, I was intrigued to learn more about Tanzania's school system. Fortunately, each site on this distribution was at a different school so I was able to satisfy my curiosity.

Imagine walking into a classroom about fifteen by twenty feet square and being warmly greeted by 100 smiling faces. About 30 children were seated on the concrete floor. The remaining 70 shared the 20 desks in the room, many sitting three or four to a desk designed only for two. Most classrooms this size housed 75-150 students and approximately 1,000 students occupy a single school. Upon our arrival into the classroom the children immediately rose to their feet and said in unison, "Good Morning Madam!" I was touched by their warm and joyful faces as they sang us a song in English that had been rehearsed for our visit.

In a country where poverty is so prevalent that it ranks Tanzania as the second poorest country in the world, it is nice to see schools as an organized institution where children up to 14 years old are entitled to a free education. It is unfortunate, but many students do not continue on with school after grade seven (at 14 years old) as tuition is no longer supported by the government.

Families, however, must pay for a school uniform which consists of a blue skirt or shorts and a button-down shirt. Children are not allowed to attend school without wearing their uniform. Many of the children's uniforms were well-worn and tattered. I hope that the inclusion of a new button-down shirt in their bedkit will help to allow more children to continue attending school.

School supplies are in high demand for Tanzania's students. I am happy that this year's bedkit also contains two pens, two pencils, and two notebooks to further help the children continue in their learning.

Each of the nine schools we visited had certain similarities. Classrooms were dark, and floors and walls were concrete with cut-outs for windows to let natural light in. The roofs of the classrooms were tin and had many holes that would allow rain to come through during the rainy season. There was no electricity in the classrooms which meant no overhead projectors, computers, or TV's and VCR's for teaching tools to which North American children are accustomed. The teachers' only physical tool is a blackboard and chalk.

In one school, their communications system is a single rusted piece of scrap metal attached to a tree branch. It is banged at the beginning and end of school periods. Although it is not a sophisticated system, to me it made a beautiful sound. There is no broadcasted instrumental recording of their national anthem, instead the children assemble themselves in the school yard and 1,000 voices sing the Tanzanian anthem accompanied by a two or three student ensemble playing drums and cymbals.

After seeing the schools in Tanzania I was impressed with how happy the teachers and students are. The students are eager to learn and they proudly try to show their English speaking skills in their attempts to communicate with us. They take pride in their school work, carrying with them a small grocery bag with their one or two notebooks that contain math equations and sentences printed in English. Pencils are treasured and used right to the very nub.

One of the most touching things to me was to see the children taking so much pride in their school yard and school building, enhancing the sense of community we've all experienced. There is no janitor to clean

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(Tanzania by Katie Sandiford, Stouffville, Ontario, continued from page 3)
up the tarmac after recess. Instead, there is only dusty ground that is swept of leaves each morning by the students with their homemade brooms. There are a few flowers growing beside the school building, also watered by the students with water that some of the children have carried miles to school.

At one school the principal, realizing that well nourished tummies lead to better working minds, implemented a breakfast program. Students bring the wood to school that will feed a fire to cook *uji*, the staple food in most Tanzanian's diets, that the children can eat mid-day.

Teachers in Tanzania can expect to make about \$3.00 US per day, about two/ three times higher than minimum wage. I can see that the teachers care a tremendous amount for their students and that they love their jobs. I see so much potential, so much hope and so much care being taken to ensure that their young children are educated. In seeing their system, I realized that the inspiration to learn comes not from technology or of funding for supplies, but rather from people. I can only hope that I can bring that same Tanzanian inspiration to my students in Ontario.

BY DAVE DRYDEN OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

August 5/05 It is 8:30 a.m., distribution #2 at a school in Nyamakongo, 140 kilometres from Dar es Salaam. Mama Wandoa, our Tanzanian host, is standing in a field adjacent to the school talking to a group of over 200 parents and caregivers who have accompanied their children to the distribution.

NEXT SCHEDULED DISTRIBUTION TRIPS

**September, 2005
HONDURAS
5,000 BEDKITS**

**November, 2005
BANGLADESH
7,000 BEDKITS**

Before the distribution of 800 bedkits begins, Mama wants to explain important details about the mosquito nets that are being given to each child.

Malaria is the #1 killer of children in East Africa. Here a child dies of malaria every 30 seconds. The risk of being infected by a mosquito is greatest in the child's dwelling at dawn, twilight, and between midnight and 4:00 a.m. To ensure a peaceful and safe night's sleep for each child, SCAW requires that a mosquito net be included in all Tanzanian bedkits.

Mama explains that a packet of insecticide is also included in the bedkit, and that every three months the mosquito net MUST be washed in this insecticide solution if the net's repellent qualities are to be maintained. The group of caregivers is very attentive. 40-50 men are to Mama's left, while in front of her are a number of nursing mothers, and to her right are over 100 female caregivers. Mama is a good teacher. Periodically a chorus of "Yes" comes from the crowd. At the end of her presentation she answers questions. This education of caregivers is an important aspect of each Tanzanian distribution.

August 14/05 The 5,000 bedkits have been successfully distributed and the SCAW team has driven to northern Tanzania for a few days of sightseeing. Based on our research before leaving Canada, we have learned that a new type of mosquito net, endorsed by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, is being manufactured in only three locations throughout the world, one of them being Arusha, Tanzania. This new mosquito net that has the insect repellent manufactured into its fibres is called the Olyset net. Its repellent qualities will last at least five years, and the fibres themselves are stronger and less prone to rips and tears. An added benefit is that a "halo" of protection is created around the net that will protect others in the room or hut.

Mama has arranged a meeting with executives from the manufacturer, A to Z Textile Mills. We spend a half-day touring the factory, explaining our needs and asking questions. Fortunately Mama joins us. She is the person with the practical experience of knowing what style of net would best meet the needs of the children. We all leave the factory with

THANKS to the following for their contributions to this Tanzanian trip:

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Milton van der Veen for maintaining SCAW's web site

Donors and volunteers for their continuing support!

new Olyset nets and material to take back to Canada for further discussion and evaluation.

Over the past five years, 20,000 bedkits have been distributed by SCAW in Tanzania. The evolution of the suitability of the items in the Tanzania bedkit is a tribute to on-going communication amongst Richard and Joan Hryniw, Mama Wandoa and local producers.

The Tanzanian bedkit is an expression of love, from you, the donor, to the child. However, as well, every day our SCAW team saw how much love and commitment the Tanzanian parents and caregivers have for their children. Sleeping Children, through your donations, is helping these caregivers to demonstrate their love to their children. Every parent and caregiver wants and appreciates that opportunity.

It is amazing the benefits derived from a simple \$30.00 donation! Many thanks!



SCAW'S GOAL - 1,000,000 BEDKITS BY 2010!