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Nairobi, Kenya

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CMSI Link Letter

Isabelle is a CMSIreland Mission Associate who advises the Tujisaidie Community in Kayole, Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Friends of the Tujisaidie Self-Help Group in Nairobi,

As Advent approaches, it is a good time to look back at the year so far and give thanks for the many things God has enabled us to do during the past months. With the help of our friends and supporters, we have been able to lend a hand to the families who lost their belongings or were made homeless when their houses were demolished in the wake of the El Niño flooding. With the help of Misean Cara, we have been able to build six new classrooms for the Tujisaidie School. With the help of a friend, we have been able to take all the students on outings to places within the wider Nairobi area. And with the help of link parishes, we have been able to provide all the students with a hot lunch throughout the school year, and to send them home with a big food packet at the start of the two-month break in November and December (while national examinations take place and schools prepare themselves to re-open in January for the new school year). We also welcomed visitors, including the Ambassador of Ireland, a delegation from Misean Cara, and friends from Femmes d'Europe and from Just Be a Child.

In this link letter, I want to focus on the visit by Lenka McAlinden from Just Be a Child, an organisation that has by now donated over 6000 books to Tujisaidie and Tumaini. The books are contributed by well-wishers in English homes, schools and publishers, and sent by container to organisations in Kenya. Lenka has also generously donated various other items over and beyond the books : chairs, microscopes, school bags, files and other items of value to children and students. Twice, we have helped to empty the container after it arrived in Nairobi, sorting out what is for Tujisaidie and what is for other beneficiaries. We have great admiration for Lenka and her supporters for providing these great resources to young people and schools in various parts of Kenya, and sometimes even providing the container itself, which recipients can convert to a library attached to their schools.

The donations from Just Be a Child have now enabled Tumaini to extend the library to over 12,000 books. CMSIreland has provided funds to paint the library and has donated bookshelves, tables and chairs. It has also enabled the librarian to return to college and take a two-year course in librarianship and data management. And in addition, a temporary librarian has been engaged to manage the library in her absence.

During her recent visit, Lenka asked how the books were helping the users. Here are some of the responses she received.

Naomi Maingi, the Librarian, said :

Pupils are eager to come to the library during their free time, which is very encouraging, because capturing the attention of the pupils is an encouragement that the future of books will be embraced. The number of active users has encouraged us to also offer free tuition to the high



school students during their holidays in order to help them with their revision. The school heads are approaching us in order to secure an hour at least for their pupils and students in the library, where the books are available to them at any given turn up number. They experience the joy of being in the library because with the wealth of books there is no monotony. We have been able to sort the books in different categories to help with the easy retrieval of learning materials and entertainment books for the lower and upper primary school, novels for the secondary and enjoyment reader, art which includes drawing books, making flowers etc.

Antony Njoroge, the head of Tumaini African Foundation, added :

The Tumaini Centre of Excellence Library has the potential to host 60 library users in a single sitting. The library is now equipped with 12,538 books of different genres. From January to October of this year, the library has hosted 13,719 library users. Eight schools within the community have adopted the library as their school library.

The library has recorded an increase in attendance, which is an indication of the growth of reading culture. Due to the increased demand from the kindergarten age group, the library has set aside 3 hours every Saturday morning as exclusive for their use.

And John Omondi Obimo, the Principal of the Tujisaidie School, reported on the use of the books in the school itself :

Twice a week the preschoolers of ages 3 years to 6 years interact with the small children's readers, which has brought the love of touching and opening books, and recognition of different pictures, which are coloured and bright. The lower primary children of ages 6 to 9 get an opportunity to read young childrens' story books and have bettered their knowledge of reading and counting. The upper primary learners of ages 10 years to 15 years are now very committed to reading as they can access books of various tastes of their ages. They are also practising arts and crafts thanks to the books.

The school population has increased. Each child is given a book per weeks to read at home. This is also helping their parents, as many of them have very limited literacy skills. And the teachers are benefiting too, as the books provide them with a lot of materials when preparing their lessons.

We are so grateful for CMSIreland and all these friends, who help the community in so many ways.

Prayer requests at this time are :

- Give thanks that the Tujisaidie School has now been recognised as an Examination Centre for the end-of-primary-school examinations, taking place during the first few days of November. Please pray that the candidates do well at these examinations and are offered a place in a suitable Junior Secondary School for January 2025.
- Please pray for the good continuation of the Misen Cara project, closing the phase of building the six new classrooms and starting the second phase of furnishing and equipping them.

Wishing you every blessing for Advent and the Christmas time!

Isabelle



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