



2017 - Review of the Year

The year in Kenya has been dominated by the election which created a great deal of uncertainty. The election was held in August, ruled void by the Supreme Court which ordered a re-run. The Opposition leader withdrew claiming that the re-run would also be rigged, leaving President Kenyatta to win the re-run unopposed.

There have been frequent demonstrations, which usually led to violence, resulting in many deaths and the situation remains uncertain and tense, particularly in the slums where people from many tribes lives side by side in abject poverty.



While we have no reports of injury to any of the students we support or the volunteers who assist, it has led to school closures and disrupted study, and the school where our cycling club is based was looted. As you can see from this phot, every window was broken, and all computers, desks and chairs taken.

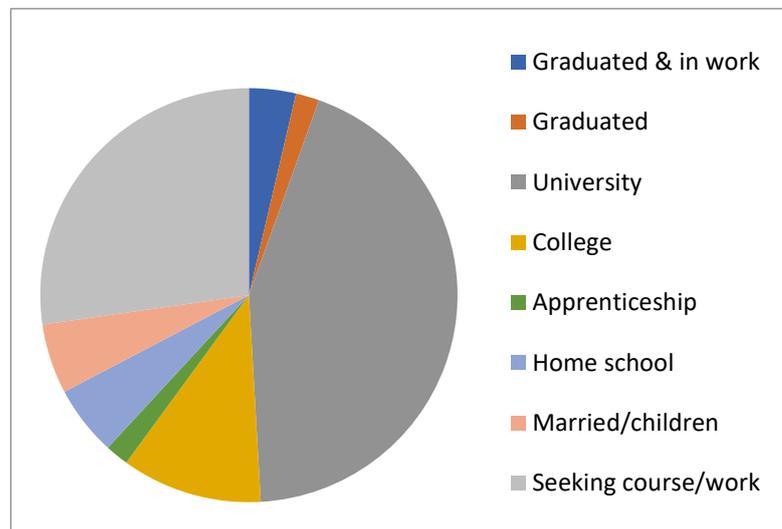
Despite this set-back, things have progressed steadily during the year.

Scholarships

We have now sponsored 149 children in total, with 94 being in school during 2017 and 55 having completed their schooling. Over 60% of these have gone on to university or college, with several in full-time secure employment. 15 are currently in short-term casual work (selling clothes or vegetables, working on building sites etc) and we continue to support these with our mentoring programme.

Of those who've left school

Graduated & in work	2
Graduated	1
University	24
College	6
Apprenticeship	1
Special needs, home school	3
Married/children	3
Seeking training/work	15
Total	55



15 of our students have recently sat their final KCSE exams marking the end of their time at secondary school. They now await results, which will determine whether they receive offers of places at university or college.

We have been able to develop a contact at the government student loan body (HELB) which means we can give more help to these students as they apply for their loans. A number have had difficulties with these loans (for example, Valary achieved her university place at 17, a year earlier than most. However, she could not get a loan until she was 18). We have been able to support a small number of students like Valary with loans of our own - these are interest-free, but repayable.

We have sponsored children at 89 different schools across the country; children from 9 different tribal backgrounds. Many of the children are orphans and we have even been able to arrange home of several, so they have somewhere to go during the school holidays. Six have lost parents while at school and one boy narrowly escaped when his school dormitory caught fire. As you can see, the students live difficult lives.

Interestingly, one election promise is to provide free secondary education. The government has committed 25 billion Kenyan Shillings (around £185m) to cover the cost of school day fees. This may cover their teaching costs – but won't include boarding fees. As most children board, this will have some but a limited impact. It is unlikely to affect the 2018 school year and we will watch the situation closely.

As an example, the government contribution this year is 12,870 Ksh (around £95) per child, leaving parents to pay 54,554 Ksh (around £400).

What we are seeing is many schools reporting a large number of parents being unable to pay their fees. One school, St Barnabas, for example reported a deficit of £27,700. In these cases, children are excluded from school until their fees are paid, meaning that their studies are disrupted and even curtailed. I am delighted that our scholarships mean this does not happen to our sponsored students.

We therefore continue to offer scholarships in 2018 and are now paying fees over to the schools so that children can start the new year in January. The students we are supporting next year include one who scored 431 out of 500 in the primary school exams, the highest we've seen. This has secured her a place at Alliance Girls High School, one of the top 5 state schools in Kenya.

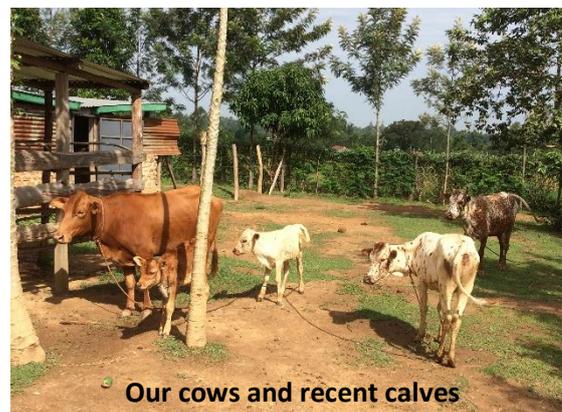
Farm

The farm continues to provide maize to the local Ehubala Primary School, but less than we would wish. We therefore asked the local agricultural college to carry out a site visit to review our operation. Their verdict was that we need to diversify if it is to become self-sustaining. This shows how difficult it is for local families to survive on the small plots of land they farm.

Our three cows each produced a calf this year, but one sadly died recently.

The project is proving valuable to the villagers around Butere, with access to clean drinking water + a supply of plants, seeds, and advice from Wycliffe our project manager.

The plan for 2018 is to build a chicken run for around 200 hens so we have a regular supply of eggs and income. We also intend to sell the existing cows and replace these with ones better suited to milking.



Our cows and recent calves

Mentoring

We ran a pilot mentoring programme in 2016 and plans are in place to extend this in 2018. The backgrounds of our students make it very difficult to find permanent work in Kenya that pays a meaningful wage. Our students simply don't have the personal contacts required. The mentoring programme matches them with business owners and managers in Nairobi who meet with them to develop their personal skills and confidence + help them identify opportunities. An example, is Faith who is now in the second year of a paid Apprenticeship in Mechatronics, obtained with the support of her mentor.

We are hoping to offer 15 places in the 2018 programme and most of our existing mentors have expressed a wish to continue.

The project will be organised by one of our sponsored students (Lammeck) who is studying at university, giving him leadership and organisation experience.

We have asked the mentors to contribute to the cost of running the programme as the project becomes more self-sustaining.

Cycling Club

The club has proved a success in its first year. Around 40 children have attended sessions with 15-20 taking part at any time. I joined 8 of the students for a ride in August and saw for myself how much they enjoyed it. The Head teacher reports improved attendance – children who were previously often absent, now attend school more regularly as they must go to school if they wish to be part of the cycling club. Despite being a school in the Kibera slums, the school is the only one in Kenya with a cycling club. One young girl has also reported that cycling is proving good for her asthma (before joining our cycling club, she was unable to take part in any physical activities).

I mentioned that the Raila Education Centre, where our club is based, was looted during the election violence. The school was severely affected, and just two weeks before the Form Four students were due to sit their final exams!

All our bikes were also taken, and the local volunteers have been approaching bike shops and cycling enthusiasts in Nairobi. So far we have had one bike returned, two more donated and a local fundraising exercise has raised €250. The club is therefore back up and running, albeit on a smaller scale.



Students take a trip - 26km each way

We are determined to resurrect the club as soon as possible and will shortly begin a dedicated fundraising campaign. It is helping kids who are otherwise very susceptible to temptations of drugs, glue sniffing, alcohol, gang crime and violence, and even prostitution. Our plan is to buy a shipping container which will become the base and store for the bikes. This will allow us to not only teach the kids to ride and take trips outside the slums, but also teach them repairs and maintenance skills.

Thank you again for all your support over this year. We continue to put every penny donated towards these projects and I think we're making good use of your money.

Thank you and very best wishes,

Neil

P.S. You may have seen that I rather foolishly committed to running the 2018 London marathon. Look out for updates on our Facebook page.

www.facebook.com/RedRubberBallFoundation