

Lights for Learning 2004

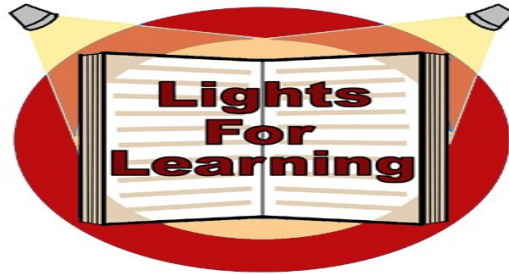
In Conjunction with

Rotary Club of Mombasa and Kilifi

Mombasa Trip 2006

Post Trip Report

By
Roger Mugridge

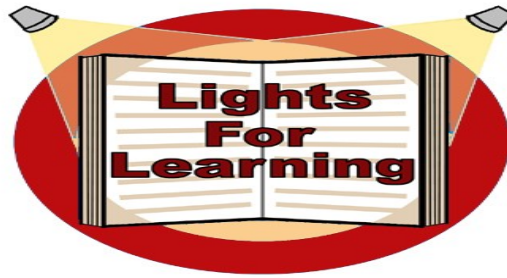


Lights for Learning 2004

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Forward



Lights for Learning 2004

Back in 2002 I suddenly found myself in the totally unexpected situation of being disabled and being told that I would never be able to hold down full time employment again, not very good for a 'young man' of fifty three. We had previously taken a couple of holidays in Kenya and had befriended a young man named Chirea, We had started to help him with the cost of educating his family, and on the last occasion that we had visited the family one of the little ones had been badly burned. This in reality caused the birth of Lights for Learning.

Not being in my nature to sit back and feel sorry for myself; after the initial shock and 'depression' of my illness I decided that I would try to make up some kind of lighting system to help 'our Kenyan Family' and started looking on the internet for something that would be suitable for the building that he lived in, but would also be cheap to use.

After having installed the lights and having them running for a while we realised that we were hitting problems with things like humidity, them moving their cooking area underneath the light and creating a thick coat of soot on the cover! Etc.

The lights were developing every time that we hit a problem, and we suddenly realised that the system that we had could be so advantageous to so many youngsters that were trying to carry out their studies by the light from the fire or kerosene lamps, both not very good lighting and extremely hazardous to health. A friend of ours was following the development of the lighting system and agreed to help us get the project registered as a charity. We had looked at this previously but gave up when we became engulfed in bureaucracy and numerous forms.

Lights for Learning eventually became registered in 2004 and since then we have made great friends with so many people that we had never heard of before, and without whom we would never be where we are today in our achievements with the charity.

Overview

Lights for Learning is a registered charity based in Cricklade Wiltshire, working in the developing countries of the world wherever we are given the opportunity to go.

Since becoming registered in 2004 we have worked very closely with Project Albert, a charity based at RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire, who work in Kenya with an organisation called Africa Exchange and a charity based in that country called Bridging the Gap. Alongside these charities we have provided lights for a school in Kibera, one of the slums of Nairobi, and two schools on the Massai Mara.

We have also given a set of twenty lights to the Lions Club of Mombasa and they have had them fitted into an educational centre where young people are being taught trades.

Our last trip in March was to take lights over to fit into a clinic and two schools. This was arranged through the Rotary Club of Mombasa, and this booklet tells about the trip.

We started working on our next project back at the beginning of 2005. We were approached by a lady that has helped us out a lot with the charity and whose family originates from Zambia. She requested that we look to fit lights into a Catholic school in this country where there are 800 pupils. After assessing the project we decided that we would do our best to carry out the work, but considered that it would be some time before we were able to raise the money to pay for it. We estimated the cost of the components for the lighting to be approximately £8000.00. Since taking on this project we have been very fortunate in being selected by Immanuel United Reform Church in Swindon as the charity to benefit from their Harvest appeal. This raised over £3000.00 pound toward the project! We have had a few other small fundraising events helping toward the final sum, and in the last couple of months we have received a matching grant to finish the project by International Power. We are all thrilled to bits and plan to make the trip to Zambia at the end of July/beginning of August this year. I would like to say that everyone going on the fitting of this project will be self funding as was the majority of the last trip to Kenya. We are very fortunate in this area where we have lots of people that really want to become involved in our work, and for this we are grateful

The Team



Roger Mugridge



Peter Genet



Mr Shah



Ben



Samson

Fitting of lights into Clinic and Schools arranged with Rotary Club of Mombasa - March 2006



During our Bi-annual holiday in Kenya in January of 2006 I visited the Rotary Club of Mombasa as a Cricklade Rotarian. I was invited to tell the members about our Charity and what our aims are, and to show them an example of the lights that, by chance, I had with me! Following this my wife and I were invited by one of the members, Mr Shah to go out on the Saturday and to see some of the projects that the Club had become involved in. We visited a clinic that was served by one resident nurse and dealt with approximately four hundred patients a month and to which there were three classrooms attached. These buildings had solar powered lighting fitted, but none of the lights were working. The lights fitted were 12 volt florescent tubes with high power consumption. One of the other projects that we visited was Ngamani School in Kilifi which is about one hundred and twenty kilometres from Mombasa. About half of this journey was 'off road' into the bush.

On our return to England we held a meeting with the Trustees of the Charity and decided that we already had the stock to fit three of the classrooms at the school with lights, being all they were requesting, and to repair the lighting at the other village. Peter Genet, having never visited Africa, expressed his interest in going, and I decided that I would also make the return trip, if all agreed.

All of the lights and equipment that was required was collected together and a friend of Peters, Nigel, was able to arrange for the equipment to be sent over to Mombasa by courier with no charge to

ourselves. Jean set to and was able to raise enough extra funds to pay for Peters' injections and Malaria treatment (to lighten the load to him and his family a little) to pay for the visas, my malaria treatment, and to fund the Trip to Nairobi that had been arranged for when we were over there.

After much organisation, e.g. realising that it was cheaper to take two weeks package holiday than to book just flights; Peter booking one weeks holiday and one week without pay with his employer; all of the injections that he had to get in and visas to be arranged we found ourselves leaving our wives and children on March 13th at 13.00, flying off at 21.00 and arriving at Mombasa at 9am local time on March 14th.



We arrived at the hotel at 11am, and after a quick shower and change we hailed a taxi to take us to the Rotary meeting in Mombasa for 12.30pm. We explained to the group what our agenda was for the trip and what our aims were for this visit. Mr Shah was already aware of our planned arrival, and the reason for travelling back so soon after our holiday. We had arranged for the delivery by DHL to be received by him at his business address prior to leaving England. During this meeting we were invited to go along with them on a medical camp the following Sunday, 19th, we gladly accepted, and were excited at the thought of being able to share this experience with them.

The next couple of days were extremely frustrating. The lights were stuck in customs and the paperwork had gone astray! We began to wonder if we would ever be able to complete our project for this trip. We occupied ourselves by arranging for the flight to Nairobi, sorting out the purchase of a generator and some tools that we had been unable to bring with us etc., also to acclimatise to the heat before, hopefully getting to work!

Eventually, after many phone calls and messages, we heard the news that the lights were to be released at 10am on the Friday! We held our breath, wondering if it would really happen. It did! And we were picked up at noon by Mr Shah and two electricians that he had enrolled to help us with the fitting, and to learn how the lights actually worked. The parcels were delivered to Mr Shah as previously arranged; unfortunately there was an import duty charge of 66%! It cost us about £200.00 to get the lights released! It was fortunate that we had initially put an extremely low price on the cost of the contents before it left England!



The first project that we went to was the clinic and the schoolrooms where lights were already fitted but were not working. Initially we rewired the system from the solar panel, and installed one of the control boxes that we use with our lights. Some of the tubes were not usable, and we replaced these with our LED lights and boxes. The tubes that were still working were left in place, and the electricians were shown what needed to be done to replace them when they eventually fail. By the time that we left the village the lights were working in both the clinics' rooms and the classrooms, and the villagers were extremely grateful for the renewed opportunity to hold classes after dark etc. The villagers help to maintain the work carried out in the clinic by having a small garden nursery and selling plants to raise funds for the upkeep of this service.



After completing this work we still had enough time to go to the next project at Ngamani Primary School where a request from the teachers and the head had been for lights to be fitted into three of the classrooms to enable study to take place at night. This project would be the first one that we had built the lights from scratch and actually fitted ourselves, and we were very excited. Though the previous job was actually the 'first', we had really only gone along to see if we could 'repair' what was already in place.

Each of the three classrooms was 20ft x 30ft, and we had calculated that we needed to install four rows of three lights into each to get maximum efficiency. Because there were no ceilings in the buildings we had to calculate the height that the lights had to be to give optimum light and the walls were drilled and plugged at measured intervals. Cord was used to string the lights, along with cable ties that will allow for adjustment as time passes. This also allows the lights to be slid for a small distance by the supervising body to get maximum efficiency for each class. The time that we had left on this first day of fitting was enough to complete the first of the three classrooms.

We left the hotel early on the Saturday morning, being picked up by Mr Shah who was accompanied by our 'two electricians' we travelled back to the school and commenced fitting the next classroom. We started measuring and fitting as required and suddenly realised that we had 'lost' one of our electrician friends. We assumed that he had gone off for a lie down or a drink or whatever! When we had completed this second classroom we set off to the next one and found our 'lost man' who had been busy drilling, plugging and stringing the lights – all without us realising – good man! All that was left for us two 'old' men to do was the wiring! We did have a couple of stressful moments during this work. The first was when the guys climbed onto the roof to fit the solar panel. They went armed with a drill, screwdriver and screws; they drilled the roof and then, to our horror, proceeded to fit the solar panel with nails!!!! When we saw the hammer being swung on our precious solar panel we nearly had to be given oxygen! The second came when it was time to throw the switch.

It was a joy when the lights sprang to life at the first flick of the switch (as if we had any doubt whatsoever!)



We were privileged to have an official presentation made of the lights to the school, and the children had come along on their day off to dance and sing for us. There are times when my disability comes in handy, especially when invited to join in the dancing – Peter couldn't get away with it!

I was asked last week what I get out of the charity, and why we do what we do when there is no monetary reward for us, and as I am registered disabled why would I do it without getting paid for it. My reply to this was that to see the children's faces when those lights were switched on was all the reward that I needed, and to be told the next day that they had already arranged to hold night classes on three nights of the week was everything that we ask. That's what it is all about!

The main reason for our visit to Kenya was completed and we still had a week to get through. The next day, which was the day we were to go to the bush clinic with the Rotary Club I wasn't feeling too good. I decided to stay at the hotel as we were to travel to Nairobi early the next morning; however Peter went along to see what these clinics were like. After a long 'rough road' journey the clinic was reached. When they arrived there were about 1500 people waiting for treatment. Word had been sent out to tell the surrounding area that there would be an eye clinic, dentist, doctors' surgery and pharmacy held in this village on this day. The people came from far and near, Peter was told that some of the patients had walked for five hours to come for treatment. The most vivid memory for Peter of this day was the sight of men and boys having teeth pulled without anaesthetic – no sounds – no moaning – just a tear running from the eye as the head was brought up after the treatment! The other thing was the eye clinic. The board that was used to test the vision was really unusual! All of the letters were like a capital E, but the letter was backwards, laid on its' back, rotated the opposite way etc. When Peter questioned this he was told that this was because a lot of the people were illiterate and the only way of testing the length of vision was for the patient to say which way the letter was lying as many would be unable to identify different letters of the alphabet! A remarkable experience!





We had arranged to travel to Nairobi the following day to meet with Sam Harrell, a missionary and Director of African Exchange. We had already worked with Sam through Project Albert based at Lyneham and had supplied him with lights for some schools that he had been involved with the building of. The reason for our visit to Nairobi, apart from meeting Sam, was to visit the slums at Kibera where we also had a set of lights fitted in a school. Unfortunately we were told that it was too dangerous to go into Kibera but arrangements had been made to visit Kibagane, another slum area. To enter this 'settlement' we had to be escorted by 'an important man!' It was an experience that I will never forget, and it makes me feel very humble. The lives that these people live are so deprived compared to what we have and yet they appear to be accepting of their fate and to make the best of a, in some circumstances, very bad lot. There was a young boy there that was actually one of the lucky children that had been chosen to attend a project called Kids to Kids. This is a small school that has about thirty pupils. The children there receive food daily, and they couldn't understand why this young man always brought a carrier bag to school with him. They found out that he was taking some of his 'daily food' home with him so that his siblings had something to eat. Another picture that stays in my mind is a young lady of eleven who had been taking care of her baby sister since she had lost her parents to aids. There are rooms there that are no bigger than 4ft x 8ft where there are eleven people sleeping! The most vivid memory was

of two small children, maybe two and three years old with bloated stomachs from starvation. When I asked our escort if there was anything that we could do to help them his reply was “what about the other thousands in the same condition that are living here in this village? – you can’t save them all” These situations were repeated over and over again as we walked around meeting the villagers.



All Alone



Peter and our escort



We have had lots of encouragement from Companies that are supporting our work with brilliant discounts on the components that we use to make up the light boxes etc, and without their help we wouldn't have been able to complete half of the projects that we have.

We have great friends who give us their time with no thought of charge. The person that designed and regularly updates our web site has been great. Through the web site we have received fabulous donations from people all over the world. We even have a lady in the States that is at present setting up a group of supporters that she is calling 'The Light Brigade', we call her our main beam!

Chris, who lives close by us is invaluable, and spends hours helping with the making up of the light units. He is also looking ahead to when we can start setting up workshops in these countries, and is making up jigs to make the process easier for all concerned. We sometimes have a laugh with him by saying "make a jig Chris" but without his dedication and hard work we would be lost, and we are grateful to have him with us. I must also say that we are grateful to his wife Sue who 'lets' him give so much of his time to the Charity.

We also have many good friends out there who regularly make direct donations to the Charities bank account – for this we are eternally grateful. It is wonderful to know that we have so many faithful supporters behind us. This is an area of the Charity that we need to develop and this will be one of our goals this year. It is very nice to get big, one off donations from companies etc. but it is more comforting to know that month after month regularly there is a sum going into the account to allow us to continue with this work. We cannot thank you enough for your faith in what we are doing – THANK YOU.

