
President's Report to the Annual General Meeting April 19, 2017

The Katoke Trust for Overseas Aid

The past 12 months have seen major difficulties, big transitions, good reports and warm gratitude.

Difficulties. It has been a difficult year at Katoke. You have heard of the earthquake (which killed many in the community and destroyed or damaged properties), the failure of rains (which left subsistence farmers facing hunger) and, at the school, the death of the deputy, Lamech Kassano. These put our workers and the whole community under increased pressure. In the Trust we have lost a considerable source of financial support previously given by Danebank due to new government regulations for use of school funding.

Transitions. The year is also a time of transition. There is a new Bishop of the Lweru Diocese who is also the new Chair of the School Board, Godfrey Mbelwa. There is to be new head and business manager of the school as Rowena and Peter Bragg complete their time at Katoke. In the Trust, we have been delighted to have a new patron, the NSW Attorney General, Hon. Mark Speakman MP.

Good reports. And we have had good news from the school; bursting at the seams with students and continuing to get high marks in national exams. Our health (AIDS and malaria prevention) and agriculture (vanilla) projects are flourishing. We are also delighted that builder Kevin Voigt and wife Valma are shortly to continue the building program and I am at present in conversation with an experienced mission couple from WA who may be suitable replacements for Rowena and Peter. Yet we need to broaden our supporter base and recruit some key new member to our 7 committees.

Warm gratitude. We can only make a difference at Katoke because of the quality of local leaders and our good relationships with them. These relationships and the gratitude shown are some of the great joys of our work. Lamech Kassano was a fine example and I want to pay tribute to him.

Kassano. I have been a long term friend of Lamech and also his father, Canon Geravasi Kassano, who was an articulate and greatly respected pastor at Katoke in the 1970s. Lamech, one of eight children, trained as a teacher, taught in secondary schools, worked for a local United Nations project and was development officer for the Diocese of Lweru. He then became a founding member of staff at KLSS and grew to play a key role as Civics teacher, Deputy Head and community liaison. His unexpected death aged 62 on December 15, 2016, of an acute pulmonary obstruction (a blood clot between the heart and the lung) has been a great loss. He knew the local culture and was a very fluent communicator in both Swahili and English. Rowena tells how she could confide in Kassano because he understood and shared the Christian purposes of the school. Kassano would write the occasional letter to me and when Anna Moir came home in December last year she brought a very precious letter written by Kassano dated 15/11/16 - just three weeks before his death. He said his health was improving (after a heart attack) and mentioned the harmful effects of the earthquake and famine on the district. He then expressed warm gratitude for the school and gave a blessing,

“I always have special prayers for you and the Trust. You have made a very big difference through introducing this school but also enabling the poor to access equal education with the rich. Be blessed by the Lord.”

I thank God for the vision, the commitment to KLSS, the life and the friendship of Lamech Kassano.

“Equal access” for the poor prompted by a biblical concern for justice has been the reason for all our work and particularly for our sponsorship program that some 200 Australians have supported. Children from poor families often excel. One such is Idda Raulin who, on form 2 on national exams, rated as one of the very best students in Tanzania, gaining a GPA of 5. She would not be at the school if there were no sponsor. To all who sponsor children, a big “Asante sana”, Thank you.

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