

Hi All,

Firstly thanks so much for the support this project received from so many of you – we just couldn't have done it on our own and the orphanage and the kids are very grateful to you all. We've been flat chat since arriving – so much involved in setting up a library! Thank goodness for Em's knowledge and expertise!!

We arrived Saturday evening and were mobbed by the children with many hugs all round. They were excited to see Lyle, Em, Zac and Aiden eventually. They'd heard so much about them from me and didn't quite believe they would ever come! It was good to have them here at last.

Getting here proved more eventful than expected with my driving licence suddenly arriving telling me it was due for renewal while I was away and computers not behaving as they should. We made it to the plane on time and when sitting on the tarmac, 2 separate people decided not to fly and needed their luggage taken off the plane (1 hour delay). When in the air, a person took ill and we made an unscheduled stop in Darwin to deal with this (2 hour delay). Arrived in Abu Dhabi having missed our connection to Nairobi so an unscheduled stopover saw us set up in a VERY nice hotel for the night courtesy of Etihad – great opportunity for our bodies to adjust to the time difference in luxury!

Once we arrived in Nairobi, a day late, our ever reliable taxi driver, Hezron, was there to meet & greet and drive us to our overnight guest house stop, arranged by a Kenyan friend, Stella – where would we be without such wonderful people! We dropped our luggage at the guest house and Hezron rushed us to the shops to do the shopping for the orphanage we had planned to do in a much more leisurely manner earlier that day. Thank goodness their shops are open late. Whew – we were now caught up and flopped into the welcoming sofas of the guest house!! Em, Zac & Aiden arrived from England that evening (wonderful to see them!), met at the airport and safely transported to the guest house by the ever faithful Hezron and we chatted over a late dinner and fell into bed.



The next morning we all headed off on a walking tour of downtown Nairobi and a trip into the Mathare slums. We organised both these through a NFP group who work with young people and unwed mothers in the slums. George, our guide, a product of these slums, has been helped through this group & is now studying at college.



An inspiring and sobering day.

Hezron picked us up mid afternoon and piled all 6 of us, plus approx. 200kgms luggage, plus shopping into his car for the 4hr trip to Nakuru – interesting!! Along the way – zebras by the road, Kenyan traffic (!!!), police check points, rugged roads, people everywhere, walking, sitting & laying in the shade, herding cattle and goats. Then mobs of orphanage children – what a great introduction to Kenyan life the day had been for the new arrivals!

Since then Em, Zac, Aiden and Lyle have spent long days sorting approx. 3,500 books into categories, labelling, numbering, gluing in card envelopes, writing out cards, entering the books into an 'accession register', covering them and sorting them alphabetically ready for when the library is finished. Thankfully they had the assistance of a loyal band of about 12 kids from the orphanage who also did the hard yards (& snuck in as much reading as they could along the way). They are so hungry for the books.



My role was to project manage the completion of the library – talk with carpenters and painters, fork out yet more money and lay down the law (in a kindly fashion of course ☺!). In between I ran school holiday art & craft activities for the kids, helped by Aiden and Jacob (the boy we sponsor) and took games to their dorms a couple of evenings, helped by Zac and Jacob. The nearby Ziwa Lodge has a swimming pool, so I was able to play Grandma on 2 occasions and take Zac & Aiden for a swim. We also had a family dinner at the Lodge one night and talked and laughed into the evening.

We all attended a church service with the kids on their Sabbath (Saturday) and were wooed by the incredible harmonies of over 200 African children's voices – so naturally beautiful! That afternoon we accompanied the kids on their Saturday afternoon walk and the little girls were fascinated by Aiden's fair colouring and wanted to hold his hand.



The Sunday was spent on safari in Lake Nakuru National Park which was still open to the public even though they had had an anthrax outbreak. In the surreal environment of lake, savannah and bush we viewed giraffe, zebra, buffalo, wart hog, gazelle, eland, waterbuck, monkey, baboon, impala, flamingo, stork, secretary birds, ostrich and, surprisingly, both black & white rhino. We think we also saw the nostril of a hippo ☺.

All too soon the 10 days were up for Em & the boys and after speeches and hugs, they were suddenly winging their way back to England and Lyle & I were left with a few long days of finishing off. The kids worked wonderfully well with us and by Friday afternoon it was time for a party (apple, loquats, biscuits) for the faithful 12, having first choice of the library bags (noise and excited chatter – choosing wasn't easy with the variety of patterns on offer!) and an hour or so just for reading – pure bliss for these kids!



Then it was time for Lyle & I to spend 12 hrs overnight on a coach with very poor suspension, on very poor roads, resulting in very poor sleep and very poorly backs by the time we arrived in Mombasa for our much needed week of R&R before Lyle flies home and I head back to Nakuru. But more of Mombasa next time.

Love, *Valerie & Lyle*