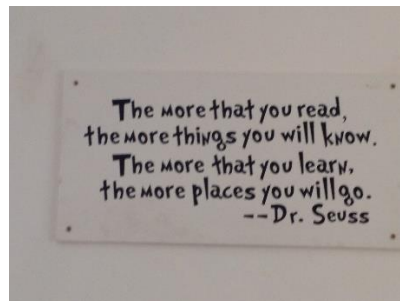


Well it's officially open!! Although the classes have been using it for a couple of weeks, the library has now had its official opening and it scrubbed up rather well even though the painting of the floor will not happen for few weeks yet – nothing happens quickly in Kenya! No going down to the hardware and buying concrete floor paint here – order it and maybe it will come in in a couple of weeks (and maybe it won't!). I must admit I have had my moments of doubt and panic about things being ready by the time I left. Sitting back and letting things happen may be the Kenyan style but it's definitely not mine! Kenya is good for teaching me patience and for fine tuning my judgement of when to push and when to hold back.

Nevertheless the children are trained in library behaviour and are developing, not only their love of reading, but also a healthy respect for the books themselves. The teachers are trained in using the library and I left them with printed and laminated Library Rules, Teacher Responsibilities and Library Monitor Duties to refer to. There are 10 Library Monitors, all trained and eager to keep shelves tidy (Kenyan style – sorry Em, not quite Oxford style!). Teachers have experienced making paint and painting, making glue and collage, making playdough and doing French knitting and are eager to pass on their skills. They are all teaching Lifeskills and Creative Arts classes and enjoying it. 'I didn't know I could draw' says one teacher after he taught a portrait class, and another teacher said 'They really enjoyed it and so did I' after a picture making class using paint. Opening the mind to new and creative experiences has such far reaching effects.



Working with the teachers has been a delight after getting past the first hurdles. This morning I handed them balloons and asked them to have them all blown up by lunchtime. The task completed and balloons tied in bunches, they then set about decorating the outside of the library. They did a great job and entered into the fun of it all. Their confidence to step outside the square has grown enormously!

Another delight had been getting to know the staff better. Jack is the Orphanage Manager and has been with the orphanage for 9 years. Winnie is his wife and is the grade 1 teacher. They met while working here at the orphanage – a real life romance! Three weeks before we arrived this year they moved into their new little 4 room house just near my flat after living for years in 2 rooms with a 50 metre walk to the shower & toilet. Now I have had the joy of their 3 children waving every time they walk outside to push their toys around their quite extensive vegetable patch. Their youngest, Brent, sat quietly on my knee during the opening ceremony. Winnie's sister died while I have been here which was a sadness we all shared. Winnie is also expecting their 4th child in a few weeks (they have adopted an 8yr old girl since I was here last year). They are in their early thirties and I wish I could convey what beautiful, hard working, caring and affirming people these two are but

words do not do them justice so a couple of photos will have to suffice. Morris and Nora are carers extraordinaire and Sammi is the fundi (carpenter) – middle photo.



Jacob, the boy we sponsor, will turn 17 in November. He is a tiny fellow and his 9 year old brother Findley is fast catching up in height. 7 year old cousin Charlie is not far behind. Jacob & I have fun together when he comes for a meal but we also discuss serious matters such as his grades, his behaviour, his mother who died when he was 7, his grandmother who visited from Tanzania a few months back and the role of his family in him becoming who he is. We play Rummykub and this year he also learned Chinese Chequers and how to use a knife and fork. He loved having Lyle here for a few weeks and discussing their mutual love of science while on the Saturday afternoon walk.

The time has come to leave yet once again. I never know if I will be able to come back, but I always hope (and so do they!) They tell me they are currently praying for health, strength and energy for us so we can return next year. I think they are noticing I am getting older but don't want that to stop us! There is so much to do here. The school needs understanding managers. Most of the time and energy goes into managing the orphanage. The teachers need support and guidance. The classrooms need painting and their floors and windows need repairing. Many of the children need remedial teaching and everyone needs a listening and discerning ear. I wish Lyle and I were 15 years younger! But right now I am looking forward to going home, sleeping in, not having every moment of my day programmed and being looked after by Lyle.

Thanks again for doing your part in this amazing project.

Valerie