



Sophie's Diary from Kenya (August 2012)



WEDNESDAY 15TH

I have now arrived in Laikipia, Kenya. This is in The Great Rift Valley. I am staying on a wild conservancy close to The Land of Hope and have already on entry been welcomed by a Leopard, a young male who came on and off the dirt track for bit of sunbathing (as it is the cold season) so they like the track for it's warmth.

I wasn't prepared for this so have not really brought many warm clothes and it is raining and pouring just like it was in London a few weeks ago. Luckily I managed to pick up a pair of wellies and this morning they came in good use as we went for a morning walk that turned out to be an epic 4.5 hour stroll through wild bushland.

At times having to climb up the hill to avoid a herd of Buffalo who we then realised had be disturbed by a pride of hungry lions. So quietly, we were ready to either jump up a tree or run further up the mountain-beating through green wild new bushland due to the rain fall. So August feels almost like Autumn.

FRIDAY 17TH

The sun rises and sets at exactly the same time as we are close to the equator and my view from my banda which is a hard roofed tent is an open savannah in which many wild birds and animals roam. There are the creatures that can live together like Wild Boar, Zebras and Impala who hang out in the daytime and those who keep far away from each other like The elephants, Buffalo and Lions, who start hunting the moment that dusk falls.

Last night or early this morning I was woken up by the sound of Buffalo, a huge herd who were being circled by a pride of lions. The large cats waited all night patiently in the hope that one would break off from the group, so they could pounce and make a kill. However the Buffalo stayed closely together, the bulls on the outer circle protecting the females and their small off spring in the centre. The Buffalo made a lot of grunting noises all night and a kill was never made.

Sadly the next day on our bush walk a calf was taken by the lions- and what sounded like breaking branches was infact the breaking bones.

SATURDAY 18TH

Today I will go to Ol Moran town to buy some supplies for the kids. We will do a feeding day tomorrow which is infact a Sunday. This happens once a week.

The crop this year which is mainly Maize is actually one of the best this area has had in years and they call it a bumper harvest. So all the surrounding fields are full with maize.

This year has been good for the nearby villages and slowly they are becoming more rich with food due to the rainfall. The little towns are beginning to buzz with a bit more to buy and sell and also they are all completely mobile now- the mobile phone culture here is the most important way that each village communicates. It is good to see a bit of fortune in these normally poverty stricken areas. The government are also helping a lot more with education in the local area.

In fact The Mutaro school has benefitted from these new schemes- CDF constituency development fund- where the government give money to each constituency to decide on which programme they will develop and this money goes to schools, dispensary's and maternity wards and digging of bore-holes for water supplies. There is also a certain percent donated for Bursary applications for needy and bright students. They now have a constant supply of water and the community have helped renovate part of the surrounding area. So while the longer term project of a new school at The land of Hope develops the children are safely housed in the existing school.



SUNDAY 19TH AUGUST

103 children turned up today for the feeding, a rather good turn out . I bought only enough milk for 70 but plenty of biscuits. I have also brought along lots of pens and pencils that I have collected over the past years. So we gave the tiny kids the milk and helped them use a straw and then the older kids we gave pens and pencils to so nobody went away empty handed. Quite a task managing so many excited young ones and young girls and boys. Then the class that I worked with on Earth Africa 5 years ago Came to the gate and how they have grown. Most of the boys turned up and only a few girls but the boys are now nineteen and as I stood next to them they towered over me. I will meet them in the Ol Moran town for a catch up and a soda next week.



TUESDAY 21ST

Today I visited The Land of Hope and since I last saw the land 3 structures of magnificence have been built. Finally seeing where the money raised via the RCCF has gone is an accomplishment in itself. There have been different donors as this is a big project which is ever growing- and The RCCF have limited funds. So we have donated towards the nursery and will also give money towards a centre for youths where the Mutaro kids will attend. It is a centre for culture, art, education and will also have a surgery and a sports centre. Infact today I saw where the track will be graded with the help of the British Army. The bore-hole was also donated by a separate source which would have taken an effort to fund-raise so for all these contributions that help enormously to a project like this- one is thankful, especially in these hard economic times.

The design is based on the Mutaro school which you can clearly see in the pictures but it is permanent so will not fall down after a few years. There will be little homes for teachers and also a sleeping place if students have to travel far. There is the nursery and another centre which will be used by the entire community. Where workshops will be held or special classes for the children for singing or painting. It is a beautiful centre that The RCCF are so very proud to have contributed towards and which could not have been achieved without all those who helped raised the money during the fundraiser in April 2009. This is an ongoing project which I will continue to raise funds for.

THURSDAY 23rd

I went to meet my boys and one girl today to chat about how they see their future and what skills would be useful for them in the coming years either in their gap year before university or so they could help start a small business- There are little micro finance projects setting up all over the place whether through the communities or the government will loan money to groups of young men and women if they want to start a small business whether through teaching, engineering or agriculture. The youth centre will help them with these skills as it will offer lessons in computer science, cooking, building or learning medical skills in the surgery.

I also made it clear that even though there will be support from various foundations or private individuals that they also have to contribute towards their own education and future by getting local jobs in the community whether working during their holidays in a local shop or teaching or Learning skills through the ever increasing housing developments and they also need to start working towards their university careers. The same rules apply even in less wealthy countries which is that Generation Y have to now be much responsible for their futures. They all want to help the development of The Land of hope and also go into primary schools encouraging the little ones with more skills. It was a very productive meeting and I have full confidence that these young people will do great things.

FRIDAY 24TH

I leave today to now visit another school in Nakuru that some money has been given. This is a brilliant project which is mainly through the church. An orphanage for boys and girls that now have a proper school. These kids are less privileged due to their circumstances. A combination of street kids who need to be rehabilitated or children who have lost their parents or been thrown out of their families due to changing situations. Run by Sammy Nawali, originally a street child himself who was picked up off the street by an anonymous man who paid for his entire education that then inspired Sammy to set up Rains Edge and Sure 24 for underprivileged kids. They have a fish farm and a workshop and grown their own food. They have cattle for milk and hens for eggs. They now have a school that also services the local community.

It has been an amazing trip and actually seeing where the money is going has been incredible. The money raised by EVERYONE who was a part of The RCCF fundraiser back in April 2009 is helping hundreds of children. So I thank everyone from the bottom of my heart who have contributed as you are changing peoples lives. If you ever fancy a trip to see The land of Hope please contact me and we can arrange this for you. You can email me through my webpage or through my Facebook music page. Enjoy the photos.

Much Love
Sophie X