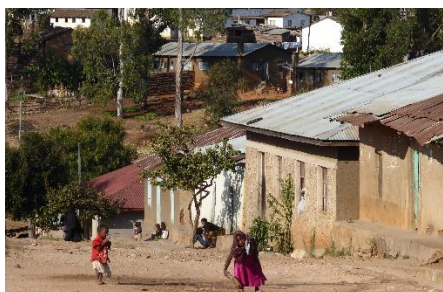


## Ten years on...

Once you visit Tanzania, there is something which brings you back time and time again. Thankfully, I experienced that 'something' during my return to Iringa in the pleasant southern highlands after an absence of 10 years. This time, I thought I knew what to expect, and once memories of the town and its surrounding countryside had returned, the place was a familiar friend. However, in many areas I saw and the people I met, there have been changes – and for the good in most cases.



Brushing a street clean in Iringa. Is this what we want young people to aspire to? SEED *can* make a difference.

We give our money to SEED with a hope that it will have a positive effect on the lives of the young people we support. We read this newsletter and any personal letters from our students and begin to realise what our money is doing but it's not until you see and experience the lives our students and their families, that you fully see the 'big' picture. And 10 years on – is SEED still worth it?

Looking at the changes that can be seen in Tanzania, perhaps the most significant is the gap between rich and poor – it's getting wider. If you can, you buy a plot of land and when you can, you build on it. Houses are popping up everywhere, though far fewer in the Iringa region – for one reason, money is scarce. Additionally, the development of mobile technology is increasing

the 'haves' and 'haves not'. It is not uncommon for Tanzanians who can to have two, or maybe three mobile phones to communicate, make money transactions for others (you are a bank for others in places where there are no banks), and add air-time to other mobiles on behalf of the phone companies.

So what about the SEED charity? How has that helped bring about change – for that was its main aim through bringing education accessible to those who wanted it? Travelling to the schools, you realise that outside the relative wealth of Iringa, there is still huge poverty. Lack of basic infrastructure inhibits the development of wealth. Like *déjà vu*, the queue of buckets



Life in rural Iringa. SEED gives hope to children like these who wait for a future where they may be able to have money to provide meals without worrying where the food will come from.

waiting for a trickle of murky water to refill a pool was still the same in Nyamihuu – the village on the road to Idodi where Emma Stapley had the vision for this charity. Primary schools may be bursting at their seams, but if you are a clever student but have the misfortune of having no money from your family (and orphans have even less chance), there are few other opportunities to afford the progression through education to greater things.

During the visit, a few of the students who are now going through higher education, or indeed, have got jobs paid a visit to Iringa. Although full-time occupations are not easy to find, and since the Government are now requiring even higher standards of degrees to be reached before a job is offered, those students who are successful are grateful for all that our SEED sponsors have given them. There is even the suggestion from them that those who can, contribute to a Foundation Fund for future SEED students so helping the charity continue; this is something to pursue. Even those who may not work full-time, often support the wider family in other ways such as looking after younger brothers or sisters in town so that those left in the village have less burden placed upon them.



The Clock Tower, Iringa town, with resurfaced roads around it. Fear not – dirt tracks and pot holes are not too far away!



Why is the scarcity of water still a problem in Iringa? In the north of Tanzania, they use it to keep the dust down on roads!



Some of the post-secondary school students in Iringa. Still in learning, in a job or looking for one, these are our success stories.



The students from Kiwele with long-term SEED volunteers Samson (right) and Stevo (centre).

Are the schools any different? In all cases, there have been building projects and recent one-off funding for science laboratories from the Government and family contributions have resulted in new teaching spaces with water and gas on tap (when available!) There were new smart dormitories at Kalenga; at Idodi, builders were hard at work reroofing and plastering the one



One of the rooms in the new dormitory block at Kalenga. Note the trunks for storage, the mosquito net on the right and the tidiness!

destroyed by fire earlier this year. Lack of bunk beds (about £50 each) are now the greatest challenge. In all schools, the students were articulate, particularly those in Form IV at the top of the school. Their English was good – and needs to be as all exams and teaching (apart from Kiswahili) is in English. They are also aware of what other students have – including those sponsored by other charities – and are keen to point out their requirements: school bag, enough large books for every subject, PE clothes... and even the opportunity for them to choose what

they really need from the contribution you give through your sponsorship. In many cases, students who are sponsored by SEED are also some of the cleverest in the school and this bodes well for the future. Whilst visits were made to all three Secondary Schools: Kiwele, Kalenga and Idodi, it just wasn't possible to meet all the students who are currently in Form V and Form VI, or beyond – some of whom are spread across the country.

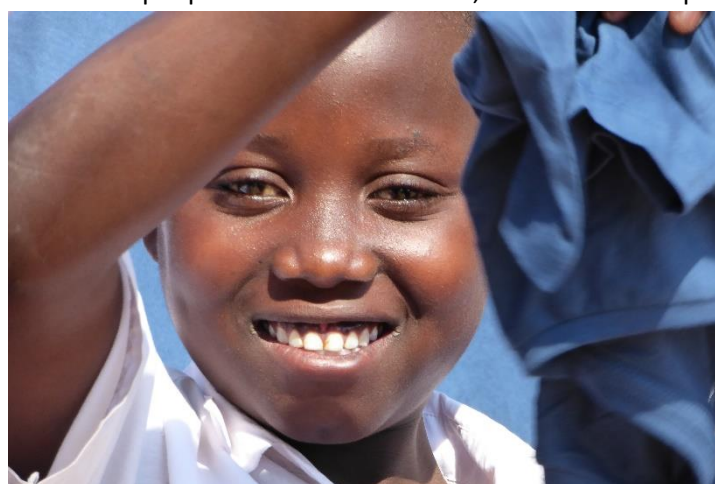


Japheti, who was SEED's first sponsored student, addresses the students at Kalenga.

It was plain to see that your sponsorship of students does make a difference but it's not without its difficulties and this visit has also demonstrated how SEED can develop so that it is more robust for the future. For example, in every school, there is a mentor teacher who supports the lives of students who are sponsored by other charities. This hands-on approach means that problems can be resolved immediately without the need and expense for someone to travel two hours or more. Getting money to where it is needed securely can be problematic – even with people we trust and know, we should not put temptation in anyone's way.



Refurbishing the dormitories at Idodi



A smiling first year student from Kalenga shows her gratitude to SEED.

Once students leave the geographical confines of the Iringa region, it becomes more difficult to ensure their education is supported in the right way if we are unable to see them as often. We also have a duty of care over them and anyone we employ. The committee are currently finding ways to ensure the charity is ready for the future ahead.

So will it be another 10 years before I visit Iringa again? With the smile of happy students, the inspiration that the teachers bring, the wonderful things in the shop and delicious food from the café at Neema Crafts, the busy Iringa market, the refreshing temperatures and amazing landscapes... No it won't be 10 years.



A view from Iringa looking over the valley below. Being higher up, the town benefits from cooler temperatures which has made it a pleasant place to stay for hundreds of years. Nearby – a 3 hour drive – Ruaha National Park is a quiet, yet amazing place to spot wildlife. If you can, do try to get there before everyone else does!

Robert Hollis