



This will most likely be our next-to-last newsletter. Barring a remarkable happenstance, Nan and I shall be leaving Maseno 13 December, not to return. It was a difficult decision. The 10 years we have been in Maseno represents a large chunk of our expected life spans. Despite frustrations and difficulties, it has been a gratifying 10 years. We shall never regret the time spent in Maseno even while we regret those we have been close to but must leave behind: Simba, Duma, and the many honorable people who have worked alongside us. However, we are tired, aging, growing impatient. Even more dangerous, we are losing our empathy. These signal it is time to leave.

With this decision come many thoughts about “*What we have done and left undone*”. While here, we have given support and encouragement and have given at least the illusion that the world has not forgotten Maseno. But when we leave, what will be left behind? It is easy to become discouraged and depressed when one ponders this. Certainly we have changed the lives of a few, even as our own lives have changed. But we have left many more lives unchanged. What of that hallowed word, “Sustainability”? There was always too much against us: inflation, poverty, a bankrupt judiciary and a tattered educational system, rampant corruption infiltrating every corner of society, and an inadequate and uncaring “healthcare” system. All were beyond our capacity to alter. But when our minds return to objectivity, we can at least look at some accomplishments with pride, some of which might come close to “Sustainability”.

Take the **Orphan Feeding Program**. Yes, we fed orphans once per week and actually improved their health in conjunction with the **Orphan Health Initiative**. But more than that, it was a demonstration about what can be done starting with relatively little. Nancy also pointed a route to sustainability with her micro-enterprise loans. Yes, many projects crashed, victim to self-interest and corruption. But some still remain and are growing. What is a reasonable batting average in a world like this? Better than zero is success. The Program may not be sustainable as a program. Donors may withdraw and parishes may have insufficient funds to continue. But the idea is planted and the seeds may sprout.

Take **St. Phillips Theological College**. Nancy walked into a crumbling, one-student failed institution. When we leave, we leave an institution which is uniformly respected. The theological library collected by Nancy is excellent and students come from other schools to use it. Through hard work and her skillful academic approach, she re-established cordial academic ties with St. Paul’s University, Limuru, so that St. Phillips graduates could go on to higher degrees of Bachelor and Master if their performances were satisfactory. The former Archbishop Nzimbi of Kenya, during a recent visit, congratulated Bishop Oketch for not taking Nzimbi’s recommendation, two years before we arrived, to close St. Phillips! Sustainable? Maybe yes, maybe no, but at least there is a cohort of clerics, well trained at St. Phillips to serve, and hopefully eventually to lead, the future Anglican Church of Kenya. Nor did Nancy fail to realize that the Anglican Church of Kenya could not afford to provide tuition fees for the students. She started a Cybercafe and Copy Center which, equipped with batteries donated by Tierrasanta Lutheran Church, can continue up to 8 hours even when Kenya Power cuts off. This is doing better than break-even and is one source of support for St. Phillips. Finally, her

skills as hostess for visitors have provided yet another income for the College. These efforts go beyond the ordinary.

What about **facilitation of peripheral programs** initiated and sustained by a number of our visitors. They are numerous and can only be listed. The Striga Project by the Drs. Sands; Help for the School of the Deaf by Glen Noteboom; the Literacy School, a joint effort of the Drs. Sands, Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler, and the dedicated Community Development worker, Florence Oyosi; the Crafts Retail Store in Luanda together with the small shop at the Hospital funded through the efforts of Mary Crowley; the Community-based organization headed by Florence Oyosi and partially supported by Nancy Rowe, RN; the Jiggers Project funded through Rotary International with Maseno Rotary Chapter; several local school renovation projects; the Hospital and community water supply from the mountain engineered by Engineers Without Borders; Phoebe House, initiated for HIV+ outcast women, funded by the community and some expatriate donations; countless individual student “scholarships”; The list could go on. Nancy has played a greater or lesser part in all of these, either acting as a gracious hostess providing accommodation and transport or as a critical initiator and regulator.

And the **Hospital?** Much has been accomplished. The early renovations of the defunct institution, together with the efforts of our newly appointed manager, Mr. Were, put the Hospital back on the functional medical map. Mr. Were, retired from a career as a Government Hospital manager, knew and was known by the right people and, at least early on, could sell the Hospital improvements. By virtue of his and our efforts, we were designated one of the five initial Comprehensive Care Centers (CCC) for the outpatient treatment and follow-up of HIV+ patients. The funds came from PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan for Aids Relief) and were administered through the Catholic Medical Mission Board. This substantially improved the image of the Hospital. Also (at least in my opinion) it became the best Center in the area because we would never refuse admission to any CCC patient who needed Hospitalization. If we were to care for them as outpatients, then we were obligated to care for them as inpatients, when their needs were greatest. Not a money-maker but a point of honor and pride for the Hospital.

Another program came into being and was approved for Maseno Mission Hospital. This was the Maternity program sponsored by the German Government. It provided, for a fee of about \$2.50, a card which underwrote the cost of prenatal care and Hospital delivery for any needy pregnant woman in the area. This was a great boost to our Maternity operations. Its success gave us the justification to apply for a grant for renovation of the Maternity Ward. It was awarded by the Episcopal United Thank Offering and now we have a very nice delivery unit and newborn ward at Maseno. It opened in early 2011.

I think because the Catholic Medical Mission Board liked what was going on at Maseno Mission Hospital, they contributed year-end funds to renovation of our outpatient unit. It has made a huge difference. They also contributed a large generator capable of keeping essential services going when Kenya Power shuts off.

Finally, the Hospital has served as an educational resource and eye-opening experience for the large number of visitors coming from separate disciplines at various levels from college undergraduates in social sciences or pre-med to medical residents in specialty

training, and even established physicians. Notable is the collaboration with the University of Tennessee engineered by Dr. Bruce Steinhauer. The one Hospital shortfall is the very slow pace of financial management reform. This may be the Achilles Heel of the Hospital. The computer systems are just undergoing glitch removal, and we are not yet beginning to get some cost center data to work with. We are grateful to have Rich Kim helping with this as a Peace Corps volunteer and we hope to see some data in the months to come.

With the input from CMMB renovating the outpatient area and the new Maternity Ward, the Hospital has never looked better. True, when I leave, there will no longer be a Board-Certified Internist overseeing the wards and consulting in the outpatient area. But I hope I will have left something behind which will motivate the staff to continue to improve and to rise above the current level of community health care. That is all I can do, and all that I hope for. I think it is attainable. If it eventuates, it will be a satisfying legacy and a further justification of the 10 years spent.