

Présidente : Claire MATHIJSSEN  
Secrétaire Général : Christian ROTH  
Trésorier : Marino PULLIERO

Paris, December 15, 2009

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**2009**

Rafiki Ya Maisha had a particularly fruitful year this year, both in Chepkanga and in Paris. The political and social troubles of last year in Kenya have subsided and though problems have not been resolved, stability has mostly returned to daily life.

Noticeable and concrete advancements in our building project for the new and larger Sergoek Vocational Training Center can be seen today.

In short, 2009 for Kenya was the year of construction and for France, the year of the youth.

## **ACTIVITY REPORT**

### **BUILDING**

January saw the arrival of the new interlocking brick machine, purchased with the help of a donation from the Association of American Wives of Europeans. By the end of February, more than 1000 bricks had been made and the foundations for a small side building were ready to be poured. This one block unit will get the school started on site pending the finished blueprints from the Kenyan architect and the report from the Quantity Surveyor of the Ministry of Works.

February was also the moment for my visit from Paris, with my husband and two sons. Christopher Roth delivered the finished set of architectural plans produced in Paris to the local authorities and to the Board Members of Rafiki Ya Maisha. I was given the great honor as President, to lay the corner stone of the new building in a simple and improvised ceremony, with a moving speech by Michael Kimaiyo, Secretary.



We are proud to announce that our homemade bricks were used to lay the foundations and build the building containing the first two classrooms of the training center. This 2 room unit was completed in August with the help of our young volunteers from France. The workshops will open their doors next January for the beginning of the new school year.

Local impact :

- The road to the center was graded
- The water connection to the plot was implemented
- A total of 10 people found employment through the project
- The MP, Prof. Margaret Kamar, decided to use these plans as a model for future schools in her constituency.
- The elders of the Chepkanga community pledged their support to Rafiki Ya Maisha, (re)gaining status as elders in a village council

Official News:

The officials from the Ministry of Education and the Quantity Surveyor from the Ministry of Works both met on the plot to discuss the future of the project. Instructions and guidelines were given to the Board members of Rafiki Ya Maisha. This led to **the registration of the center** with the Ministry of Education in October 2009, our aim since the launching of the pilot project. The immediate benefit for the students is the availability of government scholarships.

Rafiki Ya Maisha's student registration pointedly shot up and accepted 20 new students in the Computer workshop and 20 other students in the Sewing and Tailoring workshop. A fashion show fundraising event in November displayed the new talents of the young seamstresses and hairdressers to the community.



## **VOLUNTEERS**

Four of our young volunteers who had needed to postpone their trip last year due to the violence, finally left for Kenya in July this year. These 17-18 year old high school students stayed for 5 to 7 weeks and one stayed for 5 months, returning before the year end. They participated in a variety of community activities.

The two young men worked against the clock, building, purchasing sand, timber, paint, doors and windows to finish and equip the building. They also loved participating in a lively soccer tournament in a local school and managed each to score for the winning team!

The two young girls worked in a Baby unit at the Eldoret Moi Referral Hospital where they cared for abandoned street babies. They emotionally adopted two little boys, twins like them, and might well have returned to Paris with the babies had it not been for their mother who, in a twist of good fortune, returned to pick them up!

We were particularly proud of our star volunteer Charlotte, who, notwithstanding an accident that left her paraplegic two summers ago, pursued her dream and volunteered with Rafiki Ya Maisha as planned. She is an inspiration to all who know her and will hear about her. It was a very special foursome and we are extremely proud of them.



## DONATIONS

Donations from friends, members old and new and well wishers have been vital to our fledgling association. We thank one and all for their unfailing support.

The Brick Press money donated by the Association of **American Wives of Europeans** in Paris (see article in AAWE Newsletter, May/June 09) and the donation for 6 treadle foot sewing machines by the **American Women's Association** in Nairobi have contributed immensely towards our project.

The **Rafiki Club** of the Ecole Active Bilingue of Paris, lead by dynamic high school students eager to engage in a humanitarian project, remarkably raised more than 3000€ this year (see article in Accent Magazine, June 09). This money allowed the volunteers to buy the necessary material to finish the small building which can be seen here in the picture with the volunteers.

Denis Valode from **Valode & Pistre** architectural firm gave generously of his time to one of our volunteers. He imparted the building with his art and knowledge and offered full support of his staff towards the conception and realization of the model and plans.

## CONTACTS

This year we met Mr Edwin Maloba, Chargé d'Affaires at the **Embassy of Kenya in Paris**, who was impressed by our work and requested to be informed of fundraising events, such as the Valentine's rose sale.

Mr Jacques Le Guen, Député du Finistère, head of the parliamentary group **Amitié France-Kenya**, received us in his office. He send a letter to the French Ambassador in Kenya referring to our projects in Chepkanga and we are now corresponding with them.

We were also very honoured to meet Mr Elkana Odembo, recently appointed Ambassador to France, who was delighted to meet us just a few weeks after his arrival rue Freycinet, as he had already heard of Rafiki Ya Maisha !

## FINANCIAL REPORT (November 1, 2008 to October 31, 2009)

Donations received and Dues:	10 445.00 €
Interests accrued:	439.18 €
Expenses:	3 015.36 €
Donations to RYM Kenya:	3 780.00 €
Reimbursement of Cash Advances:	3 014.31 €
Bank Balance	
- Checking Account:	2 131.19 €
- Savings Account:	5 000.00 €
- Investment Account:	15 000.00 €

## PROJECTS FOR 2010

- We plan to start building the larger Sergoek Vocational Training Center. In the meantime the brick production will intensify. The building will be built one section at a time. We are keen to use local materials only with environmentally responsible techniques.
- A Masonry workshop is in the planning and will teach the trainees on site as the building goes up. A mechanics workshop will follow.
- The Quantity Surveyor's report will determine the total cost of the project.
- Our local MP, Prof. M. Kamar, has pledged part of the Constituency Development Fund to our building project in 2010. The amount has yet to be determined.
- Fundraising activities on both sides will continue, especially with the Rafiki Club in Paris.
- We plan to return in February and keep the momentum and enthusiasm going.

## CONCLUSION

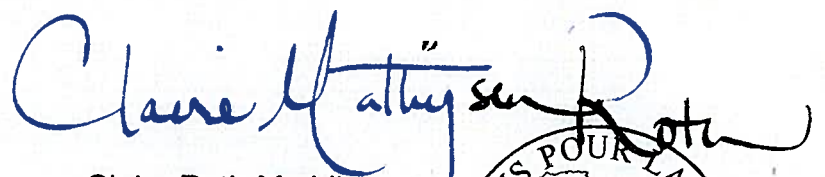
We are proud to report to you that our goals for 2009 have been largely fulfilled, including a brand new updated website. Many thanks to our IT student Richard Nguyen for his dedication and skilled work.

Rafiki Ya Maisha has been very active.

A high mark of trust came when Kenyan government officials started cooperating, allowing the project to reach another level. Church, government and administration are all working in the same direction.

In sum, our very small grass-roots association, using modest sums of money, the local village community and a brick load of good will is proving that it can nurture important changes in a tiny village in this part of Africa.

Close to our hearts, lastly, lies the realization that very engaged young people on our end have felt responsible enough to strive for the education of less fortunate youths who live a world away. This brings life changing awareness. A meaningful exchange with our Rafikis in Kenya is alive and thriving.



Claire Roth-Mathijssen

Check our new website at [www.rafikiyamaisha.com](http://www.rafikiyamaisha.com)

