

From: Sue McKenzie [mailto:lensue@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 8:29 AM
To: Sue McKenzie
Subject: Buying in Nairobi

It has been a long time since I wrote an email to you. I have one about the progress of the school written in my diary at Mama Monica's which I will send later this week when I return to Ewaso Ngiro. But if you have been reading Kyla's blog on the Harambee 4 Humanity website, you have seen pictures and had almost day-to-day reports about the trials tribulations and joys of building in Kenya.

Yesterday the floor pad was laid. Today the first three courses of stone will be completed. Alec and Karl will arrive just in time thanks to a couple of delays at the site.

I took a matatu alone from Ewaso Ngiro to Nairobi for the first time last Saturday. It was a bit of a stretch for me personally as I have always had Len with me when travelling. I was worried about where I would be let off the matatu in Nairobi - right in the middle of the River Road area which is considered a bit of a rough area. I needn't have worried. Mama Monica and Carol came to meet me, but before I could meet up with them a lovely woman on the matatu took me in hand and said she would get me to where I was going. You must understand that the bus stops are not well-marked affairs. There are just a lot of vans, people and other vehicles in a chaotic mess. There are no clearly-marked bus company signs to help.

I am currently in a cyber at O Tiende in Nairobi awaiting the arrival of Alec and Karl's taxi from the airport . . . finally. The volcano in Iceland (go figure!) sure played havoc with their travel plans delaying their arrival here by two days. Mckenzie and Judith have not been so lucky. They will not arrive until Saturday now, almost a week after their scheduled arrival. The boys were able to reschedule through New York and Nairobi. They are bringing Mckenzie's camera so that Len or I can begin filming the documentary while there is still something to film! I expect the guys will be beat when they arrive as they have been travelling now for 36 hours straight.

I have been buying Kenyan goods to bring back to sell as a fundraiser for H4H. Indeed that is the real reason I am in Nairobi. I need to find suppliers and place orders to have things made.

I just returned from meeting with Leila, an exceptional young woman of 22 with a 5 yr old son, who has set up a collective of young women like herself (teen moms who still want to continue their education) to work together making and selling crafts. Any money they make is used to pay their children's school fees. What is left is divided equally among the women. (For those who know about the pad project, Leila is the leader for that project in her community. This collective sews pads too.)

Kyla had noticed the sandals which Leila was wearing on a previous visit with her. We arranged for me to meet with her in downtown Nairobi. Well the end of the story is that I was thrilled with the sandals. They are so smart and so well-made that I ordered 48 pairs. When I return, I think you will be lining up to buy them - especially Janet!

Earlier in the day, I took a short jaunt into the Kibera slum which is a 10-minute walk from Mama Monica's with Mr. Mthembe who had located someone who could make bone animal pendants for me. As we walked down the steep main path into Kibera, I tried to look around as much as I could without losing my footing. There were vendors of fruits and

vegetables, a man delivering bread, shops carrying groceries. people cooking food to sell and lots of children everywhere. There also were tin shacks, no! HOMES precariously perched on the side of the hill. The water must run right through them when it rains!

Suddenly Mr. Mthembe said, "Follow me!". He swerved off the main route toward a water tank where 10 children were filling huge yellow plastic jugs with water. He turned left. I followed as we edged our way sideways along the side of a metal shed. Below us was a steep drop down the hill. Then we were in the animal pendant "factory" or manufacturing place.

Joseph, the manager, introduced himself to me and invited me to sit, gallantly placing the sleeve of his jacket on a dusty burlap sack of the bones used for making the pendants. I have to comment on the fact that Joseph was dressed extremely well, clean, wrinkle-free shirt, nice pants. I marvel at how people can turn out so spiffy when they live in such conditions as those in Kibera.

Joseph then introduced me to one of his workers whose face was white with bone dust from his grinding machine. We discussed size of pendants, polish, kinds of animals and number I wanted. In the end, I ordered 900. (So get ready to bead ladies!) We negotiated a cost of 8 shillings which he felt was a fair price and was what I felt I should pay after all my research on the topic. We agreed on 8 shillings each. That is about 11 cents. The pendants are all handcut and handpolished animals, made from scratch.

He will deliver the goods in two weeks and has agreed to let me come and take a picture of his 'factory' to display with the wine charms we make. This feels so good to support the struggling poor at the grassroots level and then to use the profit to build Oleleshwa Primary! Sue