

Dear friends of Got Matar,

On behalf of the entire Got Matar Community Development Group, I would like to sincerely thank you all for your generous support over the past 20 years. Many of you have kindly contributed towards all 3 stages of the growth of our education programme, including upgrading ten primary schools, constructing a secondary school and creating an Institute of Technology. We are so lucky to have your support because through your donations, we have made great strides towards empowering the young and vulnerable persons within the community.

In the year 2001, I met Dr. Andrew Macmillan for the first time. He had come, as part of a United Nations study of the drought-affected Horn of Africa, to visit Bondo as an example of a rural district that had been hit very hard by both drought and the HIV epidemic, with the aim of learning from local people how they saw the road to recovery.

I was privileged and presented my project on education and how to solve the problems facing Bondo district. The donors present including the World Bank representative agreed that we had to support one third of the children living as orphans having lost their parents due to HIV infection.

In January 2002, members of the local community came together to form the Got Matar Community Development Group (GMCDG). It was registered as a Self-Help Organization by the Ministry of Social Development in Kenya. Recognizing that they had "lost a generation", they decided that they must invest in the education of their children, especially the orphans, so that they would be equipped with the learning and life skills that they would desperately need in future, without which they would be condemned to live on the fringes of Kenyan society.

GMCDG started by refurbishing and improving the conditions of the 10 primary schools in East Yimbo which were in dire state and wanted us to repair buildings, construct water tanks, purchase desks, develop the school garden, provide school lunch programme among others. They include:

1. Got Matar Primary School
2. Pala Primary School
3. Chunga Primary School
4. Uhanga Primary School
5. Abidha Primary School
6. Bur Yiro Primary School
7. Pap Lela Primary School
8. Othach Primary School
9. Mago Primary School
10. Magombe Primary School

In late 2006 we formally invited Andrew MacMillan to raise funds internationally to finance the construction of a secondary school. His son, Harry ran a sponsored marathon race in England and he generously donated the first sterling pounds which we used to build the four streamed form one block of classrooms. Within just four years, with your help, we had completed an entirely new school for 600 pupils of which 332 were girls and 268 were boys. Now, there are 1200 pupils and student numbers are expected to rise to 1600 by 2026! The school, which is run by the Department of Education, already ranks very high amongst secondary schools on Siaya County on the basis of final exam results.

In 2012, once our investments in the secondary school infrastructure had been largely completed, we embarked on the creation of the Got Matar Institute of Technology (IoT) with the aim of offering opportunities for young people to learn practical skills that would be in demand as Kenya's economy developed. For the first 5 years, courses were held in rented buildings, but since 2017 we have given priority to construction and equipment of purpose-built training workshops for each of the 12 diploma courses now provided by the IoT on its campus close to the secondary school. The Institute is run as a community enterprise which is intended to be self-financing when pupil numbers increase from the current 350 to 500 over the next 2 to 3 years.

While we have been able to raise some resources from government-funded capital investment programmes, the lion's share of the development costs has come from overseas supporters who have responded generously to our appeals. GMCDG is particularly grateful to friends and relations of the MacMillan family who have come forward with donations year after year. But I also want to highlight our special gratitude to several individuals and entities who have made exceptionally large contributions to the development programme.

These include:

Dan Gustafson, former FAO representative in Kenya, and his wife, Kitty who have made very substantial gifts each year since our programme started;

Giorgio and Caterina Possio who financed the full costs of the IoT's Mechanics training workshop in memory of their daughter, Anna, who died at a young age.

The guests invited by their son, Francesco Possio and his bride, Clementina, to their wedding, who, together, donated sufficient funds to finance the building and equipment of the IoT's Electricians' training workshop.

Simon Davy and family who are supporting a scholarship programme that enables 40 well-qualified pupils from very poor families to attend the secondary school.

We also owe special thanks to the following charities which have given significant grants to GMCDG:

The Swiss-registered Fondation BERFRED which has paid for the full costs of building a day nursery, now used by 35 children, as well as 3 phases of a girls' hostel with a capacity for 90 students, both at the IoT.

The John and Adrian Swire Family Trusts, as well as the Spurgin Trust, both of which have provided substantial annual support for priority components of the ongoing investment programme,

Bricks and Cartwheels, an Australian NGO, that designed and paid for construction of a girls' dormitory at the secondary school.

Finally, we want to pay tribute to the commendable assistance that we have received from registered charities in UK and Italy that have helped us by providing financial management services to the GMCDG, including the collection of donations and their transfer to us for use in Kenya. These services were initially provided in UK by PEAS (Promotion of Education in African Schools) and subsequently by Ace Africa, both of which have also supplied us with valuable technical assistance through their local staff. We are especially grateful to Associazione SONIA, founded by Vanda Altarelli in memory of her young daughter who was killed in a car crash, for generously providing similar financial services in Italy to handle Euro donations. Vanda, whose reach is now constrained by poor health, has been an inspirational source of guidance to us, based on her practical experience in designing and implementing projects to bring a better life to thousands of poor families around the world.

We now look forward very much to working with Popi Fabrizio who has kindly agreed to continue to provide the services offered till now by Vanda. KARIBU ONLUS that he founded 15 years ago to support rural development and education in a very deprived community in the coastal region of Kenya will from now on serve as our anchor charity for handling Euro donations.

We at Got Matar wish all our friends and supporters a happy Merry Christmas and prosperous new year.

Yours faithfully



Grace Ochieng' Andiki.

