



June 2008

July already...where is time going? It feels like it was just yesterday I was writing the May newsletter. In spite of a particularly chilly winter season with early morning mists and high winds even the UK would be proud of – hot water bottles have been essential equipment for early morning game drives – we have been keeping ourselves busy in the valley.

We are proud to announce the official handover of the Mugurameno Community School, which took place in early June and was attended by the Chieftainess' Representative, Maxwell Syamalimba, the Mugurameno Head Man and local dignitaries from the village. This is the first nursery school in the Chiawa district, built by Simon and Jenny's MBSCT charity, and the day was a very happy occasion as children previously taught in a mud hut danced and sang in their own proper school building with walls and real blackboards!

June also saw a major event in Chiawa Village when the CLA (an association of tour operators in the GMA) launched the first part of its community development programme – a valley-wide soccer and netball league. The scheme has been established in conjunction with the US "Play For Life" initiative. The launch day was attended by HRH Chieftainess Chiawa, the Minister of Lands and other dignitaries. Team kits were provided by individual lodges and external donors: MBSCT sponsored three teams with smart white and black kits.

The first football tournaments have already been held, much to the delight of Kasaka staff, who got an afternoon off work. Meanwhile our GM Alex, a former AENA umpire, umpired two of the girls' netball matches, amid cries of "bias" from the losing Gota Gota side!



The victorious side in Play for Life shirts



Edson, Kasaka's oldest member of staff, as the team's self-appointed coach





Sightings in the GMA and within the National Park this month have been exceptional. I was lucky enough to spend a lot of time at Kasaka myself in June and we have had both leopards AND lions in the camp at night. And of course our resident “Monty” running around the gardens and the baboons, ever consistent in their desire to remove *all* our thatch before the rainy season comes. However, without a doubt our most popular sighting of the month was the return of Oliver, the GMA’s resident elephant (“Oliver Twist”, a name he was given due to the twist in his tail). Oliver is a legend in the area, and I am sure many of you will remember him if you visited the lodge last year. We have not seen him in camp since the end of last year and were beginning to think he had left us but thankfully he has come home, and I am happy to report he has yet to steal any of the fruit and vegetable supplies off our delivery truck this season.

Gareth Bentley was back at Kasaka just last week to get some more photos of the developments at camp and we were lucky enough to capture some amazing photos of a beautiful male leopard resting in a tree at dusk and.... an aardvark sighting on our way back to the lodge in the GMA. A first for both myself and Gareth, a real treat to say the least! Expect to see some of his latest photos in next month’s newsletter.

As always, please feel free to contact me, Melanie, should you have any queries or requests, on

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Oliver (spot the tail) with Lewis, our Head Coxswain



