



Nothing new under the sun  
Steve Vinton, June 13, 2007

Pauline has served with us in the little village of Igoda for over a year now -- she's one of the teachers who joined us in early 2006 after Godfrey and I spoke at the Klerruu Teachers Training College in Iringa. She's a lovely person through and through, a Christian who gives of herself for her students, and when I got back from my trip to America, Godfrey and Emmanueli shared with me that they had decided that it would be good for her to formally join our leadership team here in Tanzania. They had made an awful lot of really good decisions during the month that I was gone, but having Pauline join the executive committee of Village Schools Tanzania was certainly, in my mind at least, one of the best of all of their decisions. And so here we were this week making our first trip with Pauline -- all of us, Godfrey, Emmanueli, Sarah, Janerose, Pauline and myself -- heading for Idigima to see how things were going at that new school which we had opened on March 26th.

The sight was really one to behold! 321 students! Godfrey and I headed off to take a look at the foundations they had recently put in for the three teachers houses they want to build and then we were off to survey the plan they have to put in a rather ingenious water system to divert water from a bend in the river three-quarters of a mile away so that we would have a continual source of water at the school. When Godfrey and I returned from our "little hike" we found Pauline and Sarah in one of the classrooms team-teaching -- and it was great to hear from outside the classroom the wonderful English those kids were speaking after less than three months in school.

There was so much to be happy about that day.

On the way to the school, we had stopped in the neighboring village where the leaders from all of the villages in the area were meeting to discuss plans for the next couple of months. The rains have stopped in their area and they had made the decision therefore to plow ahead and aim to make 120,000 bricks in the next two months so that they could build six additional classrooms by September -- because they expect that we'll have as many as 300 more students from their villages who will want to start school just as soon as they get those classrooms built!

Then we arrived at the school, saw all of those kids in the classrooms, heard their wonderful English. We were greeted enthusiastically by our team of teachers, we had a wonderful meeting with the parents, we got to see the foundations for the new teachers houses, we saw their rather ambitious program to bring water right there to the school ... and then we got to hear the students.

First they sang their new school anthem that they had just written. Not bad for a bunch of eighth graders!

*Our school is Idigima  
All of us together we have built it  
Idigima will grow, surely Idigima will grow  
We will all work together and Idigima will  
surely grow ...*

*Our school has the best academics  
The best morals. The best games.  
At Idigima everything will be the best.*

*Our leaders of VST  
May you be strong  
May you preserve our unity*

*AIDS is a killer  
AIDS is the scourge  
People of Iyula wake up!*

*Almighty God look down upon this school.  
Pour down your blessings on this school.  
Cause our school to grow.*

*Our motto -- We shall overcome  
With the help of God, in unity,  
Together surely we shall overcome.*

And listening to more than 300 students sing that song in wonderful harmony would have been enough to be the icing on the cake after a wonderful visit. I looked over and could just see Pauline beaming. But then came the real icing on the cake. The student body president informed us to the loud cheers of the students that they had just been waiting for the good news of the decision of the elders that the parents would make 120,000 bricks to build the six classrooms so that they could announce their own decision that they had made as students.

Their decision? In the next 30 days they, the students of Idigima, would make 30,000 bricks themselves! And they had it all organized and planned out. Each day all of the students from one of the classrooms would take their turn

and come in their work clothes and make bricks all day. Their goal? Their parents could make the bricks for the classrooms for their little brothers and sisters who will come to study in September, but they're going to make the bricks for the office building for their teachers!

It was a reminder to me after all of these years of working on this continent that while it indeed might be true that "there is nothing new under the sun", Steve Vinton at least has yet to see it all, and these students in these villages here can still occasionally surprise me and catch me off guard and inspire me.

And all I could think of was how wonderful that of all of the schools that we picked for Pauline to come visit with us, Idigima was the one we picked. We all left inspired. Inspired together.

And then we got the phone call.

The meetings are on in the village of Mikalanga down south in the Ruvuma area where we have been asked to come to work with those people to build their school! They said that they did not want to call us with words only, but that they have bricks and stones already carried to the site which will speak on their behalf.