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The Friends of Urambo & Mwanhala

# Friends of Urambo & Mwanhala

Linking the Tabora Region of Tanzania with the UK



## A Message from the Honorary Secretary

Dear Supporter,

**I take up my pen to write this newsletter aware that it is long overdue; my apologies for this but I hope that you find the news here encouraging.**

After the successes with our projects in 2023 and an improvement in our finances due to some generous donations, we have resolved to undertake two major projects in 2024, one in Mambali village, Nzega District and the other in Usisya village in Urambo District. Simon Headington, our Project Officer, explains what is planned on page 3 of this newsletter.

These two projects costing around £15,000 each will use the bulk of our available funds, but we will nevertheless continue with our annual grants of £2,000 to each of the Folk Development Colleges at Mwanhala, Sikonge and



The Nzega District Commissioner, The Hon. Naitapwaki Lemeya Tukai opens the lyombo classroom for children with special needs.

Urambo. The purpose of these grants is to enable access to young people who would otherwise not have the money to attend college courses. There is a short piece about the FDCs later in the newsletter. We give annual grants to the fifteen village clinics we support – these include Mambali and Usisya. Included here is a piece by Jo Taylor, our Medical Officer explaining the uses to which these small grants are put.

As reported last autumn, the lyombo classroom for children with special needs was completed successfully. There was an opening ceremony held and the classroom was

formally declared open by the Nzega District Commissioner, The Hon. Naitapwaki Lemeya Tukai. It was a jolly occasion with the village ladies in particular greatly enjoying the Commissioner's visit. We have been requested and have agreed to construct a latrine block for these children to use. This work will get underway as soon as the details of the building have been finalised. Supporters will be pleased to read the message from the Nzega District Administrative Secretary thanking you for your support on page 11.

Kamalendi village in Urambo District has a clinic which is being refurbished and modernised but has run out of money to complete the maternity block. An approach has been made to us to provide the funds for this project to be completed and I am glad to say that we have been able to agree to this too. And waiting in the wings is the refurbishment of the mother and child clinic at Isegenhe, Nzega District; a project we have agreed to take on as soon as we have the money available.

I am pleased to report that the final touches have been made to the large rainwater harvesting systems at Ibambo and Nyasa clinics. In each case the large storage tank has been connected directly to the clinic using a solar pump and small, raised tank.

So, there is lots going on



Celebrations during the Commissioner's visit



Inscriptions on the new classroom

but everything we do is dependent on two things:

1. The support of the Districts is vital, in particular the work of the District Liaison Officers and the tremendous volunteers we have there. You will find a short appreciation of their work on page 8 of this newsletter.
2. The continuing financial input of you, our supporters,



Kiloleni pump house

for, without you we could do nothing. Please continue your giving and, if you can, join in one of the two sponsored walks being held this summer (see page 10).

The project at Kiloleni village has reached a successful stage. The maternity clinic was opened by Mama Sitta, the MP for Urambo and the water supply from the borehole we paid for was connected. The first borehole drilled, while successful, could not supply the quantity of water we hoped for and so a second very successful borehole, was drilled a short distance away. The first has now been fitted with a hand pump and a cattle trough put there. The second has been connected to the village via a 2km pipeline and water is pumped by solar power to a storage tank at the clinic. Villagers are able to come and draw water from a standpipe at the clinic. There are plans to connect the village centre and the school to the water supply but before we do this we want to be sure that the water committee is able to run the scheme successfully and

generate sufficient revenue to maintain the system without further input from FUM. We are hopeful that this will be the case.

We had a request from Kiloleni village to help with the supply of desks for the secondary school. The village had paid for the bulk of these but were

40 desks short and so asked us for help. We were able to do this by commissioning Urambo FDC to construct the desks in



Nurse Daima Nziku

their workshop. The school is now fully equipped.

Some good news is that Daima Nziku, the nurse who was sponsored to attend a course in clinical medicine has been awarded his diploma and is now working in Lubiso, a village in Nzega District where a new District hospital is being constructed.

I must thank those generous souls who have made large donations this year in support of the village maternity clinics. These donations are anonymous but add up to many thousands of pounds and always come as a pleasant surprise. We pledge to use all

money donated as effectively as we are able.

Finally some bad news I fear. The rains this year have been particularly heavy at times and although this means that harvests have been good, sadly the rains have resulted in the collapse of some buildings including the clinic in the village of Mwasala in Nzega District. We are not yet sure just how serious the situation is but there is sure to be a major reconstruction project required. A full report will be in the autumn newsletter.

As always on behalf of all our friends in Tanzania, thank you for your continued support.

*Rod Smith*

## Maternity Unit Projects in the villages of Mambali and Usisya

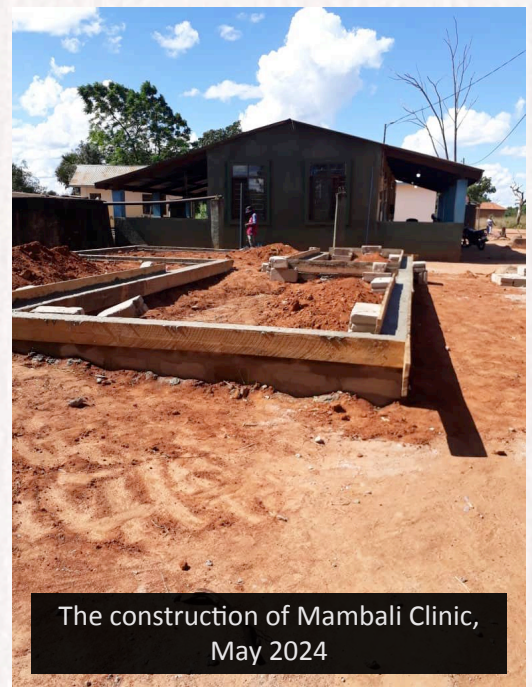
### Simon Headington

**Mambali** is in the south-west part of Nzega District, on a back road that runs from Tabora to Nzega. It is closer to Tabora than to Nzega town, but even Tabora is two hours away in a good vehicle. It is a very proactive village with a dispensary and staff houses that were built with the support of another British NGO in the 1990s. Our membership secretary, Julie Overnell spent a number of months in the village at that time.

FUM's involvement with Mambali started in 2018, when we began supporting a family

with Albinism. Following a crowdfunding effort we were able to provide basic accommodation for them as well as farming materials so they were able to support themselves using land allocated by the village. Then, using a generous donation from Cranbrook School, we were able to refurbish the village clinic.

I was due to visit the village last August but a last-minute change of plans meant that this didn't happen. Undeterred, the Village Chairman travelled to Nzega



The construction of Mambali Clinic, May 2024

to explain how motivated the village were to build a new maternity building.

Now thanks to a generous donation, it has been possible to agree to support this project and work should be starting any day now.

This particular village is already well known to the FUM Liaison Officer for Nzega District, Venance Gomegwa, as, in 1990's he was the community development technician who was assigned to supervise the construction of the dispensary and oversaw its refurbishment.

This time Gomegwa will be working with an enthusiastic Dispensary Committee and will have the full support of the village, ward and district leadership to help see this important project through to a conclusion. Michael Myamba, the FUM liaison officer, is active with the village in ensuring this project goes smoothly and so far, signs are good. Already the foundations have been dug and concrete poured. Everything is scheduled to be finished in August.

**The Usisya Dispensary** is 20km east of Urambo, close to the new tarmac road. It was built by the villagers, with help from Urambo District Council and opened in 1989 and now serves a local population of over 19,000 people, of whom (in 2021) 5,980 were under the age of 5 years and 1,196 were under the age of one year (according



Usisya maternity unit under construction

to a notice I read last summer on the wall of the dispensary). As well as general outpatient services, the clinic provides a good range of maternity services, also Immunisation and Child Health care. HIV programmes include Testing and Counselling and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. It is planned that in the near future the clinic will be able to offer laboratory services.

The official government staff roll for this clinic is 15 so the current two nurses and one attendant are kept very busy. They also receive support from a number of local volunteers for outreach work.

Within the single building are rooms for consultations and treatment with smaller rooms for pharmacy, HIV counselling, vaccinations and maternal deliveries.

The clinic receives an annual grant from FUM. In 2021 the staff used its £250 FUM

donation to buy a new maternal delivery kit and a new weighing scale for checking babies' progress.

The village is keen to have a separate maternity building as at the moment if the single bed that is available is already in use, the expectant mothers have to travel to other villages or to Urambo Town.

The villagers have been making concrete blocks in preparation for the project.

The project is being managed by FUM's Urambo Co-ordinator Lucky Mgeni and will have been started by the time you are reading this.

The clinic in **Kamalendi village** was being rebuilt with the aid of government funding but unfortunately money ran short.

We have responded to a request from the village to help and have agreed to fund the clinic completion. Lucky Mgeni will supervise this and will be able to help as soon as his work with the Usisya project allows.



Kamalendi Maternity Unit

# Medical Matters

## Jo Taylor

**Once a year FUM makes a small grant available to each of the fifteen rural clinics we support to enable them to purchase equipment which they think essential but which they cannot afford within their budget.**

The transfer of this small grant has always been problematic because unless care is taken it can easily fall foul of budgeting rules. In order to be able to accept the money, each clinic, when drawing up its budget, should include the sum from FUM but this is not easy for the overworked clinic nurses to do. The problem is a minor one in the grand scheme of things but for an individual clinic the help can make a large difference. The DEDs are very aware of the problem and so, with our liaison teams in the Districts, have come to a solution which should ease the transfer of funds with the minimum of fuss. This is very good news and we thank the DED's team and our liaison officers for sorting this

problem out. We will start the transfers under the new system this summer.

Last year the purchases made by the clinics included gas cylinders to run the fridges used for storing vaccines at the clinics where there is either no mains electricity or an unreliable supply. Some, again those with no mains electricity, bought solar batteries. Some bought delivery kits, IV giving sets and other medical supplies. Others spent some of their money on getting copies of RCH Cards which they have to use to record information about pregnant mothers and their babies. Maboha spent their money on electrical installations as the government

had connected the village to the mains electricity. Mwasala is working towards improving their water collection system and so they purchased gutters and accessories.

**A note from Rod Smith:** You can see that the purchases are many and varied and allow the clinics to plug gaps in their procurement. Jo Taylor is in close contact with all the clinic medical officers who never cease to express their gratitude but of course, these thanks should rightly be directed to you as without your continued generosity we could do nothing. So a big thank you to you all.

## A Short Story - FUM Memorial Plaque

### Rod Smith

When first set up following the 1960s Freedom From Hunger campaign, FUM concentrated on supporting the Folk Development Colleges in Urambo and Mwanhala but as the organisation grew in strength we then expanded our horizons and branched out into villages to help with water supply and village clinic construction. We adopted the

existing Mwanhala clinic then others and now support fifteen clinics in the districts of Kaliua, Nzega and Urambo. The first clinics built with FUM help were in Nzega District in the villages of Semembele and Isegenhe both opened in 1983 by our secretary, John Gillett when he was visiting with Priscilla and Mary, his daughter.





Isegenhe Maternity Unit plaque

Forty years passed and the memorial plaque was looking very sad. As do all our supported villages, Isegenhe values its link with FUM which it wants recognised and so a

message came to me asking if it would be possible for FUM to supply a new plaque. Now FUM funds are not to be used in such a way and so I approached the Gillett family who were delighted to fund a new, rather smart plaque which is now affixed to the maternity building.

As can be read elsewhere, we have agreed to refurbish the Isegenhe maternity unit and so soon the building will be as smart as the plaque.



Medical Officer Imamu Makangila

## Mambali House Nick Vinall

**In 2020 our Liaison Officer in Nzega was Sebastian, a Social Worker for the District Council. He brought to our attention the plight of a whole family of people with albinism and asked if there was anything that FUM could do to help them.**

More enlightened people in Tanzania accept those with albinism but in areas where traditional beliefs are stronger sufferers can be isolated, or even in danger, despite the government's efforts to promote acceptance.

The family lived in the remote hamlet of Isilyaza, near the village of Mambali, 70 km south west of Nzega. With no land to cultivate the family had been reliant on begging.

We consulted with The District Commissioner (DC) Hon Godfrey, the top local government official. He visited the family and also addressed the local villagers about the

need for respect and support for people with albinism.

FUM's constitution does not allow us to support individuals or families; only institutions such as clinics, colleges and schools can be supported. So our Secretary, Rod Smith, suggested a crowd-funding initiative and we were delighted that in just over two weeks it raised £1500. We were very grateful to all who contributed, £2500 in total.

This enabled our good friend Mr Venance Gomegwa to design and supervise the building of better housing for the family.

The village committee, encouraged by Hon Godfrey, made some land available for the family to cultivate and in appreciation of this gesture FUM built some extra toilets for the local primary School.

All went well for some time but then the mother died from skin cancer as did one of the children. The lack of melanin in their skin makes people with albinism very vulnerable to skin cancer. Sadly this led to the disintegration of the family structure and they moved to their home village to be closer to other family. The situation wasn't helped by the superstition linked to skin cancer which is poorly

understood despite the educational work of the social welfare officers. The house remained empty in anticipation of their return but it has become clear that this will not happen.

**A silver lining to a sad end**

It is sad that things did not work out for the family with albinism but the closure of that opportunity has opened

another. The nearby Primary School has only one house for accommodating teachers. This is used by the Head Teacher. The other three teachers have to live some distance away, 3 – 5 miles, and walk or cycle to the school along a rough path.

With admirable opportunism the Head Teacher ‘wondered’ if the house might be used instead by teachers at the school, an idea which FUM

keenly welcomed. Our secretary Rod Smith is currently in communication with the local Nzega officials to sort out the details.

The house suffered a bit of superficial degradation whilst it stood empty but Mr Gomegwa says that this can easily be sorted out and FUM is happy to pay for the work needed.

# Our Folk Development Colleges

## Di Cooper

**As members will know, FUM is involved with three FDCs in Tabora Region. Mwanhala, Sikonge and Urambo District. Di Cooper keeps in close touch with the principals and if funds allow we are sometimes able to solve FDC problems, for example with transport and water supply.**

Sikonge and Urambo FDCs have motorcycles to use while Mwanhala still manages to keep its pick up truck running even though this is nearly 20 years old, but our main contribution in practical terms is the provision of £2000 a year to each College to provide bursary funds for students whose families are unable to support their fees and expenses whilst studying. Mr Joseph writes from Sikonge, ‘Thank you, and please extend my regards to the entire FUM team. We are very grateful for your continued support of our students. Many of them are

benefiting greatly; some have even secured jobs in Dar es Salaam and can now support



their families thanks to FUM’s sponsorship.’

Folk Development Colleges have a long history in Tanzania.

Initially styled along the lines of Swedish Folk High Schools, in the sixties, seventies and eighties, with links between the two countries, they were to provide training in practical skills but also knowledge of ‘citizenship’ to support the development of village communities, a tool for economic and social growth. Participants were selected by village committees and were not required to have any

level of formal education qualification. Over the years the Ministry to which the FDCs were responsible changed from Education to Gender and



Mr Gulmay on the FDC motorcycle provided by FUM

Community Development, and then back to Education as the emphasis of the courses shifted from adult education to community development and back again. As secondary education in the country grew, prospective students applying were younger and were expected to have a certain level of education. Students currently in our FDCs have completed Primary education, and some may have completed some level of secondary education. Numbers entering the Colleges have increased in recent years when there was a change in the language of instruction to KiSwahili. The students currently study a range of vocational courses, from woodwork and metalwork to domestic electrical installation and plumbing to motor vehicle maintenance, reflecting the changes in the

needs of the community and the sort of qualifications young people wish to attain. Most will hope to achieve a national qualification in Vocational Education Training, some may limit themselves to an internal FDC certificate. All students have some IT training, though this can be limited by the level of technical infrastructure, and all will assist in the cultivation of some College land in the production of food crops for student meals.

The three FDCs are run by their three, very effective principals: Mr Mwadua in Mwanhala, Mr Joseph in Sikonge and Mr Gulmay in Urambo. They are to be congratulated for their many successful years at their FDCs which seem to be flourishing under their guidance.

## Our Teams in Nzega, Kaliua and Urambo

### Elena Davidson

**Our ability to carry out project work in the Districts would be greatly reduced were it not for the support we receive at District Level. We are fortunate that District Liaison Officers have been appointed to oversee our projects and to take an active part in their planning and construction.**

These officers also act on behalf of other NGOs, notably The Minchinhampton Nkokoto Link and the Kenilworth Uyogo Friendship Link and are supported by two volunteers who are so important to us and give up hours of their own time working for the benefit of their communities.

**Charles Mwisima**, Urambo Planning Officer, acts as the District Liaison for Urambo and Kaliua. He has been in post for some years now and has ensured that our efforts in his districts are as effective as possible, smoothing our way at District Level.

**Michael Myamba**, The District Social Welfare Officer in Nzega, is newly appointed as our Nzega Liaison. He is proving to be a dynamo of action and energy and has the skills and standing in the villages to motivate village governments so that projects get the full support of all villagers.



Charles Mwisima

**Lucky Mgeni**, a water engineer, is now running his own business in Urambo. He oversees all stages of our projects in both Urambo and Kaliua Districts. Without his efforts we would be able to do very little.

**Venance Gomegwa**, for many years, was the clerk of works with Nzega District Council and was site managers and overseer of most of FUM's projects for more than three decades. He was tireless and

ever present whenever Cranbrook school groups visited ensuring that the materials needed were available for their project work and supervising their amateur efforts, quietly correcting their mistakes. He is now retired but still volunteers to work on FUM projects acting as works manager.

FUM has always worked to help Tanzanian District Government projects rather than

generate and develop our own ideas. We are bombarded by requests from the villages but anything we undertake has to first gain the approval of the Districts as it must fit in with the District Development aims, and it is the Districts, through their liaison officers, who ensure that our money is properly spent. I am pleased to say that we have the strong support of the District Governments and the approval of the District Executive Directors and



Michael Myamba

the District Commissioners. We are always grateful for the attention they give to us.



Lucky Mgeni



Venance Gomegwa

# FUM Sponsored Walks 2024

## Isabel Heycock

This will be the 10th year of FUM sponsored walks, raising money to improve the facilities at the Village Clinics which we support. The money raised this year is earmarked to pay for the completion of the maternity unit at Kamalendi village and for the refurbishment of the maternity unit in Isegenhe.

### Why not join in?

This year's walks are:

On September 8th, a walk on the new Tamara Way on the Devon/Cornwall border, organised by Julie Overnell.

On September 14th, a walk on the South Downs, organised by Isabel Heycock.

Both walks are 15 miles but with shorter alternatives for anyone not wanting to walk the whole distance.

We would love to have you join either of these walks. To find out more about them please contact Julie or Isabel. Their contact details can be found below and on the back of the newsletter.

The Tamara Way walk will be on  
Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September.

Contact Julie Overnell,  
[jjeo@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jjeo@hotmail.co.uk) for further details.

The South Downs walk will be on  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September.

Contact Isabel Heycock,  
[iheycock@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:iheycock@hotmail.co.uk) for further details.

Further information about the new Tamara Way can be found by clicking this link.

<https://www.tamarvalley-nl.org.uk/discover-explore/walking/tamara-coast-to-coast-way/>



**The letter of thanks from the Nzega District Administrative Secretary  
thanking the members of FUM for the donation of the new classroom for  
children with special needs at Iyombo Village Primary School.**

**Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania  
Ofisi ya Rais  
TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA**



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**Kumb.Na.AB.80/282/04/86**

Ofisi ya Mkuu wa Wilaya,  
S.L.P. 1,  
**NZEGA.**  
**TABORA - TANZANIA**  
23 January, 2024

To Hon Secretary,  
The Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala,  
Ref – Classroom

Dear Hon Secretary,

**RE: CLASSROOM FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IYOMBO VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL, NZEGA DISTRICT**

I am writing to thank you for your generous donation of classroom in Iyombo Primary School at Nzega District. Your kind gesture is greatly appreciated and it means a lot to us to have your support.

Your donation will go a long way in helping the School accommodate more Pupils and make them comfortable because now they have more classrooms to use which will lead them to receive the valuable education they need.

We as District Government we would like to ensure our donors that will keep the classroom in a good use so they be can useful for a long period of time and continue to benefit our future children.

Once again I would like to express my gratitude towards your donation, we will always be thankful to your organization for coming forward and helping our school with their education. We are extremely fortunate to have you as a magnanimous donor.

Sincerely in our District.

  
Winifred E. Fuito  
**District Administrative Secretary  
Nzega**

**Copy to:**

District Commissioner

**THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE  
SECRETARY  
NZEGA.**

# FUM Officers

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## The new and improved FUM Website

If you haven't visited our website recently, why not take a look?

Our website is crammed with news, photographs and information about every area

of our work. Just go to [www.fum.org.uk](http://www.fum.org.uk) on your PC

or tablet, or point your mobile device at the QR

code to take you straight there.



## The Final Word

Without the continuing financial input of you, our supporters, we could do nothing. Please continue your generous giving and, if you can, join in one of the two sponsored walks being held this summer.

Rod Smith