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## Hello supporters

This is the latest newsletter to the supporters of the Simbiri Trust - the operational name of the K and D 61:1 Trust. The Trust supports the work of the Simbiri Nan Bell Health Centre, in western Kenya (often shortened to Simbiri Health Centre).



This picture of the staff was taken by me in February 2016. The person on the far right is Vitalis, the senior clinical officer - the person who leads the team at Simbiri.

2016 was a mixed year. On the plus side, we feel that we have an excellent leader at Simbiri, Vitalis, who has done an amazing job in leading the staff in keeping the facility running to provide 24/7 health care to the local, very poor, population. There have been immense difficulties throughout the year, but every time I speak to Vitalis, he remains upbeat, reassures me that the staff remain committed to the facility, and the services that Simbiri Health Centre provides have continued to operate unabated - that is,

general health care, mother and children's clinic, safe deliveries of pregnant mothers, community outreach, and an HIV clinic attended by many local people.

The minus side....well, we have had a 'rollercoaster' year in relation to a dispute over the land rights of the site of the facility, combined with an attempted 'take-over' bid to run the facility by a local family. To cut a very long saga short, this ended up in a legal wrangle, culminating in a court case that was adjourned three times, but finally got resolved in October 2016 with a final judgement from the local Judge. We won, and the facility can now continue to operate without this (rather malicious) interference.

A 'plus side' of this dispute was that virtually the whole of the local community, including the local chief, and district government officers, were fully supportive of the facility running as previously, and were genuinely outraged at the attempted 'take over' by one family. I happened to be at Simbiri in February when there was a public meeting attended by about 350 local people, the local press, radio station, and dignitaries, and I survived an entire hot afternoon of speeches, singing and dancing, all in favour and support for Simbiri Health Centre, and against the 'take-over'.

But, a definite, 'minus side' of the dispute was the emotional toll it took on Vitalis who had to divert much of his time, energies, and attention into the details, reports, court hearings, etc, of the saga. The Trustees are both very grateful, and astonished, at his staying power and commitment to the facility.

## Visiting Doctors

I spent 10 days at the facility in February/March to encourage, teach, and generally ensure that things were going well. I was encouraged to see that Vitalis and Elijah - the two senior clinical officers - not only do their work diligently, but are keen to keep up to date with developing trends in medicine. For example, we had good discussions on recent guidelines about malaria. They also liaise well with the 15 volunteer community health workers whose main role is in preventative medicine, mainly by providing healthcare education to the surrounding population. When not in Kenya, I am in regular contact with Vitalis by phone, text and email.

Dr Ann Egan, one of the Trustees and a GP, spent 10 days at Simbiri in September. She too felt that the visit had been positive and encouraging to all staff, but especially to Vitalis and Elijah. She is more daring than me in her transport methods whilst there - see photo.



Ann and myself try to visit annually, which means a UK GP visits about every 6 months. Note: all visiting doctors are self funded and are not paid or reimbursed from the Trust.

## Finance - edging towards self reliance

Our long term plan has always been to help make Simbiri Health Centre self-reliant. At a recent Trustee meeting the Trustees unanimously agreed that 'now is the time' for the relationship between the Trust and the local management committee at Simbiri to change in a significant way.

At the start of the project, over 25 years ago, all funds came from the UK. Over the years there has been a significant expansion of the facility and staff numbers, and locally derived income has gradually increased to the extent that financing the facility became a partnership between the local management committee and the UK Simbiri Trust. However, the UK Trust until now always had the final say in financial decisions, and sometimes ended up 'micro-managing' the facility from afar.

However, as from the beginning of 2017, the 'boot is on the other foot' and we have handed over all management and financial decisions to Vitalis under the guidance of a locally elected management committee. The reasons for this are:

1. The bulk of the income for the day-to-day running of the facility is now derived from local sources and local income generating schemes (as described in previous newsletters and on the website). Also, the income raised by the UK Trust has gone down considerably over the past three years - y/e 5th April '15 - £23,379; y/e 5th April '16 - £16,003 and forecast for y/e 5th April '17 - about £12,000. This has inevitably speeded up the hand over process, and the UK Trust has decided that all funds raised in the UK will now be used primarily for capital or non recurring costs.
2. As we (the UK Trust) now supply the lesser part of the income, we did not feel it right to 'call the tune' anymore.
3. We feel that we have honest leadership and management in place, with good checks and balances, with accountability to a locally elected management committee.

So, in practice, what this means is that Vitalis and the local committee now make all decisions about day-to-day running of the facility, and what to spend the money on.

Although, the locally derived income is enough now to keep up with the day-to-day financial needs of the facility, including wages - **we still need to raise funds in the UK!** Funds raised by the UK Trust are still badly needed to pay for capital expenditures and non-recurring costs such as for medical equipment, repairs to the buildings and infrastructure, kick-starting new income generating schemes, etc.

The UK Trust will continue as before and monitor the situation, trustees will continue to visit, but there is now this change in management to the local people. We are a little apprehensive as to how it will go....but this was what we had hoped all along. For Simbiri to become more self reliant and, hopefully within the next few years, to fly solo!

**To all our supporters** - Thank you very much for your support.

Dr Tim Kenny on behalf of the Trustees - January 2017