

MASANGA NEWS

Newsletter for members and supporters of the Association Friends of Masanga (AFOM)

Travelled over 6,000 kms to say Thank You.

Masanga hospital Director, Thomas Fortune, was recently on a 12-day visit to Denmark where one of the items on his agenda was to guest speak at our annual general meeting. A very well-prepared and eloquent Thomas Fortune told us about the project and the situation to date, the challenges that had arisen along the way together with those that face us in the future. The following question was posed by AFOM Chairman Peter Bo Jørgensen:

ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

To which Thomas Fortune replied with a resounding YES, adding that he looked forward to continuing the co-operation with optimism.

A tightly-packed and well-prepared programme filled Thomas Fortune's 12-day visit. One of the calls he made was on IBIS's Secretary General, Vagn Berthelsen, with whom he chatted about IBIS and the co-operation that already exists between Masanga and IBIS. In addition, he paid visits to the Energy and Environment Centre, to Baisikeli, with whom we co-operate on our bicycle project, and finally to the LIONS hostel together with Poul Schøn of LIONS Club. LIONS has supported our project right from the start and it is one of our important partners ensuring the continuance of the project.

Thomas Fortune also made a call on Multicenter Syd on Falster, where he was given a guided tour by project leader Arne Kjærsgaard before lunch. Before an audience of 200 students, Thomas thanked those present for their material and logistical support since 2006: support that includes everything from wheelchairs, zimmer frames, bicycles, hospital equipment and other items much needed in Sierra Leone.

(Photo caption: Arne Kjærsgaard, Project leader at Multicenter Syd and Thomas Fortune, Masanga Hospital)

Finally, Thomas Fortune called on Hyldagerskolen in Albertslund, where he was given a cheque for DKK 18,000 from teachers and students who had made Masanga hospital their theme subject for one week. The cheque not only represents increased awareness in the third world by the students, but it is also the product of the creativity and hard work that went into raising funds for Masanga.

(Photo caption: Thomas Fortune together with students from Hyldagerskolen in Albertslund)

Thomas thanked the students in English for their fantastic support and finished by saying: “-Maybe the small things do not mean so much for you but they mean a very much to thousands of people in our country”, after which there was a round of applause.

The Korup Club raised DKK 5,000

Masanga receives support from many different sources: just before Christmas, children and young people in Odense raised money for Masanga. The following is a report that we have received from them:

The Korup Club is an afternoon and evening club for young people between the ages of 10 and 18 where they can spend their free time daily.

In December, we organised a Christmas bazaar in support of Masanga. The children had been given a choice of three causes to whom they could donate the profit, and they chose Masanga.

(photo caption: Christmas bazaar at the Korup Club in Odense in support of Masanga)

The children made lots of Christmas decorations, cookies, sweets and waffles, which were then put on sale. In addition, they entertained visitors with a couple of small sketches, and 4 different bands each played a couple of numbers.

We had a full house with more than 200 visitors throughout the day and we managed to raise nearly DKK 5000 for Masanga. The children were proud when we calculated the number of patients who could be treated for the amount raised: it was almost the same number as the Club membership.

(photo caption: Club children put on sketches for the Masanga benefit)

We hope to repeat the success in 2010.

The optimum jungle dwelling

A tree house is currently being reborn in Masanga. It is being made from the same materials and on the same foundation - at the top of a hill – as the original house which had previously stood for 40 years. However, this one will be entirely new.

In October last year, Friends of Masanga approached Architects without Borders to ask for their help in designing and building staff accommodation for hospital personnel. The hospital's remote location, and the fact that we need to maintain a qualified workforce and thus improve the hospital's capability and strengthen development in the region, makes it essential for us to be able to offer

decent staff accommodation. Following our approach, a working group was set up with the objective of devising a project that would take into account social and hygiene conditions as well as resources. With the support of Friends of Masanga and The Danish Art Agency, the first house is currently being built in Masanga.

One of the problems that we have had to face is the scarcity of wood. All forests in Sierra Leone are cut down with the purpose of creating larger areas for agricultural purposes or utilising the wood for building work or for fuel. New trees are not planted to the same extent as they are felled. The wood is sold as soon as it has been chopped down and as such is never allowed to dry.

(photo caption: the perfect jungle house begins to take shape)

Sierra Leone was once known for its very good timber. Today, unfortunately, it is in short supply. We decided, therefore, to tackle the problem by planting 100 trees and purchasing timber for the next house months in advance in order to allow it to dry. Another problem in connection with the construction work is that there is no access to electricity in Masanga. The fully-equipped workshop is only used for a few hours each week and electric tools are virtually never used. It would be possible to build much faster if there were daily access to electricity.

Apart from the resource problems we have encountered, the building work in Masanga has been a positive experience. There is a great deal of interest in the project and the building site has visitors daily, all are curious and ask questions about the design and function of the house. The workmen are competent and reliable. If the architect has not turned up at the building site by 8 am, they knock on his door in order to obtain the key to the workshop. It puts paid to the prejudice that exists about African workmen.

(photo caption: The new house in the jungle will be inaugurated together with the local population.)

The main goal with the first house is to make a study of the extent of building materials required, the skill levels of the craftsmen, and the possibilities and limitations that arise. It also serves as a 1:1 test of availability of materials, prices and quality. Along with the skills of the workmen, new techniques are also being tested, i.e. different methods of ventilation. The house is being built with a ventilated roof that opens on all sides so that in the warm months it acts as an open cover with a free flow of air.

The result of the study will lay the foundation for the development of a new type of housing: an innovative proposal that will kick off a viable course of development and set a standard for future construction work in Masanga. There will be focus on indoor climate, resources and climatic conditions. In the longer term, the goal is to build the new type of housing for all hospital personnel.

News in brief

Successful General Meeting

We held a general meeting on Saturday, 20 March at Hyldager School in Albertslund. Approximately 60 attended the meeting with a total of approx 90 taking part in the remainder of the day's activities, which included workshops, a presentation by Thomas Fortune, and a party in the evening.

At the General Meeting, Chairman Peter Bo Jørgensen presented a comprehensive report that was received enthusiastically and thus adopted by those present. 2009 has been the most active year so far in the 4 year period that the Association, with its membership of 400, has existed.

Only one change was made to the board: Dr Else Iversen, who has made a big contribution to the rebuilding of the Masanga hospital, withdrew in accordance with her original plan to be involved for a limited time span. Else was given a standing ovation from all present. Dr Susan Hass was elected in her place. The board thus consists of Susan, Peter Bo Jørgensen (chairman), Knud Anker Iversen (secretary), Inge Hass and Peter Adamsen (treasurer). No fewer than 5 substitutes were elected, all eligible to attend board meetings. They are: Morten Jess, Urd Steendahl, Rasmus Dahlin, Rikke Bennedsen and Mogens Holm-Larsen. This new clutch of substitutes significantly rejuvenates the board !

Arne's 60th

One of our very important collaboration partners, Arne Kjærsgård of Multicenter Syd, will soon celebrate his 60th birthday and will be marking the occasion with a reception on Thursday, 22 April from 1300-1700 at Multicenter Syd in Nykøbing F.

2 containers soon to be despatched

We are preparing to pack and despatch 2 containers: one will be filled primarily with various items of hospital equipment while the other container will be packed with bikes for the hospital's cycle workshop.

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