



Theosophical Order of Service (TOS)

(Founded in February 1908)

A Union of Those who Love in the Service of All that Suffers. www.tos-uk.org.uk

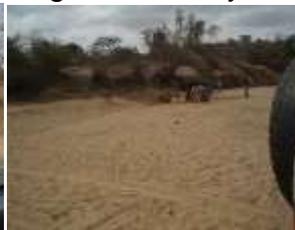
TOS EMERGENCY AID FOR STARVING FAMILIES IN EAST AFRICA

In 2012, when **Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya** faced acute food shortages, the **TOS in Nairobi** undertook a project on behalf of us all. The town of Kitui, 130 km east of Nairobi, was selected and a church identified as local partner. At the end of August that year, fifty families were given enough staple foods to keep them alive for a month as part of a programme that lasted six months. (No, wait! In fact, fifty-five families were fed, because it was impossible to turn away the extra ones that turned up.)



The food was personally delivered and distributed, principally to the mothers, by **Mrs Usha Shah, TOS convenor in Kenya**. Accompanied by a local area facilitator, **Mr Paulo**, she travelled to Kitui via Machakos where a pick-up van loaded with maize flour, oil and salt was waiting. They then left for Kitui, about two hours away. Here is **Usha's** account:

"The road to Kitui is all tarmacked except for a badly pot-holed stretch of two kilometres. The countryside all along is dreary and depressing. We could see grass which was brown, shrivelled and ready to catch fire but for long patches of bare earth. The trees were leafless and waiting for the rains which had not arrived for three years. The savannah shrubs and cacti were battling to stay alive. It was brown throughout, with little green except for the trees which refused to surrender to the harsh conditions. The fields displayed the brave but failed attempts of the small land holders to grow maize and chick peas - failed because all the plants had dried up, even before seeing the light of the day.



"On both sides, women and children were trekking long distances to find and buy water from designated places with boreholes. Improvised ways of lessening the weight of the water were seen: cans held on strings, children rolling drums along the road, donkey carts. We saw women carrying their babies on their backs with water cans in their arms and scores of children, even young ones, trudging along in pursuit of water. We, who live in developed countries, cry about child labour in Africa and elsewhere but those who complain should come and see what in many cases, is a necessary evil. They are working for their very survival. This search for water keeps them out of schools and keeps women from earning a living by knitting, sewing, etc. Animals also trek long distances in search of water. On our way, we saw a donkey licking the pebbles along the side of the river to see if there was any water – a pitiful sight. The rivers had dried up and offered nothing but boulders and rocks.



“Already saddened at seeing these desperate conditions so close to Nairobi, we reached the arranged venue where more than 50 people were waiting patiently for us to arrive. The women surged forward to welcome us with songs and dancing. Amongst them were some very elderly ladies barely able to walk, and even two blind ones. This brought tears to our eyes. A speech of welcome was made and in reply I explained about **Theosophy** and the

work of **TOS** worldwide. The people were amazed when I mentioned that **TOS** members in **Spain, France, England, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Italy**, and the **USA** cared about their plight and had made it possible for **TOS Kenya** to bring them food. Hearty applause and prayers of blessing were given by all before we even started on the work at hand.

“Everything was set up quickly and the food distribution started in a very orderly way. Some of the recipients could not hold back their tears when they saw the flour and oil. The elderly and blind ladies were helped to carry their share by the younger ones. Some biscuits, sweets and stationery from a Kenyan donor were then distributed. The elderly ladies were the happiest to receive the biscuits - a special treat indeed! It was hard to see them so thrilled with simple things to which they never had access and which we take for granted. Many came to hug us, shake hands or just be near. At such moments I felt good to be alive and able to be of some service to our fellow beings! Amid shouts of “**Asante Sana, na Mungu na Bariki**” (Thank you and may you prosper by God’s grace), we left to return to Nairobi. On the way we saw smiling women and children carrying their very welcome load, assured of a daily meal for at least a month.

“At one point we stopped and gave some small things and a shirt, trousers and cardigan to a very elderly man walking along the road. He clutched the clothes, staring at them with amazement as though he couldn’t believe the gift is real! When we got back to Nairobi after our long day, we were tired but so very happy that **TOS Kenya** had embarked on this project. As I tried to go to sleep, all I could see was the smiles on the faces of the elderly ladies in particular and the delight of the old man on the road side, and I could still hear the shouts of happiness that greeted us when we arrived.

“Some of you were asking about the possibility of developing a project that will allow ‘our’ families to feed themselves rather than depending on emergency aid. Excellent question! We have put down a bore hole on the church property at which our food distributions takes place so that the villagers can have not only drinking water but water for the planting of high quality seeds. There are also plans to provide the villagers with fruit-bearing trees such as mangoes and pawpaw. Meanwhile, I extend heartfelt thanks to all of you who put a smile on the faces of the residents of the Kyambevo Village, Kauma Location, Kitui West. **Each penny you have donated has gone to the beneficiaries and there have been no administrative expenses whatsoever.** Many, many thanks.”

The **TOS in Kenya** is itself supporting five of the **TOS**’s 55 families at a cost of 2,000 Kenyan shillings per month per family. This covers supplies of 22 Kg of maize meal, cooking oil and salt. That’s for a family of two parents and three children per month. (The total sum for the full period of six months including all five families comes to US\$700. One wonders how long a family of five from an affluent country would last on what would seem to be a mono-diet of maize meal.) **TOS** groups and an individual member in other countries have matched the five families taken on by the **TOS in Kenya**, allowing us to cover **45** of the **55** families so far. **Usha Shah** assures us of complete accountability in this project. She has assured us that not a penny of our donations is going on administrative costs such as is the case with the big charitable organisations on the spot.

P.S. Thanks to the addition of generous donations from **Leeds Lodge** and **Torbay Lodge**, and the magnificent fund-raising musical concert organised by **Cornelia Crowther** and given by **Sarah Waycott** and **Hannah Mitchell** at the **2011 European School of Theosophy**, in **St Albans**, the total money sent to **Kenya** by **TOS (UK)** exceeds **£1,000**. (May 2012).

For further information on the TOS, contact
Cynthia & Atma Trasi, TOS (UK), 66 Kirkgate, Shipley, West Yorks BD18 3EL,
Tel: 01274 598455 info@tos-uk.org.uk www.tos-uk.org.uk