



# V.I.V.A. NEWS

## Volunteers in Irish Veterinary Assistance

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Bringing New Life to people and their animals

DECEMBER 2002

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

A year already since our last newsletter and we have so much to tell you about what has been achieved in the past 12 months - as well as passing on the details of a number of exciting new projects due to launch in 2003.

In a relatively short time VIVA has established itself as a real presence in the rural agricultural development sector. From setting-up new A.I. training projects in Africa and Eastern Europe to treating animal diseases and promoting education in several countries we are making real strides in helping farmers across the world. Having watched the projects evolve, I am confident that they are working well and that together we will be able to make a real difference with the modest resources available to us.

I have been impressed with the enthusiasm of local students, farmers and the communities in which they live. They work tremendously hard in what are often appalling circumstances. I have been equally impressed with the generosity and commitment to VIVA of Irish veterinarians and agricultural specialists.

VIVA's membership has grown and the number of donors to the organisation has doubled in 12 months. So too have the number of projects we are committed to and the list of applicant projects is growing continuously, so I do hope that this upward trend continues further.

Read on if you would like to hear about how you have made a difference this year. You'll find out what a CAW is in rural development and take a journey across Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe to see how animal husbandry and preventative care are forming the backbone of VIVA's work. And do, please, contact us with any ideas you have for ways to fundraise for next year's activities.

Thank you all for your ongoing support and I wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Brendan Mimmagh, Secretary, VIVA and  
Fr. Michael Maher, Chairman, VIVA

## MALAWI - a country threatened by famine receives training in sustainable agriculture

Malawi is a country of 11 million inhabitants where one in four die before reaching five years of age. The combined result of the conflict in Mozambique sending over one million refugees flooding into Malawi and an on-going drought is placing a severe economic and food burden on the country. With over 86% of the labour force involved in agriculture and a current life expectancy of just 37 years the need for improved nutrition and increased food production is clearly a priority. The present food shortages is due to the failure of the maize crop, the staple food for the people. Farmers need to diversify to become independent of some crop failures. Livestock projects gives them that independence as livestock and their produce can be sold readily in time of need.

This year, the Small Scale Livestock Promotion Programme (SSLPP) based in Lilongwe, Malawi, applied to VIVA for support in their ongoing work.

Under the guiding hand of Dr. Sute Mwakasungula, SSLPP comprises local volunteers and farmers who organise and train local people from villages in the region. These people in turn go on to train other villagers in general animal healthcare and welfare methods. To date VIVA has supplied 10,000 A.I. straws of bovine semen. The straws were generously donated by Dovea Genetics Ltd., Dovea, Co. Tipperary. In addition, some high quality A.I. equipment was also donated in conjunction with Bothar who have already been working in Malawi for some time and donated 200 Irish heifers last year. These cows were donated to impoverished families in Ntchhisi and Mzuruat where they were needed most.

Following an evaluation of the project, VIVA has agreed to assist further through the Training for Trainers course in animal health and welfare issues. A bovine A.I. technical training project due to start in January 2003 will build on the scheme by sending straws from Dovea AI station in Thurles, Co Tipperary together with the expertise of Noel Ryan an experienced AI technician with Dovea. Noel will stay for some weeks as a volunteer training local people mostly women.

"With proper equipment and training in how to get the best from their animals, these farmers should be able to increase their family income, by selling milk in their neighborhood and to the local processing plant," said Peter Ireton, Chief Executive, Bothar, Ireland, "In the long term the



A dairy goat mean a lot to a poor family in Malawi.

### COMING UP IN 2003...

## Franciscan college in Kenya supports new Goat A.I. Service

In conjunction with the Baraka Franciscan Agricultural college in Molo, Western Kenya, HPI-Kenya and Bothar Ireland, VIVA will be involved in setting up a comprehensive goat Artificial Insemination Service. This service will be available to small goat keepers in Kenya, Uganda and Northern Tanzania initially. VIVA will be responsible for the technical training and equipping of A.I. operators as well as monitoring and supervision of this unique service. The aim of this programme is to improve the genetic gene pool available to these small holders and in turn improve their income and sustainability.

The Franciscan college in Molo is a sister college of the Franciscan Agricultural College in Mountbellow, Co. Galway. Students and staff in Galway are great supporters of the work VIVA is engaged in. "Our college is grounded on the desire of the Church to respond to the needs and aspirations of the poor. Basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health, education and jobs are not being met for the majority of people," said Bro Tony Dolan, College Principal who hails from Ballinamore Co, Leitrim.

aim is to improve the genetic quality of dairy cattle in the project areas too so this sort of integrated approach is definitely the most effective way of achieving these aims," he added.

A dairy goat keeping course targets rural women with small holdings. Goats milk gives them an opportunity to have a nutritional supplement in their diet and they can also sell any surplus. The course was devised by VIVA and is due to be presented in Malawi in January 2003.

# INDIA - Super Cyclone Disaster Victims of Orissa

On October 29th 1999 a super cyclone hit the already impoverished Orissa state in India destroying everything in its path and killing thousands of people. With nothing left on which to eek out a living, mass migration has been taking place and food production for those that remain is a priority.

Although several organisations have already been involved in re-stocking the region with animals, a veterinary service has not traditionally grown alongside the donation of livestock. For its part, VIVA has been invited to aid in the rehabilitation programme for victims of the



*Sacred Cows of India.*



disaster. One proposal is to employ and train a local veterinarian who will train Community Animal Health Workers (CAWS) to provide an essential animal health service to the villagers of Orissa who are dependant on their animals for their survival. VIVA hopes to be working alongside Heifer Project International (HPI) India and BOTHAR Ireland together with CARE India to help rehabilitate these people over the course of 4 years.

"Animals form an essential part of our food security, especially as soil fertility is declining alarmingly," points out Dr Pran K Bhatt, Country Director of HPI INDIA with whom VIVA is coordinating this project. "The training of local workers is the best way

## Training in Bovine A.I for Albania -Kosovo

Following on from the launch of VIVA's very successful course in cow welfare, animal husbandry and mastitis prevention in Albania and Kosovo last year, VIVA is this year launching a new course for local farmers and agricultural technicians. A bovine A.I technical training project in Albania and Kosovo due to start in 2003 will build on the scheme already put in place by VIVA since 2000. Training in A.I. techniques will be combined with education on prevention and treatment of reproductive problems in cows.

"It is really satisfying that the foundations VIVA set down will be built upon in the future with additional support for the farmers. The immediate food shortages and fodder shortages have been dealt with and now they need to rebuild their herds and livelihoods. With the help of VIVA this is going to be possible." said Dr Nuridin Mestani on his visit to Longford.

to move forward now because it will empower people to take control of their future here," he added.

VIVA needs your support to realise this project by becoming members of VIVA and fundraising for this worthy project.

## HYDATID DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMME -

*working with a community to support a practical educational health project*

When a dog contaminates water or soil with a virulent tapeworm egg, the outcome for human beings who come into contact with it is often fatal. In Turkana Northern Kenya a disease known as Hydatid is carried by dogs and passed in this way to humans often causing enormous cysts to grow in the people often leading to their death.

Controlling the disease is impeded by the nomadic pastoral lifestyle of these people and only a handful of people have worked on seeking a cure for it. One of those is Dr. Paul Torgerson, a former lecturer in Parasitology at the Veterinary College in

Ballsbridge and currently a lecturer in the Veterinary College in Zurich, Switzerland.

Considered the world's leading expert on Hydatid disease he has previously worked on projects in China, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, South America and Tunisia and has recently joined Dr. Eberhard Zeyhle of AMREF (African Medical & Research Foundation) in Turkana, Northern Kenya to help find a solution to the disease there. Funded by APSO, the Irish Government Agency for Personal Services Overseas, Dr. Torgerson is part of a VIVA/AMREF initiative to fight this terrible disease.

" The project is challenging , not least because of the nomadic lifestyle of the Turkana people but also because the training they need in new animal health practices will take some time to instill. I am hopeful that working with my local colleague, Dr. Zeyhle, will make a real difference within the next year." said Dr. Torgerson.

VIVA & AMREF are working on educating people on how to prevent contracting the disease and also on the treatment of those already infected and finally, the control of stray dogs.

## T.J. MAHER (1922- 2002)



Earlier this year, T.J. Maher, the founder and Chairman of BOTHAR sadly passed away. The highly respected Tipperary man, former T.D. and MEP, was renowned for his commitment to a rural development and farming practices in Ireland and later in the developing world.

T.J. was a firm advocate of education and training of farmers and was a great supporter of VIVA and its aims. His brother Fr. Michael Maher, MVB, MRCVS, C.S.S.p. is now Chairman of VIVA.

"It is a real honour to be able to continue with some of the work which T.J. considered so important. He spent his life trying to improve conditions for farmers, initially in Ireland and latterly in the developing world where he was an inspiration to everyone he met. He believed that food security was the key to enabling local people to help themselves - so long may we work towards that goal." said Fr. Maher.



# The Volunteers that make the wheels turn

## THE ADMINISTRATION

As with any charitable organisation much of the hard graft is undertaken by volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the organisation running smoothly. We would like to pay special tribute to VIVA volunteer Valarie Kells, who has been an essential help to us in our promotional activities as well as typing up our country evaluation reports and training manuals. Valarie works with the Department of Agriculture in the District Veterinary Office in Longford.

## THE A.I. DONORS

Further thanks is due to the AI station at Dovea, Co Tipperary and Progressive Genetics in Enfield Co Meath where incredible generosity has been shown throughout 2002. Their knowledge, expertise and products are fundamental to getting many of VIVA's new projects off the ground. A BIG THANKS to Dermot Cahill, manager Dovea, also Noel Ryan, John Mooney Michael Carey, Brena Tobin, Veterinary Surgeon and to Bernard Eivers, VS, Progressive Genetics.

## THE VIDEO – GIVING FOR LIVING

We are delighted to tell you that we now have a short promotional video of our own to use for fundraising events



Valarie Kells with young Massai cattle herders in Kenya.

and education purposes. The staff and students at FAS in Tralee, Co Kerry are responsible for filming, editing and scripting the tape and we are very grateful to them for their hard work and commitment. Copies of the VIVA tape are available from our office, just send us an e-mail at [vivaaid@eircom.net](mailto:vivaaid@eircom.net).

## How you can help in 2003?

As well as collecting our annual membership subscriptions we are inviting people to organise a local fundraiser during 2003. However small, any contributions towards the training schemes planned for Malawi, Kenya and India as well as the ongoing work in Albania/ Kosovo will be greatly appreciated.

### VIVA GOLF CLASSIC

One date to be put in the diary already is the VIVA Golf Classic scheduled for May 22nd 2003 organised by the District Veterinary Office in Longford. Due to be held in Tullamore Golf Club throughout the day, we are looking for

your participation either by entering a team of four or by offering a prize or sponsorship to help make it a successful and really fun day out for everyone. Contact Tony McManus at (043) 50317 for details.

### NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

VIVA is proud to announce that we now have a new website up and running. Containing details of past and present projects as well as information on how you can get involved in our work just click on [www.vivaaid.ie](http://www.vivaaid.ie).

Go on pass the address to a friend or colleagues and let's spread the word about what we are doing.

- Join VIVA
- Make a donation
- Complete a standing order: VIVA Account, Bank of Ireland, Longford. A/C. No.: 5606 3780
- Help raise funds



# SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT NEW LIFE TO FARMS AROUND THE WORLD THIS YEAR



## CLINICAL SOCIETY TO THE RESCUE

The Mid-Western Clinical society were extremely generous in their support of the VIVA programmes and in February of this year presented VIVA with a cheque for £1000-00 at their meeting at Jury's hotel, Limerick.

TOP RIGHT :- Paraic McNamara, MVB, MRCVS , Brendan Mimmagh, VIVA, Anna Nolan, MVB, MRCVS.

## VETERINARY STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

Veterinary Students organised a VIVA information Meeting to celebrate the opening of the new state of the art Veterinary College in Belfield during October of this year. Students are showing great enthusiasm for the VIVA programmes and are actively fundraising for our work in aid of the needy farmers and their animals.



BOTTOM RIGHT :-L-R Brendan Mimmagh, VIVA, final year students Bryan O'Meara, Elsie O'Sullivan, Orlaith Cleary, Valarie Kells VIVA.

## KOSOVO DIRECTOR VISITS LONGFORD

During August of this year Dr Nuridin Mestani, HPI Kosovo Director visited the VIVA office in Longford to thank the Irish people for the tremendous support they gave to his people since the war there. Dr Nuridin was a refugee and was forced to flee to Albania with his family.



MIDDLE RIGHT :-L-R Dr Nuridin Mestani, HPI, Valarie Kells,VIVA, Peter Ireton, Bothar.

**CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE SENT TO ....**



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