



viva news

Volunteers in Irish Veterinary Assistance

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Supporting Livestock, Supporting People

December 2009



Albania / Kosovo



Nepal

Uganda



Tanzania



IVA 1999-2009

Message from the Chairman

As we celebrate our first 10 years in existence it is important to reflect on the vision of our founder Brendan Mimmagh and the first board members which included Fr Michael Maher (Chairman), Denis Kelliher, Ciara O'Sullivan, Cyril O'Sullivan, Mark Connellan and Professor Rob Lee. Their vision was to bring hope to rural families in the Developing World affected by drought, conflict and poor infrastructure through a combination of the generosity of the Irish people and the expertise of the veterinary

profession in Ireland. Ten years on the principle of supporting sustainable agriculture and creating viable rural communities, thereby ensuring food security, is belatedly supported by world leaders who have been spurred into action by a food crisis. Over the last decade agriculture in many developing nations stagnated. Now however, fears of food shortages, a rethinking of anti-poverty priorities and a crushing recession are causing a dramatic shift in world economic

policy in favour of greater support for agriculture. The FAO (Food & Agriculture Organisation) forecasts that food production will need to double by 2050 in order to keep up with rising demand, a task that will require \$30 billion of investment annually. VIVA will therefore continue with the vision that has sustained the last ten years and with your support will make a unique Irish contribution to the forgotten rural communities of the Developing World.

Seán O'Laoide – VIVA Chairman

VIVA — 10 years on!

The Beginnings

Mannix was curious. That day on the small farm that he managed (attached to an orphanage in central Malawi), two sows had farrowed and one had had a litter of 10 piglets and one had had only one piglet. How could there be such a difference between two sows that had received much the same treatment over the previous few months? As luck would have it, that week he was attending a training course in pig husbandry organised by **VIVA** (Volunteers in Irish Assistance). One of the trainers had a look at his records and was able to point out that the same boar had served both sows on the same day. If a boar serves more than one sow on a particular day, his fertility is significantly impaired and as a result the second sow got the short straw and only ended up with one piglet. A valuable lesson learnt for Mannix!

This story illustrates **VIVA's** mission, which is the provision of assistance (in the form of livestock, training, medicines etc) to livestock holders in the Developing World which ensures that their animals are healthy and productive. Their motto "Healthy animals, healthy people"



encapsulates the dependence of almost one billion subsistence farmers in these regions on their livestock. Animals here mean much more than just meat, milk, wool, feathers, hair and hides. They provide draft power, represent cash and a store of wealth for emergencies, confer status, fertilise gardens and crops, provide fuel through biogas and serve important cultural purposes.

Having grown up on a small, mixed farm in Co. Longford, Brendan Mimmagh was well-placed to appreciate the lot of a subsistence farmer in the Developing World and the foundation of **Bóthar**, the livestock development agency, in 1991 grabbed his imagination. Brendan became an active member of the organisation accompanying many of the initial livestock shipments to Africa and eastern Europe. His experiences led him to found **VIVA** to harness the goodwill of the Irish veterinary profession and to use these resources to

focus on the veterinary aspects of these livestock development projects.

In April 1999, **VIVA** was registered as a charity and the first Board was constituted with Fr. Michael Maher CSSp, a Spiritan priest, as its first Chairperson. Fr. Mick,



who uniquely combined the roles of priest and vet served as Chairperson until his death in 2004. At the time, his brother TJ, the former IFA president, chaired **Bóthar**, a unique double act which neatly symbolised the ongoing close relationship between the two organisations.

The first projects

The aftermath of the war in Kosovo in the Balkans was the setting for **VIVA's** first major initiative. An acute shortage of winter fodder faced Kosovar farmers on their return to their farms and **VIVA** was approached for assistance. An appeal by Brendan on morning radio attracted a huge response with over €20,000 being donated by the public and farming organisations like the ICMSA and Macra na Feirme. Concentrate feed was purchased in Italy and imported into Kosovo by **VIVA's** partner there, **Heifer Kosovo**.

In the early years, **VIVA** concentrated on providing training on livestock projects in conjunction with **Bóthar** in areas such as dairy health management, mastitis control and animal welfare. One niche area developed by **VIVA** was the training and equipping of Artificial Insemination (AI) technicians with courses being run in Albania, Kosovo and Malawi. In conjunction with this, **VIVA** began to



organise shipments of bovine semen to these projects with the co-operation of Irish genetic companies such as Dovea Genetics, North West Cattle Breeding Society (Sligo), Munster AI, the National Cattle Breeding Centre and Eurogene AI.

Scaling up

In recent years **VIVA** has developed strong links with other livestock development organisations and has now begun to develop livestock programmes in partnership with them. Our main international partner is **Heifer International**, an American NGO which now works in over 50 countries worldwide. **VIVA** has developed an animal traction project in Uganda with **Heifer Uganda** and trains Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) or paravets as they are more commonly known, in Tanzania under the auspices of **Heifer Tanzania**. In Nepal, **VIVA** and its partner, **Animal Health Training and Consultancy Service (AHTCS)** are working with female farmers to increase the productivity from their farms.

In particular, **VIVA** would like to thank **Bóthar** for their unstinting support over



the last 10 years. In addition to partnering with us on many projects, **Bóthar** has provided a grant of €75,000 to **VIVA** to enable it to develop into an effective organisation. This grant proved invaluable in allowing **VIVA** to develop its own initiatives in its project countries.

VIVA is also indebted to **Irish Aid** (the Irish government's development agency) for their financial support for our projects in Nepal, Uganda and Tanzania. Over €120,000 was committed to these projects by the Irish government.

The future

VIVA continues to go from strength to strength. However, its future depends on the continued support of its volunteers and fundraisers who keep the show on the road. Your solidarity with the livestock farmers of the Developing World has helped to lift hundreds of families out of poverty and we hope that that support will continue.

Uganda / Tanzania

In March a VIVA team visited our major projects in Uganda and Tanzania to get updates on their progress.

First stop on the tour was Uganda. Last autumn, VIVA initiated this major project in eastern Uganda with the aid of significant funding from Irish Aid. Over €80,000 has been committed over the next three years to the Koilei Amora Ican Animal Traction Project. One hundred and twenty eight families will be supported with the distribution of draft oxen, ploughs and carts. Farmers will also be given grass seeds, vegetable seeds, tools and appropriate training. The families engage mostly in subsistence farming that unfortunately does not provide sufficient income or produce to maintain their large families. This has resulted in malnutrition (especially in children) and early school-leaving which leads to illiteracy, unemployment and early marriages.

Using hand hoes it can take an average household up to 15 days to dig an acre of ground in preparation for crop planting. This obviously reduces the acreage under crops. However, with the introduction of oxen and ploughs, farmers will be able to plough and plant

large pieces of land in a short time.

While in Uganda, the VIVA team attended a handover ceremony for 64 oxen and 16 ploughs to the first batch of families to benefit from the project. This project is being managed by VIVA's partner, Heifer Uganda.



A team of oxen ploughing on the VIVA project



Brendan Mimmagh is presented with a hand-crafted harp to mark VIVA's contribution to the Koilei Amora Ican Project

Next stop was Arusha in Tanzania, where our Tanzanian partner, Heifer Tanzania, is training 90 Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) to provide basic animal healthcare to 100 villages around Arusha and Kilimanjaro. This model of village-based CAHWs (who are themselves livestock keepers and are nominated by their fellow farmers) ensures a low-cost and sustainable rural veterinary service for the region. All those who complete the required training are given a veterinary toolkit and a bicycle.

While in Tanzania, the VIVA team attended a ceremony at Tengera Agriculture College at which the first 30 CAHWs trained under the scheme graduated. They were also presented with basic equipment kits and bicycles to facilitate their work.



The first class of VIVA-trained paravets graduate from Tengera College. The training of these paravets would not have been possible without the support of Irish Aid (€50,000) and Electric Aid (€10,000). Electric Aid is the staff social justice fund of ESB employees which funds development projects in Ireland and abroad.



The recipients receive their oxen

Mike O'Leary Travel Bursary

On June 17th at a ceremony in the Veterinary College in UCD, Carmel Molloy, a third-year veterinary student from Thurles, Co. Tipperary, was presented with the *Mike O'Leary Trust* Travel Bursary for 2009.

This is the fifth year of the Bursary which sponsors a veterinary student each year to spend a month working on one of VIVA's overseas projects. The *Mike O'Leary Trust* was established to honour the memory of Kerry vet, Mike O'Leary, who died tragically in 2003 at the age of 39. His family and friends have undertaken a number of fundraising initiatives over the years to raise funds for the Travel Bursary in addition to supporting the Irish NGO, GOAL, and cardiomyopathy research. The O'Leary family was represented at the ceremony by Mike's father, Frank O'Leary.



L to R: Frank O'Leary, Carmel Molloy and Sean O'Laoide (VIVA Chairman) at the presentation of the student bursary

Carmel travelled to Uganda in August to carry out an animal health survey for our partner Heifer Uganda. The aim of the project was to conduct a survey on basic herd health in cattle and goat herds and the potential merits of a widespread vaccination programme on various diseases endemic to eastern Uganda. The tropical climate of Uganda is favourable to ticks and subsequently, tick borne diseases are the most common animal health issue. According to Carmel, East Coast Fever (*Theileria parva*), Nagana (Trypanosomiasis) and (unrelated to tick epidemiology) Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia were the diseases she most commonly saw.

Carmel reports that the major difficulty was educating farmers to vaccinate animals as a routine in order to prevent illness in the first place. Many farmers didn't vaccinate until they noticed animals were sick. Farmers were spraying with acaricides irregularly, if at all, and Carmel found that the majority of them were unaware that it is too late to spray once the ticks are seen on the animal.

In relation to Foot and Mouth disease there is no government compensation scheme in place and therefore there is no incentive for farmers to cull these animals. Clinical cases are treated symptomatically and left with the herd thus becoming a source of persistent infection. Logistical issues also hamper vaccination programmes in that many of the farms are inaccessible by road and poor telecommunications hinder attempts to organise group vaccination programmes.

Carmel would like to thank the Mike O'Leary Trust for the opportunity to travel to Uganda.

Kosovo Programme

VIVA has been involved in Kosovo since the end of the war in 1999 when we organised shipments of winter fodder from Italy to Kosovo. In recent years working with our partner there, Heifer Kosovo, we have been funding an artificial insemination (AI) programme which has involved the training of technicians and provision of high quality semen.

The aim of the project is to promote the Holstein-Frisian breed with local dairy farmers. At present most dairy cows are Simmental / Busha (a local breed) crosses which have a low milk capacity.

Local vets and veterinary technicians have been trained as AI technicians and been provided with the necessary equipment and semen supplies. Each farmer in the project can have 4 cows inseminated for free

and it is estimated that over 1750 farmers will benefit.

In October, a VIVA team travelled to Kosovo to provide refresher training for the AI technicians. The course was delivered by Cork vet, Denis Healy and Brendan O'Connor, an AI technician with Munster AI. Over two days, in Vermice, the team covered AI techniques and various aspects of dairy cow fertility and management. Practical training was carried



Brendan O'Connor demonstrates practical AI techniques on a training session in Kosovo

out a local slaughterhouse in the city of Prizren. In addition, a dairy farm was visited to discuss dairy cow nutrition and management.

The AI programme is an essential component of Heifer Kosovo's dairy projects as it is playing a significant role in increasing the productivity of these cows. In addition, it is a vital service in some areas where there may not be adequate availability of bulls.

VIVA would like to thank Munster AI for their co-operation in this initiative, in particular, Brendan O'Connor for giving his time and expertise, John Shirley and Anthony Cronin for their help in the shipments of semen straws and Dr. Doreen Corridan.

Albania

In recent years we have also been involved in an AI project in Albania in association with an organization called BOFAK. This organization led by Dr. Andrea Trajani, brings together over 100 AI specialists in Albania. In February, we shipped over 7000 doses of bovine semen (sourced from Munster AI) to BOFAK. Again, we would like to thank Munster AI and, in particular, John Shirley and Anthony Cronin, for their co-operation in this venture.

Nepal

In August, Longford vet Ciarán Göbl, VIVA's representative in Nepal, finished his one year placement. Building on the work of his predecessor, Susan Griffin, Ciarán has been instrumental in ensuring the successful implementation of our project there in conjunction with our partner, AHTCS.

Our project in Nepal aims to improve the socio-economic status of 15 groups of farmers, mainly female, in the Kaski District by enabling them to buy goats and providing appropriate training. There are around 375 direct beneficiaries.

How you can help

Why not show your solidarity with livestock farmers in Africa, Asia and eastern Europe. We have many opportunities for you to raise much needed funds for VIVA so check out the options below. On the other hand if you'd like to organise your own event, we can help with posters, promotional materials etc.

For information on fundraising for VIVA contact Mike Burke on 086 – 2568357 or at mike@viva.ie

Tax Relief

Did you know that if you give €250 in any one year to VIVA, we can recoup the tax you have paid on it? Irish tax legislation allows for tax relief for the charity on donations greater than €250 in any tax year at the rate of tax that you would have paid. Typically a €250 donation is worth over €430 to VIVA

Check out our new website

Our new website (www.viva.ie) has been live since May. There, you can read about our projects, make a donation and register for regular email updates. Have a look!

when we claim the tax back. All you have to do is fill out a CHY2 form (it's very easy, takes about 5 mins) and post it back to VIVA and we will be able to claim back the tax you paid on the donation amount from the Revenue Commissioners.

You are of course under no obligation to fill in this form but it allows us to benefit from your hard earned tax euros at no extra cost to yourselves?

If you are self-employed you can claim this tax relief yourself on your annual return to the Revenue Commissioners. For more details contact VIVA.

Regular Giving

Regular giving such as direct debits enables VIVA to predict its income more accurately and plan accordingly. Why not take out a direct debit in favour of VIVA? A monthly donation of €22 will allow us to claim tax relief on your donation (or in the case of the self-employed, this tax relief can be claimed by the donor).

To take out a direct debit, contact VIVA for an application form (see contact details above) or you can set it up online by going to www.mycharity.ie/charity/viva

Fundraising Events

Why not mark a significant birthday with a fundraising challenge?

If our VIVA Wheelers cycle challenges don't grab your fancy why not run or walk a marathon or half-marathon?

VIVA is now registered on www.mycharity.ie With mycharity.ie you can set up your own fundraising page in 5 minutes, email the link to all your friends and contacts who can then donate online to VIVA. Fundraising made easy!

Corporate Donations

If your company or workplace would like to support VIVA's work we'd love to hear from you. We can match your desired level of support with a specific project or country and we can support your efforts with promotional materials and help with fundraising. In addition, we can arrange in-house talks on our work.

Changes at the top

After 10 years at the helm, Brendan Mimmagh has decided to step down as CEO and concentrate on managing VIVA's overseas projects. Mike Burke takes over as CEO with responsibility for administration and fundraising. VIVA would like to acknowledge Brendan's enormous contribution over the years and hope that his involvement continues for many more.

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Ciarán attributes the success of the project to the holistic approach taken in working with these farmer groups. Firstly, the productivity of local goats was improved using superior Boer buck goats. Secondly, as livestock suffer from a nutritional deficit in the dry season due to the lack of green forage and fodder, participants are trained to use the empty paddy fields to grow drought-resistant grasses during this time to replace the poor quality rice straw which is normally fed. Thirdly, the farmers receive ancillary training in soil management, shed building and even DIY mineral licks (If you want to have a go, you need 1kg of red mud, 1kg of iodinated salt and 10 crushed and grinded roasted egg shells. Wheat, flour and water are used to bind the mix which is then left to bake in the sun. Don't forget the hole in the middle to tie it up!). Lastly, there is a strong social component to the project with the women receiving gender awareness training.

One of the biggest impacts has been in the lower caste communities. Many of the members have never owned their own animals and instead try to eke out a living working on bigger farms. Now, they have constructed new sheds and are extremely proud of their new goats and their status in society has received a major boost.

Ciarán describes his year in Nepal as an "extraordinary opportunity". According to him "it is hard to hard to imagine that I have been living in one of the poorest countries in the world. The generosity of the people in Nepal would put many of us at home to

shame and with the soaring Himalayas as a backdrop, it most surely is one of the richest countries for natural beauty. But when you spend a period of time off the beaten track, you begin to understand how difficult it is to eke out a living on a small plot of land in a country that's 60% mountainous and very densely populated"

Ciarán's blog of his year in Nepal can be read at www.vivanepal.blogspot.com



Ciarán Göbl with one of his farmer groups

VIVA Golf Classic

On August 7th, Tullamore Golf Club again hosted the annual VIVA Golf Classic. On one of this summer's few good days, over 30 teams competed for a host of prizes with Martin Bohan's team emerging victorious.



The VIVA Golf Classic winning team – L to R: Lar Lyons, John O'Connell, Martin Bohan and Pat Delahunty

Since its inception in 2003, the event has built up a loyal following and has raised almost €50,000 for VIVA's overseas projects.

VIVA would again like to thank Tony McManus for all his efforts in organising the Classic. We would also like to acknowledge the support of our main sponsors, Univet and C & M Vetlink.

Flora Women's Mini-Marathon

This year, for the first time, VIVA had a team taking part in the Women's Mini-Marathon in Dublin with 17 supporters walking, jogging or running to raise almost €3,000 for VIVA's Nepal programme. Since its inception in 1983 the event has grown to become the world's



L to R: Anne Halligan, Laura Farrell, Morag White, Cynthia Geelan, Cathy Hawthorne ready for the off at Longford Train Station

largest all-women sports event with over 40,000 participants each year. Charities are the big winners and it is now the biggest single day charity event in the country with over €100m raised since 1983 for various charities. VIVA would like to thank all the participants: *Department of Agriculture Team* – Aileen Tighe, Maresa Sheahan and Anita O'Halloran *Longford Animal Health Centre* – Cathy Hawthorne, Cynthia Geelan and Anne Halligan *Vet Students* – Morag White, Laura Farrell, Kate Lahart, Kim Ashurst, Ciara Murphy, Kathryn Cuddy, Claire Campion, Cathy Fitzgerald Martina Smyth, Mary Healy, Roisin Bolger

Our Supporters

Over the last 10 years, our supporters have raised thousands of euros for our projects overseas. Without their efforts, none of our work would be possible. So to everyone who has walked, run, cycled or swung a golf club for VIVA – Mile Buíochas!

Longford Animal Health Centre - Practice Supporter of the Year

Mike Burke recently made a presentation to Longford Animal Health Centre to acknowledge their fundraising efforts on behalf of VIVA this year. Three staff members (Cathy Hawthorne, Anne Halligan and Cynthia Geelan) took part in



Mike Burke makes a presentation to Anne Halligan and Brian Flynn of Longford Animal Health Centre to mark their contribution to VIVA in 2009

the Flora Women's mini-marathon in June and in September Brian Flynn and Donagh McDonnell took to their bikes to complete the "Burren 100" cycle challenge.

If your workplace would like to adopt VIVA as their charity for 2010 please contact Mike Burke on 086 – 2568357 or mike@viva.ie We can arrange a presentation to your staff on our work and advise on fundraising.

Burren 100

On September 12th, the "VIVA Wheelers" headed for Clare for their latest cycle challenge, a 100km sprint through the Burren! Over 50 cyclists took part on what was one of the sunniest weekends of the year. Starting in Ballyvaughan, the route took the cyclists to



Aisling Göbl, Eoin Liston and Fiona Göbl get ready to hit the road on the Burren 100

Corofin, Ennistymon, Lahinch, Doolin, the Cliffs of Moher and finally, a spectacularly scenic finish along the coastal route to Ballyvaughan. A dinner in the Hylands Burren Hotel capped what was a perfect day.

The event raised over €19,000 for VIVA's livestock projects overseas and due to its success it is hoped to make this an annual event moving around Ireland each year to a different venue. This will compliment our overseas cycle challenges.

VIVA would like to thank our sponsors, Sioda Interiors (Dundalk) and Paddy O'Donoghue of Veterinary Instruments Ltd, (Ballyvaughan). We'd also like to thank the members of the Burren Cycling Club who accompanied us on the route. The event was organised by Irish Cycling Safaris. To register your interest for future "VIVA Wheelers" events contact mike@viva.ie

Showjumping

Following their recent summer shows, Midland Showjumping have donated all the entry fees from the four events to VIVA. At a recent function in Granard, Brian Gormley MRCVS, chairman of the Midland



L to R: Mary Gannon, Brendan Mimmagh (VIVA), Mairead Higgins (Pat the Baker), Brian Gormley, Ann Gannon at presentation of cheque to VIVA in Granard

Showjumping Committee presented a cheque for €4,000 to VIVA's Brendan Mimmagh. VIVA would like to thank all the organisers and sponsors of the event as follows: Brian & Ann Gormley, Oliver Glancy, Pat the Baker, Lady Georgina Forbes, Seamus Kane (Kane Motors), Ann Gannon, Mary Gannon, Olaf O'Neill (C & M Veterinary).