Greetings from Kipkaren/Chebaiywa, Kenya! As 2012 drew to a close, we were able to take a mini-vacation for three days of R & R. Part of the time we rested and read but we also took time to reflect on what happened in the ministry of ELI. We are grateful for the partnerships of prayer and financial support and we’d like to share some of what has been accomplished in the past year:

**PRAISES:**

God enabled us to complete a year of ministry to children, local leaders, and a variety of churches in our area of Kenya. It was a joy to live on the property of the ELI Kiparen Children’s Home and participate in the daily life of the kids. Residing in the heart of ELI’s ministry to children, youth, widows, and farmers has given us a greater perspective of ELI’s goals and how we can be part of its kingdom building ministry.

**JANUARY:** At the beginning of 2012, Brook of Faith Primary School finally hired a school manager so Cathy was able to spend her final month in this position acquainting him with the procedures and policies she’d established in the last six months. We welcomed a team of 8 from the Salem, OR area for two weeks of children’s outreach, women’s conference (80+ attendees), first aid training (85+ attendees), and farmer’s extension workshops. Mark completed his research for a drag grader and began using it on the ‘futbol’ field and nearby roads to assist with erosion control. At the end of the month we traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to meet with the FM Superintendent to discuss how ELI might interact with the FM church there.

**FEBRUARY:** This month we began development of a small piece of land (.2 acre). Mark employed “Farming God’s Way” techniques to create a demonstration farm in a high traffic area of the village. We visited a Turbo farm to understand how irrigation is done locally. Cathy continued with her activities as Field Coordinator of Teams & Interns, leading the Kipkaren Task Force as they prepared for the upcoming visitor season. The children’s home sent a new group of students to secondary school making our total in high school 17 this year!

**OUT OF AFRICA**

**CHIMBA - DIGGING IN**

We have crossed the one year mark of life in Africa! As we reflect on all we’ve experienced we are grateful for the learning and friendships made in the past year. Every day seems to bring a new discovery about this incredible land we call home. Our love for the people and God’s calling to teach them His Word is very energizing!

Mark & Cathy Lessig

PHOTO: Our friend Chirchir and Mark work on a trench at the ELI property at the beginning of Spring #1 containment and protection project.
Our Ministry Adventures

Our teaching opportunities continued as Mark participated in nightly devotions at the SACDP (32 young adults attending ELI’s agricultural training program), and Cathy taught Saturday afternoon prayer meetings for UPEC women, and children’s home devotions on Tuesdays.

MARCH: Double-dug beds, a water tank, and drip irrigation made our demonstration ‘shamba’ a gathering place for the community! Mark held seminars about how to prepare the field and how to use drip irrigation. Visiting days at local secondary schools meant that Cathy was busy seeing how our high school students were doing. A dream of many months was realized - the beginning of a library at Brook of Faith! Cathy spoke at a women’s conference in Musembe. Ground breaking on a new dining hall and meeting rooms began at the KK Training Center.

APRIL: On-site support for ELI’s child sponsorship program is a big part of Cathy’s work and she spent part of the month updating yearly photos and information for each child at the KK children’s home. A freak hail and wind storm damaged our demonstration farm and crushed the roof of one of the girls’ dorms at the CH. We taught an Early Childhood Development seminar for 18 area teachers for a week. Mark constructed a large green house on the demonstration shamba to grow tomatoes.

MAY: With the arrival of the rains, we see wonderful plant growth at the demonstration shamba. Mark heads up a community effort to channel water from the BOF/CH soccer field to prevent serious erosion. Cooking lessons begin for the moms at the children’s home, starting with cakes. Cathy and the KK Task Force team make final preparations for our visiting season. Cathy wraps up plans for the teams and interns who will come while we’re in the USA (20 visitors!). We surprise Kimberly, our daughter, with a return to the USA to participate in some of her senior high school activities.

JUNE: We attended Kimberly’s high school graduation from Oley Valley High School (PA), and spoke at our home church and a missions conference. A huge yard sale and Craig’s List helped us sell the remainder of our possessions and put our home up for sale. Cathy traveled to California to meet with teams and interns soon coming to Kenya. She also spoke at several FM churches and assisted her parents as her dad recovered from liver cancer surgery. Mark remained in PA for some more time with Kimberly.

JULY: We celebrated our 4th anniversary with a family driving vacation to TN and OH that gave us some time together; we were blessed to visit the college Kimberly will attend, Cedarville University. How nice to picture her at this Christian school! Cathy flew back to Kenya with two interns while Mark remained in PA to finalize the sale of our home. Our demonstration shamba grew well while we were away and provided local vegetables to our village! Bread baking lessons helped the parents at the children’s home begin baking their own bread for the children - 24 loaves daily! The graduation of the SACDP students took place just before the arrival of small team from Southern California.

AUGUST: The So Cal team holds counseling seminars for Childrens’ Home and clinic staff, sets up a computer lab at the training center, and holds several craft events for the kids at the CH. A team from another CA church comes to host a youth camp, attended by 300+ kids for a week. Over 100 youth are baptized on Sunday afternoon! Cathy assists an ELI colleague, Michelle Kiprop, to organize our interns in conducting a health survey in Turbo, a neighboring village, to assess alcoholism and poverty issues. Kimberly heads to college and Mark returns to Kenya just in time for both of us to speak at a three day youth camp in Musembe! Cathy begins a weekly bible study with some CH girls on the book of Esther.

SEPTEMBER: A new secretary is hired at the children’s home and Cathy begins training her in her duties, especially in the area of communication. We surprise all of the ELI Kipkaren staff (65) with hoodies, complete with the ELI logo, as a thank you for the great ministry effort they’ve given during the year. UCLA Nursing Team arrives to conduct seminars at BOF, our local village, and a mobile clinic. Another hail storm devastates the local crops, too close to harvest. Our demonstration shamba, thankfully, was already in transition so not much is lost. Mark begins development of the property as a home for us. We welcome a new class of SACDP students at the training center. Mark begins teaching a Critical Thinking and Ethics course there.
OCTOBER: The Water of Life Church women’s conference team arrived for a week of fun. 83 women from 11 churches attend, many accepting Christ for the first time! Mark is given responsibility to develop some ELI land that has several springs on it, as well as other community development projects. Construction begins on our home. Mark and Cathy speak at the Brook of Faith Kindergarten class graduation/parent visiting day. Cathy’s Esther bible study ends with the girls at the CH and we begin anew with the book of Romans.

NOVEMBER: Mark oversaw the beginning development of the springs project as well as planning for a future Youth Polytechnic. He also coordinates the building of our home. Cathy facilitates a Teen Girls meeting which will continue quarterly. VBS at the children’s home kept us busy during Thanksgiving week. The gazebo floors at the children’s home are tiled just in time through a donation by the SoCal July team! Mark coordinated a Career Day for the kids at the children’s home giving the older kids a day to explore what it takes to become an entrepreneur, teacher, nurse, IT programmer, mechanic, and secretary. Schools closed for the holiday and Mark finished up his Ethics course with the SACDP students.

DECEMBER: Guardian’s Day at the Children’s Home meant things got quiet for us! Each December the kids return to their home villages for about 2-3 weeks to reconnect with relatives so we were able to use the time to focus on other projects. The construction of our home nears completion. Spring #1 on the ELI property is fully contained and protected. Cathy continues to prepare teams and interns coming to serve with ELI in 2013. On Dec 24th we both spoke at a church conference in Mwamba. Christmas Day we traveled to ELI’s Ilula campus with all the Kipkaren kids for a huge Christmas celebration.

JANUARY 2013: We moved into our new home and are enjoying having a place to call our own. We are literally steps from the Kipkaren Childrens’ Home gate so we see the children easily and still participate in activities there. New outreach starts in Lumakanda. We were invited to visit a local church and preached there twice.

FEBRUARY 2013: Mark continues to develop the 23 acre plot owned by ELI. Digging a large fish pond where Tilapia fish will be raised for sale is his current goal, as well as securing the property with fencing. Cathy has been busy hosting interns and preparing for the busy team season that will soon be upon us! She has also been busy filling the shelves of the childrens’ home, Brook of Faith school, and the SACDP libraries with books purchased with funds generated from the “Love A Library” campaign. Over $4,000 was raised and she is looking forward to starting on library #4 next month at the Ilula Childrens’ Home.

FUTURE PLANS - in 2013 we eagerly anticipate the following:
In 2013 we eagerly anticipate the following:
* Over 85 visitors to Kipkaren coming to serve with ELI as part of a team or as an intern or professional volunteer
* Continued development of the 23 acre ELI property (springs #2-7, fish ponds, AA home, tree nursery, bee hives)
* Quarterly meetings for Teen Girls, plus an annual Teen Conference for girls
* VBS hopefully held during each school term break
* Teacher seminars and mentoring, through partnership with Advancing Leaders International

PRAYER REQUESTS:
* for peace to reign on March 4th, and the days after, as Kenya holds its presidential election. We are praying against a reoccurrence of violence like what happened in 2007/08
* discernment for the many needs in our area. Wisdom to know what is important to God and what we should focus upon.
* good physical health and spiritual vitality for us both
* our witness to local leadership as we seek to model servant leadership in all we say and do
* increased financial support for our ministry. Our year end donor report for 2012 indicates we are still 25% below what our budget needs are. At the end of 2012 we felt we’d met our goal but not all who indicated they would support us have been able to continue. We are praying for the following in 2013:
  * five people to give $100 a month
  * ten people to give $50 a month
  * twenty people to give $25 a month.

Thank you again for your prayers and support of our ministry. We are humbled daily by the sacrificial intercession and giving! If you would like to keep up with us more regularly and see photos of what we’re doing please read our blog, “Pamoja - Together”. You can subscribe to our blog and posts will automatically come to your email box...easy to stay up to date!

Blessings,
Mark & Cathy Lessig

To donate: www.empoweringlives.org/donate