

AN ATTEMPT TO GROW CIB IN KENYA

Joe Karanja was anxious that we help him spread the message of CIB in Kenya so Folker Mittag and I decided to spend a week in that country in May of this year.

For me, Kenya was a revelation. It reminded me of India in many ways. The people are warm and hospitable; their food may be different but their ways of living are similar and they seem to be facing the same problems as we do – corruption, poverty, a lack of education among the poor and a large population. However, I also perceived some differences. They are very proud of their country; as a people they are upbeat and despite the tribal conflicts which they face, they are anxious to move ahead.

Folker and I met some remarkable individuals in Nairobi. Despite corruption all-round, these individuals have been waging a war against corrupt practices and are showing the way to do business and work without stooping to unethical ways. The President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, not only told his Ministers, Governors and Parliamentarians last year to “Do things Right!” but has challenged them to “Self Examine” their actions of the past year and see what needs to be corrected during this year. He has prosecuted and arrested his own Ministers who have been found to be corrupt and is creating an air of hope among his people. Then there was James Mageria who started life as a Police Officer, who reformed the Prison System in Kenya; went on to establish a University; helped draft the Constitution of Kenya; created a hospital to improve medical treatment for the poor, spearheaded a “Clean Kenya Campaign” during the last Presidential election along with Joe Karanja and along with some friends started the practice of an annual “National Prayer Breakfast”. (The National Prayer Breakfast is where the President invites all his Ministers, Governors of the States, Parliamentarians and eminent leaders of society for a Prayer Breakfast on the last Thursday of May each year; prays with them and exhorts them to new challenges for the coming year – a truly remarkable occasion.) We also met Bedan Mbugua, a journalist who was imprisoned by a previous regime for speaking out against corruption. He was one of the first graduates from James Mageria’s University and today runs a Media House in which he is focusing on “Celebrating Good”.

Apart from individual meetings, Folker and I led a Round Table where about 25 Kenyan CEOs of Business shared their experiences and concerns about “Being Ethical in Business and still remaining Competitive”. The Round Table was hosted by Jack Mbui, the Managing Director of Tata Chemicals Magadi Ltd. in Kenya. The discussions were very positive and at the end many of the participants requested Joe Karanja to organise such get-togethers each month so that they could exchange views and benefit from each other’s experiences. *We sensed the seeds of a possible CIB Chapter.*

Joe was an extraordinary host. We stayed with him and thoroughly enjoyed our stay thanks to his hospitality.

Sarosh Ghandy