



► Students helped by Team Kenya

Team Kenya

How a Tyneside charity is giving girls in Kenya a future

WHEN Geography teacher Val Wilson first visited the Kenyan town of Ndhiwa with her school over a decade ago she was shocked by the poverty she saw.

Now, 14 years on, despite frequent journeys to the country, that sense of shock at seeing 13-year-old mothers or people dying of minor illnesses, never leaves her.

Yet thanks to the charity she founded, life there for so many young people and especially girls is immeasurably better, with many more now being given the chance of an education and a job.

Team Kenya, based in Wideopen, North Tyneside, exists to support

Girls in a remote African village are being given the chance of a future thanks to a Tyneside charity. LIZ WALKER finds out about the work of Team Kenya

communities in Western Kenya to free themselves from poverty, injustice and inequality.

Founded in 2008, it has funded hundreds of students through school and college and helps promote local enterprise.

It has a special focus on breaking the cycle of poverty by investing in adolescent girls and giving them the chance of an education - keeping them off the path of school dropout, early marriage, early childbirth, and

vulnerability to sexual violence and HIV/AIDS.

With just a handful of unpaid UK volunteers this small charity raises over £60,000 each year - all of which is channelled to its Kenyan partners.

"It can be as simple as giving the family a bag of maize so that they won't send the daughter or granddaughter out to earn money through transactional sex," explains Val. "The rate of HIV is the highest in Kenya and many children are orphans and

are being brought up by grandparents. Over 60% live in extreme poverty.

"There is no interest in sending girls to school so we go to the houses, give them food, clothes and pens, so that the girl will not fall pregnant or be married off and be forced to drop out of school.

"Now we have girls coming out with good grades and going onto college. Without school they had no future. I have one girl who wants to

be a judge and another a doctor, others have gone on to be beauty therapists and work in food and catering, others have come back to work on the project. We also set up projects to generate income, such as poultry, tree planting, selling solar lights."

In some schools in Ndhiwa, a town village of 25,000 in western Kenya, there are no girls left by the time the pupils reach 14 and 15. But in the schools where Team Kenya is working there are as many girls and boys.

Teenage pregnancy is very high. In one of the schools in the area there were eight 13 and 14-year-old girls with babies. In the schools where