

Upendo News August 2004

Hi. Back in July I wrote to some of my friends and family to tell them about an orphan support project here in Kilifi that I have been involved in. (The group who runs it is called the Upendo Methodist Church Women's Group). As a result, £1800 was sent to me or my bank account! I'm now writing to let you know what we did with that money, and to tell you a bit more about the project and its plans for the future.

Outline of the project

- The 30 women in this group support 16 orphans by providing food and educational expenses. They do so out of their own pockets with occasional help from charities and the government.
- They run a nursery school in the church grounds which the orphans, as well as other children, go to. (This helps reduce the stigma associated with being an orphan, especially an HIV one). In Kenya, nursery education is a prerequisite for primary school (they do an exam to get in!). The orphans who are at primary school go to the nursery for lunch where they receive their one square meal for the day.
- The orphans live with their guardians. Often these are relatives who also have children of their own. This means that the orphans grow up in a family environment rather than in an institution.
- Educational costs (uniforms, books, stationery) are provided by the group.
- Counselling, support and advice to the children and their guardians is provided by the women, many of whom have training in this and other relevant areas such as nursing and education.

What we did with the money so far

- We commissioned a carpenter to make 30 chairs and 5 tables for the nursery school run by the group. 10 of the orphans attend this nursery along with 20 other children, and the other 6 orphans go to primary school. We painted the chairs at Busy Bees and ran a painting session for the kids too. They look fabulous and the kids love them. Each child has claimed its own, and the boys have been arguing over them....
- We added a concrete floor to the corrugated iron shed where the teaching is to take place to replace the dirt floor that was there. Built moveable wooden partitions to split the classes and painted these in bright colours. Added a solid door and secured the windows so that we can keep the nursery equipment in there permanently. Added blackboards and hooks. Now we can put up the teaching posters and aids that were not able to be put up before because the nursery was using the main body of the church. The furniture and building works cost £580.
- We allocated £500 to the feeding programme for the next 6 months. This will provide proper nutritious lunches to the children until the end of March. Funds for feeding have been requested from various organisations but the outcome of these applications may take as long as 6 months to become known.
- We have about £700 left to date which we will use to tide us over the running costs (e.g. nursery teachers' salaries, health care) until the results from funding applications are known. If we get funding, we will put this towards the purchase of the block of land next door (see below).

Other ongoing activities and plans for the future

- This month we put in two grant applications to international charities for funding nursery teachers, the feeding programme, educational costs, and HIV awareness workshops for the guardians and group members. More applications are being written now.
- We have drawn up plans for a multi-purpose building which we want to use as a day-care centre and conference centre to generate income for the orphans project. Applications to fund it are being prepared.
- We have identified 14 more orphans in dire need (there are at least another 120 more around Kilifi) that we hope to begin supporting later this year. This depends on funding.
- We want to obtain individual sponsors for the orphans. We need £380 per year per orphan for their primary education and food. To give them their secondary education or vocational training to help them through adulthood, would need about £700 per year. The cost of supporting an orphan per year through primary education is estimated to be £380.
- We want to buy the plot of land adjacent to the church which has come up for sale. This would be owned by Upendo and used for Upendo's development and activities. (Currently, Upendo uses the church facilities). The estimated cost is £2000.
- Hold an 'Orphans March' in Kilifi where we gather together a bunch of people, hold up banners, and generally make ourselves obvious. Raising awareness in the community would help enormously with ongoing funding. Already people are arriving with second-hand clothes, toys and teaching aids as a result of becoming aware.
- Have a pre-Christmas day out for the kids and their guardians. We plan to take a picnic and go to one of the nature theme parks in Mombasa.

Some final thoughts

Case study 1

Mohammed (Ali!) is 9-10 years old and has not finished his nursery education yet. A few months ago, he was a regular feature on the main street of Kilifi begging for money for his brother Issa who is mentally and physically handicapped and in a wheelchair. Issa has now been found a place in a home for such children in Mombasa thus leaving Mohammed alone to join the growing gang of kids begging on the streets. He has an uncle who acts as his guardian who is a convicted thief and drug addict. When the uncle is in jail, his aunt takes over looking after him. She is a prostitute (though waers a bui-bui from time to time!). So he has seen it all. When Issa left for his new school, M was offered a place in the Upendo nursery but didn't stay long. However, a 1-year visitor here, Joanna Jenkins, took an interest in him and decided to sponsor him. He was given new shoes, a uniform, new books and another try at Upendo. Three months later, he is doing extremely well (this term his marks were 587 out of 600), is highly motivated and has become a leader to all the smaller kids. The transformation is remarkable. At the end of this year he will be able to take his primary school entrance test. When he is ready, he has been offered a place in a boarding school so that he can be away from the home environment. Jo is funding that.

Case study 2

Four sibs (boys under 10) are looked after by their 16-year-old sister. Both parents are dead. Their grandmother has other children to look after and is unable to help out. Two of them are obviously infected with HIV.

If you can help in any way, with money or labour or creative ideas, then please get in touch.

Margaret Mackinnon

August 15, 2004

