

Upendo Orphans Project

P.O. Box 898, Kilifi, Kenya

Ph: +254 (0)722 903180

November 25, 2006

Dear all

Well, it has been a whole year since I sent a newsletter about Upendo, although some of you have been updated from time to time. I am sorry about the delay. We haven't been idle - just occupied.

It has been a very big year. In January, the land next to the church from where we currently operate was purchased. In April, we drew up plans for a new school building, started building in June and finished it in September. In October and November we finished off the grounds, and planted up the garden and lawn. We will move in for the new school year in early January. The building has two new classrooms, a resting room, a large inside kitchen, an outside kitchen, an office and a store-room. Thanks to our architect, Robin Nixon, and our builder Michael Otieno, the style and finish on it are really gorgeous - green floors, wooden doors and trim, white walls, and green roof. It has a lovely feel to it and was great fun to build with this team. To see photos of its progress, visit our photo gallery on <http://www.upendo.co.uk/Album/>

We also built a toilet and shower block which we will share with the church: this replaces a single long-drop toilet that serviced all the nursery kids and church members. (The ladies dug it themselves!)

Our normal activities are going along very well. I would say it has been a year of consolidation on that front. The feeding programme, education, clothing and counselling activities for the orphans runs very smoothly, and is clearly achieving its goals. The kids look well cared-for and happy, and they are getting their schooling. The boys go off and play football every Saturday morning with the local sports youth group. The number of orphans we support is now 24. With further sponsorship, we can easily cater for more. It costs £250 per year to support one child. There are plenty on the waiting list.

The number of kids in the nursery (for non-orphans plus orphans) has grown and we have run out of room in the tin shed and church to cope with them all. Our new building will really help with that. Now that we have space and facilities, we can run the nursery school on a more professional basis (we have relied largely on retired volunteer teachers until now) and use it as an income generator for the orphans project.

There have been many donations this year from all sorts of people. Clothes, toys, classroom furniture, office furniture, kitchen equipment, a sandpit for the garden, a tree nursery (another fund-raiser), and many others. Everything is gratefully received. What we can't use, we sell.

The big challenges for next year are to continue recovering the cost of the building and land. The total cost was around £55,000. If you would like to make a donation specific to an item in the building (e.g., the verandah, the water tanks, the wooden doors, the windows, the kitchen, perimeter fence, front gates, blackboards), I have costs of all of these, so please get in touch. We also need money to insure it and pay the electricity and water bills, if these take your fancy!

One thought to leave you with. As I met with Grace and Beatrice (chair and vice-chair ladies) under the big mango tree one late afternoon last week, we watched the kids playing. One group of older girls was having a counselling session outside on our painted chairs, two small boys were playing at soldiers, beating a drum and marching around, and the little girls were practising cartwheels while they waited

for their supper. They really are a happy bunch. It certainly feels worthwhile to support them with simple but effective help via this group of dedicated ladies.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and festive season, and please remember us during this season of giving.

Best wishes

Margaret Mackinnon (Fundraiser) and Grace Mzungu (Chairperson).