

Be Kids Newsletter



SEPTEMBER 2010

BE KIDS AUSTRALIA INC: VISIT TO KOROGOCHO SLUM, NAIROBI

DATE: Friday 23 July 2010 to Sunday 8 August 2010

PARTNERS: Child Peace International
Rotary Club Western Endeavour, Perth
Rotary Club Karura Kenya

SPECIAL THANKS: Rotary Club of Perth

BACKGROUND

We are in the third phase of the Kengele Children's Network Program ("KCN"). KCN is an activity based educational program through which children help themselves and each other to change their environment and to recast their aims and goals. KCN continues to awaken this slum community to focus on the best interest of the children: children whom tradition and culture has ignored and kept silenced in a harsh and abusive culture.

Overall, the KCN Program works on 5 thematic areas of need:

- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Security
- Peace and Culture

WHERE IS KOROGOCHO?

Korogocho is in Nairobi. It is the third largest slum in East Africa. Korogocho has a fast expanding population of approximately 180,000 living within a 1.5km radius. More than half the population is children. Most of these children are born to single mothers, are abandoned or orphaned.

Crime and drug abuse (especially alcohol) is very high. Many of

the children are sexually abused, often affected with HIV.

Punishments are severe and neglect is prevalent. This is associated with social frustrations amongst adults who struggle to find jobs and poverty is at crisis levels.

People are thankful for 100 Kenyan Shillings a day (a bit less than \$1.50). The crime rate is high, committed largely by people under the age of 18. Early pregnancy is on a constant rise.

KCN aims to lift these children's sight to a life than breaks from this to one which sees dignity, fairness, love and care and where the rights of a child are preserved and celebrated.

BE KIDS VISIT

When I arrived on 23 July 2010, **Be Kids** volunteer, Paula Day, was already there. Paula had just completed an adventure of a lifetime flying between wonderful game parks Tsavo East, Tsavo West, Amboseli, Masai Mara and Lewa Conservancy experiencing the magnificent Great Migration of animals. But the Paula that opened the door to our apartment in Lucky Summer (on the edge of the Slum), wore a face of controlled relief at my arrival – she said that, notwithstanding that this was her second visit to Kenya, nothing I had told her had

prepared her for the sensory bombardment of Korogocho!



Paula and Santos (Dance Facilitator) selecting drums to purchase for our dance troupe

May I assure you that it did not take long for Paula to accustomise and when I left, Paula was busy with programs for the children and the women, she was greeting “Mambo” to so many new friends, sharing her passion for dance with all she

met and I am sure the children and women missed her very much when she left a week later.

Read about her adventures on www.bekids.org.

The main road through Korogocho had been graded and tarmac'd, a sign of development but with it has come the inevitable hazard caused by the pickie-pickies (motorbikes) tearing up and down so fast, causing frequent accidents.

The weather ranged between foggy mornings with temperatures about 18° to lovely afternoons of about 22°, making the average daily walk of about 10km rather pleasant.

THE FIRST CHILDREN'S STUDY CENTRE HAS ARRIVED!!



As we have previously reported, we have been lobbying for spaces to put up 5 study centres over the next few years so that each of the 10 villages that comprise the Slum can share a study centre between them. Visit www.bekids.org to read the March 2010 Newsletter which sets out the background to the need for these Study Centres.

In short, the first study centre at Kisumu Ndogo/Nyayo villages was a response to the voice of

the children who repeatedly showed us photos and told us that it was difficult to study in their extremely small home without electricity, desks or space, and more than that, where adults are not too concerned about them.



The first children's study centre in Korogocho

Paula, the children and some of the facilitators primed and painted the 40 ft shipping container, we added lino on the floor, brought in the specially made desks, chairs and book shelves. We put posters on the walls and books on the shelves – the children could not contain

their excitement – this space means so much to them!



Children painting the inside of the container that is their Study Centre

Children have written rules of conduct, they have catalogued their books. Now, at last, when they are not at school, they will have a safe and functioning place in which to study and do homework.



The library shelves arrive!



Paula helping the proprietor of the chapati stall, situated behind the Study Centre, get lunch ready for the children



The official Opening 31 July 2010!



Children reading books provided by Be Kids while they take a break from painting



The new library



Paula and Raliya (Kengele Child) plant a tree to commemorate the joyous day

KENGELE CHILDREN'S DAY



Part of our Kengele Dance troupe at rehearsals for Kengele Children's Day celebrations

On Saturday 31st July we also celebrated the Kengele Children's Day. It was a full day of celebration, singing, dancing speeches, cutting a ribbon for the new Study Centre, planting trees, all organised and conducted by the children themselves.

Alongside of this activity the facilitators organized meetings with parents, mentor programs for the children and workshops that covered health and social issues relevant to the children's situation.



Caroline (Facilitator) sharing about abstinence and relationships

As it was a weekend ahead of the National Referendum in relation to the Constitution, our children had to be provided with new grey (instead of their usual green one) t-shirts so as not to provoke any disturbance as "green" meant a vote in favour of the new constitution and "red" meant a vote against it.



Issahq Butuch (left) presenting a football to a member of our football team who unfortunately did not win the final match but thoroughly enjoyed the event

Still basking in World Cup football fever, our Kengele football team also competed in the finals on that day, but lost – I

think it was because many of them were shoe-less and the ground was very rough! They did well though! More

importantly, this newly sports option offers our young boys a more masculine activity.

KENGELE CHILDREN'S CINEMA

The first ever children's cinema was opened on 31 July 2010!! It was the cherry to top the wonderful Kengele Children's Day.

Thanks so much to Taylor Media who donated all the equipment including surround sound, the children clapped and cheered as they watched, by request, the Original "Karate Kid".



Kid's movies in Koch!!

The children now have less reason to go to porn shacks to watch "TV"!! We plan to take the cinema around to each village for weekly screenings.

Various other uses are also being planned, including the hiring of the equipment for seminars in the city to create income to pay for ancillary costs such as costumes and facilitation overheads.



The delighted audience "After Party"! Thank you Taylor Media

REVIEW OF THE KCN PROGRAM

The children are now very familiar with who **Be Kids** are and how we work with them. They ask for stories of Perth and I get the sense that they know that we are their friends and that they are loved. They were especially touched by the replies that the students from Mater Dei College in Edgewater, Perth wrote to them... these letters were clutched to their chests with so much love and appreciation. It looks like there will be an ongoing exchange of letters between Mater Dei children and the KCN children. Thank you to our member Yulia Koh for organizing this exchange of communication.

The children are growing in confidence and their sense of leadership. We can be so proud of Issahq Butuch (see previous photo of Issahq presenting the football prize). Issahq, who is brought up by his 95 year old grandfather gained a scholarship to the Shepherd's Junior College last year and has now been nominated its HEAD BOY!!! I spoke with the headmaster and he told me that Issahq was selected because of his commitment to study and his strong leadership skills!

Fardosa Ali (Kengele Child) was interviewed on Citizen TV, Kenyan national TV and she impressed the host with her confidence articulation and intelligence. Another Kengele Child, Naharshon has been selected to attend a Swedish school for a month. We can be

proud of these and all our children who try so hard to achieve and who, without exception, value education... walking up at 3am to make it to school! You may remember Gabriel... he was third in his school exams this term (he is a scholarship student at Shepherd's Junior College) and promised to be top boy next year.

Children in the dance group are doing very well too. Santos, the facilitator of this activity has been coaching them well and they have won a place in an East African Dance Competition to be early next year. More news on this soon. We have approached the well toured and talented Fahari Africa dance group to coach our children. They have taken up this challenge and we hope that we may even see our children in Perth if we can find a

promoter to organise a tour of Fahari Africa with our children to Perth!



Headmaster of Shepherd's Junior College (in blue) planting a tree to show his school's support of the KCN Program

As part of the ongoing professional excursions, KCN children visited the General Motors headquarters as one of the planned excursions for this term. These are very inspiring occasions for them. The children who indicate their preferred occupation as being medicine and engineering got to go this time.



Outside the General Motors Headquarters

Art and language programs are operating a bit slower than anticipated and we encouraged the facilitators to re-energise

these activities. It appeared that the lack of resources may have been part of the reason why the art program was languishing.



Preparing for the Artoto Exhibition in the grounds of the St John Catholic Church

We discussed this is encouraged the use of recyclable materials in the art which would give the wk a relevance and also be more sustainable.



The Exhibition

The children have been enjoying and learning Mandarin from Mr Hardy Chen. However, Mr Chen had to return to China and also had to stand in for colleagues

who were on leave and hence these classes were not as regular as we had anticipated.

Paula, Charles Maina and I visited Mr Chen at the Nairobi University and encouraged him to work with our children more regularly. He promised to do so.



Paula, Hardy Chen and Charles Maina (facilitator)



The Kengele Magazine team is progressing well and we have managed to involve APHIA, an NGO funded by USAid, and widened the readership to 17,000 copies!

CHILD PEACE FACILITATION

The facilitators that we work with gave a report on each of their villages and primary activity, making

recommendations for the improvement of KCN.

Generally the KCN was running to plan save that more effort has to be made with regard to procuring scholarships, both secondary and primary. Paula, Ibrahim (Facilitator) and Amina

(Kengele Child) scheduled visits to various schools to make them aware of the KCN.

It will take some time to solidify a relationship but we look to our good relationship with Shepherd Junior college as a model.

We discussed ways in which to create an income for meeting some of the repeated problems i.e. that parents expected children to be fed when they attend the Program. It was recommended that the projection equipment be hired out with a facilitator and the income raised would be used to pay that facilitator and the

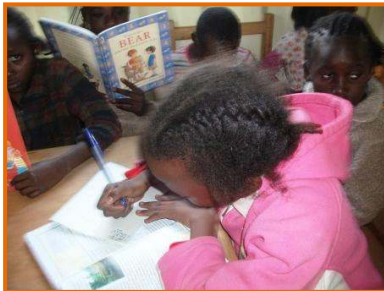
rest to be put to purchase of some food.

We also spent a day going through the **Be Kids** Child Policy and stressed the utmost importance of strict adherence to this policy.



The Child Peace Facilitating team...thank you!

KENGELE EDUCATION FUND



The children are growing up fast. Whilst they were mostly in primary schools (free schooling) when we started 2 years ago, many of these have are now of secondary school age. **Be Kids** are approaching secondary schools to ask for scholarship programs for our children. Some of them go to the less expensive Catholic schools.



Harun Thuo, his father is suffering fro a workplace injury and cannot afford to pay for Harun's fees. Two of Harun's paintings were sold at the "B" Party in May.

The children approached me to explain that whilst primary education was free and most of the children could go to school, some of them were not able to carry through to secondary school because of extreme hardship or lack of guardianship care. They brought Paula and me to meet some of these children and their families in their homes.

We discussed ways that they could help their friends and it was decided that the money we raise from the sale of their art

work in Perth auctions would be set aside and matched by **Be Kids**. Each year the children would recommend which 2 of their friends were most in need of assistance and we would assess this need and, if approved, **Be Kids** would provide education for them through their secondary school life. The first recipients are Raliya and Arron (both pictured below). These children are at an extremely vulnerable age where just a few months without support, mentorship and educational guidance, they can easily fall on the wayside and get caught up in drugs, early marriage and other snares.



Raliya is the eldest of a family of 6 children and her father is no longer with them and her mother cannot afford her schooling

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM: GOOD NEWS TO COME IN NEXT NEWSLETTER

We spent 3 days in workshop with about 60 women from the Kisumu Ndogo /Nyayo Villages. I will report on this separately as there is much to tell you about the progress on this front. The program will select approximately 10 women to be empowered with skills that will make for a sustainable business.

In exchange for an interest free loan, our women will reciprocate by providing chaperone care of the children and supervision of conduct in the Study Centres.



Mama Millicent donning her new bra – thank you to Be Kids member Sharyn Dyson who organised the huge donation of bras for our women – it was a happy event!

The women whom Paula taught English to have passionately continued their classes on their own. Their determination is inspirational: they want to be educated, something that they have been denied because of social, economic and cultural reasons.



CONCLUSION

It was so wonderful spending time walking and having all the children come up to say hello,

hold your hand and just want to spend time with you.

The days went by very fast and it was soon time to say goodbye to our children as they handed me

many letters to pass to their new friends at Mater Dei College in Perth.

be kids
AUSTRALIA INC.

Report by Joan Peters
September 2010