

# CHILDREN OF BUKATI PROJECT

IN SUPPORT OF AIDS ORPHANS

Western Kenya is suffering from the devastation caused by HIV-AIDS. In Busia District alone, almost half of the children have lost one or both their parents to AIDS and 30% of the adults are HIV positive.

When Dr. Cate Dewey visited western Kenya in February 2006 on a livestock research project, she saw first-hand the tragedy caused by the disease and the generosity of impoverished families who care for one or several orphans, in addition to their own children. Many orphans were not attending school because their guardians could not afford the school uniform or the pen and pencil families are expected to supply.

On returning to Canada that spring, Cate, her husband Randy, and their church established the Children of Bukati project to raise funds to send AIDS orphans to school with the required supplies. The project is named for the elementary school the children attend. The K to 8 school has about 700 students and 15 teachers. With only one class per grade, some classes have 90 students. There is no electricity or running water at the school.

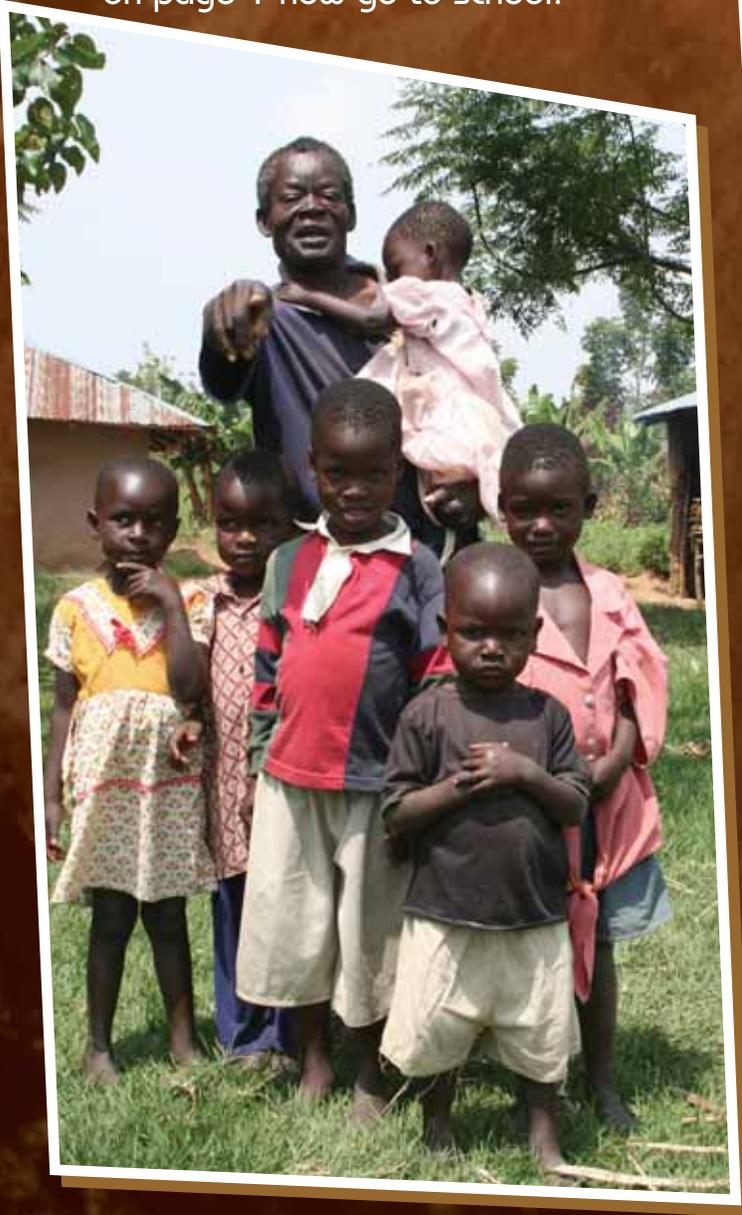
Initially, the Children of Bukati project had 200 orphans. Word-of-mouth about the project and the tremendous grassroots support for the project has seen another 120 orphans attend school. The increase means a greater demand for funds but it's the kind of problem the school and Dr. Cate – as she is fondly known at the school – are delighted to have to overcome.

This photo from February 2006 is of a fairly typical family. The children in green and white uniforms go to school. Their parents also are caring for the other children who are AIDS orphans. The couple, their children and the orphans live in one mud hut. By July 2006, the family was caring for a total of 14 children.



Children of Bukati Project

The photo below from February 2007 tells a great story. Thanks to the Children of Bukati project, all the school-aged children from the family on page 1 now go to school.

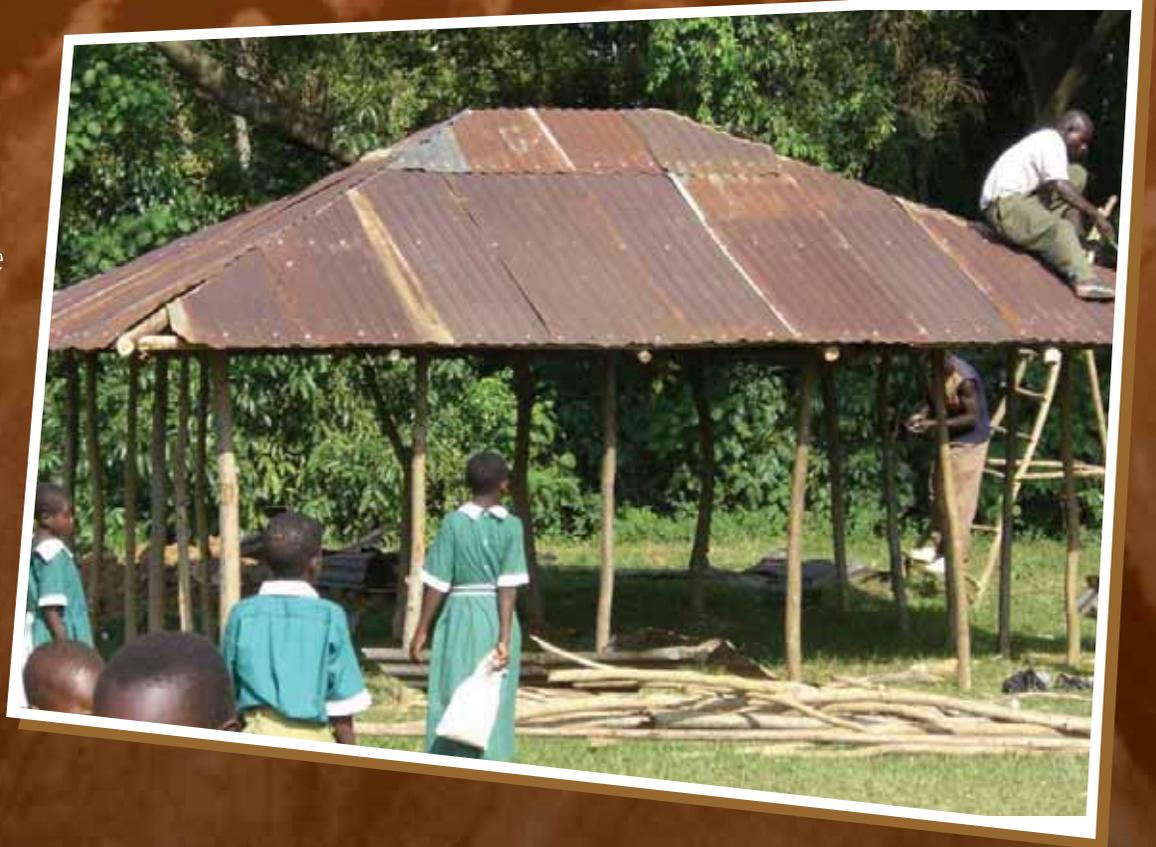


In July 2006, Dr. Cate was particularly struck by the little girl above. Her name is Cecilia. She is an AIDS orphan who was attending school but there was no money for a uniform for her. She was constantly pulling up her dress to cover her shoulders as it is inappropriate in western Kenya to have bare shoulders.

Dr. Cate returned to western Kenya in February 2007 for her research project and another visit to the Bukati School. She found it very rewarding to see Cecilia – and 211 other AIDS orphans – in a school uniform.



The kitchen under construction on the school grounds.



The rural Busia region is about 500 kilometres northwest of Nairobi. Most residents are subsistence farmers living on less than one dollar a day and living in mud huts with no electricity or running water. Farms range from half an acre to two acres. Most have chickens, some have pigs (one or two), and a few have cattle. They grow maize (corn), millet, and cassava.

Despite these hardships, the school and community are rallying around the Children of Bukati project, helping however they can to educate all their children and bring hope to the region.

## PROJECT GOALS

The Children of Bukati's goal is to help AIDS orphans attend and complete elementary school by:

1

Supplying a school uniform. Uniforms are not mandatory but are 'expected.' Children without a uniform feel out of place.

The project has provided employment for a local tailor and three local people to make the uniforms, a real benefit in an economy with few job opportunities.

2

Supplying a pen and pencil for each of the three school terms. Elementary school is free in Kenya but families are expected to provide some of the basic supplies. In this region where many families live on less than \$1 per day, the additional cost of these supplies is beyond their means.

3

Starting a lunch program that will become self-sustaining and operated by the school.

Currently, the lunch program is operating twice a week. As more funds become available, we hope to increase the program to three or more days a week.

The school and community are very involved in the project and the lunch program particularly. They quickly have acted on their business plan to support the lunch program, first with a posho (corn grist) mill operation. Posho mills are used to grind corn (and other cereals) that is cooked with water to make the staple food of the country, called ugali. Farmers will pay to have their corn ground at the school posho mill. Income will cover the mill's operating costs and surplus will go to the lunch program.

The Children of Bukati project bought the posho mill but the shed to house it and the lunch program kitchen were built with locals donating materials and labour.

The school also is raising chickens and pigs to support the lunch program.



Students in class at Bukati School.



Children proudly display new pencils received from Children of Bukati project in July 2006.

## FUNDING TARGETS

The Children of Bukati project has a total financial target of \$360,000 over six years. This will supply approximately 320 AIDS orphans with uniforms, three pens and pencils every year, and supply lunch five days a week for six years.

We have raised over \$30,000 towards our goal. Some of the funds are from the sale of bead bracelets made by the Bukati School children and then sold (and bought) by school children in Guelph. It is a wonderful link between children living an ocean and continent – and world – apart. University of Guelph students also have been active selling and buying bracelets to raise awareness and money.

We rely on volunteer time to spread the word – whether through presentations, letters, personal communications or sending out newsletters. We are able to keep our administrative costs to a bare minimum, covering postage and photocopying costs but little else.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

We welcome any assistance. Here are some options:

## 1 Make a financial donation.

The project has been 'adopted' by Stone United Church. Donations of at least \$25 are eligible for charitable receipts. Please make **cheques payable** to Stone United Church and enter Kenya Outreach on the memo line. **Mail to** Cate Dewey, RR 1, Rockwood, ON, N0B 2K0.

## 2 Host a presentation.

Dr. Cate has made presentations to many different groups to tell the story of the Bukati School and the project. She or another person who has seen the project firsthand would be pleased to speak to your group. Contact Dr. Cate c/o Stone United Church, 519-856-2301.



Bukati School students and teachers present Dr. Cate with bracelets for fundraising sales in Canada.