

November 2008 Children of Bukati Newsletter

Dear Donor

Thank you for your generous support of the Children of Bukati. Your financial contributions are enabling 514 AIDS orphans and destitute children to receive an elementary school education. You may remember Cecilia, who in 2006 had an orange dress that would not stay on her shoulders (2nd photo). It is inappropriate for a girl in Western Kenya to have bare shoulders. Each child in the program receives a school uniform. The top picture shows Cecilia in June 2008, wearing her uniform. She is blossoming into a confident, happy child.

With your help, the children are eating lunch 3 days a week. The school's 3 part-time cooks prepare 140 kg of beans and 140 kg of corn each day. The school rented 7 acres of land to grow maize, beans and kale. They harvested 40 bags of maize and 6 bags of beans this past July. The fields have been replanted for harvest in December. The community held a meeting to determine how best to use this extra food. Options were to feed all AIDS orphans 4 days a week or feed all children up to grade 2 regardless of whether or not they are orphaned. There are many days in the leanest months of the year (March to June) when the only meal the children receive is the one served at school. The community decided to feed all of the youngest children. Although this was an important community decision, and not one I participated in, I am pleased with the outcome. These 5 to 8 year olds with such rapidly growing bodies and brains need this daily nourishment. We still hope to raise enough money to feed all AIDS orphans 4 or even 5 days a week.

The school is moving towards becoming self-sustainable in 2013. Our long-term goal is to purchase several acres of land that will be used to grow maize and kale. Land costs \$2,000 per acre. In the meantime, the corn grist mill we purchased in 2007 is being used by the local women to grind their corn, millet and cassava. This ground grain is used to make ugali, the staple food in this region. Women pay a small fee for this service. The profits from the mill were used to purchase a dairy cow for the school. There is a good local market for the milk. The 3 sows have produced piglets that were sold at weaning and the livestock enterprise now includes 1 ram and 2 ewes. The ewe in the photo is due to lamb in December. The original hens stopped laying eggs so the school is rearing chicks for replacement hens. The milk, eggs and off-spring from the sows and ewes are all sold to help support the lunch program.

Several soccer clubs in Ontario donated soccer uniforms for use at the school. Last year we carried uniforms for young children. In June 2008, Mike Levy, Peter Dewey and I delivered uniforms from Guelph Youth Soccer for the older boys. They tell me the uniforms make them feel like a team, play better and win more matches. The boys in the photo are members of the school team. They were practicing for an interschool competition.



Last year the school's well was broken so there was no source of safe water for the community. Money from our project paid for the repairs. The water from the well is flowing freely once again. The children wash their dishes at the well before and after lunch. At the end of the school day, there is a steady stream of children filling buckets with water to take home for their family's use.

The Kenyan government established a grant to improve the physical facilities of overcrowded elementary schools that were located in areas of extreme poverty. The Bukati Primary School was eligible because of the local poverty and the increased enrollment from our program. A School Infrastructure Committee, established by Nick Obiero, the principal, wrote a successful proposal. The grant money replaced dirt classroom floors with cement, built new latrines, grade 7 and 8 classrooms, a principal's office and sufficient desks so no child has to spend the day on the floor. A fresh coat of paint on the school has lifted the spirits of the school's community. It is exciting to see these opportunities being accessed by the school – effectively multiplying the money that you donate.

On the North American front, I have had the opportunity to speak to many community groups, churches and schools from as far west as Parksville and Qualicum Beach, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, east to Toronto, north to Alliston, Ontario and south to Hastings, Nebraska. Thank you for the opportunity to share the story of these children with your friends and families. If you are a member of a community group, church or school looking for a speaker or pulpit supply, please consider inviting me to tell the Children of Bukati story. Many people; from ages 6 to 96 have enabled family and friends to donate to this cause in lieu of birthday gifts, wedding presents and in memory of the passing of a loved one. I have enclosed a donation form that you may use for that purpose. Similar forms can be downloaded from the website or I will mail you more if you contact me (Cate Dewey).

This project has expanded to support 514 children from the original 150 AIDS orphans attending the school in June 2006. That is a truly remarkable increase in the numbers of children being educated. Although the size and responsibilities of the project have expanded considerably, I am pleased that the original goals of the program have not changed. We continue to function entirely with volunteer help and the overhead, used for photocopies and stamps, is still less than 2 cents per dollar donated.

Please visit the website at www.childrenofbukati.com to learn more about the project. I appreciate the volunteered time, energy and dedication of our webmaster, Doug Fitzsimmons who has updated the website with many photo galleries and newsletters. I would like to thank too our treasurer, Peter Guthrie, who keeps the accounts organized and the mailing list current. An essential key to the project's success is the dedication and commitment of Nick, the principal in Kenya and his staff. This project requires significant organization and management by Nick. He includes both the Parent and School executive committee and the entire community in the decision-making. Last, but certainly not least, thank you, to the many, many volunteers who are each doing your part, providing countless hours of effort, creative energy and passion to make this project such a phenomenal success.

If you have donated through Canada Helps, you will have already received a tax receipt by email. Otherwise, receipts will be mailed in January 2009. If you have comments, questions or concerns or wish to receive future newsletters by email, please contact me at info@childrenofbukati.com.

Donations are accepted by cheque made out to Stone United Church with COB or Children of Bukati on the memo line. Please send to Cate Dewey, RR 1, Rockwood, Ontario, Canada N0B 2K0.
Credit card donations are accepted through Canada Helps, on-line via the website.