

October 2010 Children of Bukati Newsletter

Dear Donor

The children at the Bukati Primary School are a living example of the circle of hope. They have shown how they make the most of the opportunities they are given. In 2006 the AIDS orphans were not going to school and the whole community had an atmosphere of hopelessness. In 2007, we began feeding the children one day a week and each term more and more orphans came to school. In 2009, the children sang songs about children's rights to food, a home and an education. In January, 2010, the children asked the principal if they could have a gymnastics team. Two teams were formed with 16 girls and 16 boys. They practiced before and after school. Together, the community pooled their resources to make crude equipment including trampolines, high bars and jumps. The girl's team won the competitions at the town, county, district, and regional levels. Finally, they competed and came second in the province. At each stage they needed to add new elements; uniforms, music, dance. They had to rent a tape player and speakers to practice and compete to music. With no electricity, they had to rent a generator too. The community rallied around the team with an incredible sense of pride. The top photo shows the girls performing their final pyramid. The team's t-shirts and shorts were used soccer uniforms from Guelph, Ontario.

The middle picture depicts the intangible benefits of school – friendship, support, community, and love. When half of the children in the community are orphaned, the support and understanding from a friend is invaluable. Today, there are over 1200 children at the school. Of these, 800 are AIDS orphans and destitute children. All of the children in the community now go to school. In 2006, there were only 600 children attending school, 150 of these were orphaned. The school has phenomenal academic success. Last year, the grade 7 students had the highest scores in the region of 62 schools. This year, the school is ranked 2nd in the academic tests.

JB, one of the teachers at Bukati Primary School, has assumed responsibility for the permaculture project. Here he is beside a 10 foot tall banana tree. It grew from an 8 cm slip in just 6 months. In May, the large lush green leaves of banana trees flapped in the wind like an elephant's ears. These trees were grown in a small area behind the school that was considered waste land. They sheltered the building, providing welcome shade to the classrooms, keeping the temperatures more tolerable for learning. Peter Dewey and the students dug trenches for the trees to collect water from the school's roof. Sesbania trees, that provide nitrogen to the soil (nitrogen fixation), were planted here also. The protein rich leaves of the sesbania trees are used as fodder for cattle. This enhances milk production.

The Rotary Club of Qualicum Beach Sunrise together with support of other Vancouver Island Rotary Clubs raised \$10,100 to build 18 new latrines for the Bukati Primary School (on left). The Public Health authorities had threatened to close the school because the old latrines were collapsing and unsafe.



This left an insufficient number of functional latrines for the students. Now, with the 18 new latrines, that threat is thwarted. The girls are using the new latrines and the boys will use the old latrines. The construction workers dug an extra deep pit under the new latrines so they will be in good working order for a long time. The brick and cement construction will last much longer than the wooden version that gets eaten by termites.

Permaculture, empowers people to feed themselves and to be self sufficient

Eleven months after beginning the permaculture project, the land fed all 1200 children, 5 days a week for a full term. Michael Nickels converted a field of sugar cane into an organic agriculture project using swales for water capture, intercrop planting, and composting. Unused space on the school compound became orchards and vegetable gardens. Some plants in the gardens are left to go to seed, to be used for subsequent planting. Seven months after planting, the trees produced bananas for cooking and feed for livestock. Shoots of new bananas trees and sesbania tree seeds were used to grow more trees in the school's tree nursery. Tree seedlings were either planted at school or sold to raise money for food. Bukati Primary continues to need support to feed the children between harvest seasons (January – April) and to complete the sustainability projects. Examples of the latter are the purchase of laying hens and seeds for planting maize.

Just as I was basking in the success of our work at the Bukati Primary School, a young boy in another community wandered by looking dejected. He said he was 'chased from school because he was not wearing a uniform'. His uniform was too old and ragged to wear. The boy's father is dead. The boy's mother was ill and home in bed but she dressed and came to talk to me. I gave the mother the eight dollars for a new uniform. Eight dollars was keeping him from school! Please read the December 2010 newsletter to see how Children of Bukati has assumed responsibility for another school.

Volunteers – the heart of this project

Thank you, to the many, many volunteers. You are each doing your part, providing countless hours of effort, creative energy and passion to make this project such a phenomenal success. I would particularly like to thank the young children who raise money through birthday parties, teacher's thank you gifts, shoveling snow and lemonade stands. Your generosity of heart is phenomenal. You are our promise for a brighter future.

Support from the Campus Interfaith group

Rev Jamie VanderBerg, who is a campus minister at the University of Guelph, and his family spent three months in Butula this summer working and living in solidarity with the Butula community. Jamie and his wife Elaine taught at the school and their three oldest children attended Bukati Primary school. Several university students joined them in July and August to build a laying hen barn for 400 birds and ovens for cooking that use only 1/3 of the wood required of an open fire. Jamie also designed a green house that the team built together. It will be used for tomatoes, which are commonly consumed but difficult to grow locally. The team also worked to improve the permaculture project.

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 3 cents per dollar donated. We encourage AIDS orphans and destitute children to attend school by providing a lunch program and build sustainability projects to enable the community to be self sufficient in the shortest possible time.

Please visit the website at www.childrenofbukati.com to learn more about the project.

If you have donated through Canada Helps, you will have already received a tax receipt by email. Otherwise, receipts will be mailed in February. 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.