

Everyone's Child

Building Schools, Caring for and Connecting Children Around the World

Everyone's Child, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of orphaned and impoverished children around the world. Our mission reaches out to the children of the world: to educate where there are no schools, to care where there is great need, and to connect where there is isolation.

Everyone's Child stands behind this principle of provision, holding fast to the ideal that providing children with an education equips them to become the decision makers of tomorrow. Supplying these students with a daily meal has become an important part of this program also, as children need nourishment in order to learn.

Through partnerships with local leaders and citizens, this program participates in building self-sustaining schools in developing nations that support community development, access to quality education and a better life. We believe if you give a child a meal you feed him for a day, but if you teach the child to garden, you feed him for life.

The History

Everyone's Child has its' origins with "Kids in Kenya"; a project set up in the late 1990's to support school-aged children in Kenya.

In 1997 a Kenyan named Reverend Patrick Chege invited a missionary team from the Community of the Crucified One (CCO), a non-denominational church based in Pittsburgh, PA to his homeland. Reverend Chege led them on a tour of the country, beginning in Nairobi and then into the bush where they stayed in pup tents in Masai Mara. They visited several schools and in each one were treated with respect and dignity. Reverend Chege was well known throughout the region; everywhere they went he was asked to speak. He encouraged teachers and students alike, reminding them that having an education was one of the best gifts they could receive in their lifetimes, as it was a way to eliminate poverty in their country. The group was also asked to sing and speak at various schools and meetings throughout the tour. At the close of the trip, the team agreed that the greatest needs they saw related to education and health care, a message that the group leader took to the bishop and elders of their church in America.

The following year they were invited back to Kenya, this time to visit Reverend Chege's hometown of Nakuru, the fourth largest city in Kenya. There he introduced them to a landowner who offered the church five acres of land on which to build a mission house in Lanet Umoja, a rural area twelve miles outside of Nakuru. His only proviso was that the CCO would help to build a school for the children in the area who were not currently being educated. These children were visible, as were hundreds of others they had noticed each day during the trip. They were seen playing in the dust, peeking out of mud huts or walking on the streets, often carrying smaller children on their backs or heavy loads of maize on their heads. Most had no shoes and their clothing was usually dirty and in tatters. As the team drove through towns and villages the children would see them coming, and since the "matatu" (the Kiswahili word for a small bus) had to slow down on the bumpy roads, they became aware that the children were waving and shouting "bilo, bilo!" They asked Reverend Chege what that meant and he replied, "They are asking for pens, because they believe if you give them a pen, it will mean that they can go to school."

The missionaries returned to the U.S. with the landowner's offer, and the following year the governing board of the CCO sent another missionary team from the U.S. to Kenya to begin constructing a mission house and a primary school.

Research

In 2007, Ruth Young, our current director, conducted a doctoral qualitative research project in Lanet. Building from the perspectives of educators, parents, graduates of the school and American missionaries, Dr. Young explored the connection between the primary school and the surrounding village of Lanet Umoja, especially as this relationship related to the reciprocal development of one with the other. Reciprocity between the school and the village was evident in the use of the school after hours for weddings, meetings and other social events. Business in the village increased for those who sold durable goods. Many respondents indicated that the presence of the school had caused more families to move to Lanet, leading eventually to the availability of borehole water and making the introduction of electricity and technology possible in the village.

The Building of Schools

The land that was offered to the church was part of a 735 acre tract of farmland on the outskirts of Lake Nakuru called Lanet Umoja, the Kenyan word “umoja” meaning “together” or “as one.” Arthur Wanyoike, the personal bodyguard of Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya’s first president in the 1960’s, previously owned the land. The land had since been turned over to the Kenyan government and divided into plots to sell to people looking for an escape from tribal conflict resulting from political turmoil in the 1990’s or from the high cost of city living. A preschool that looked something like a rudimentary American tool shed was on the land offered to the church. It had been constructed in 1996 and boasted of 25 students and 3 staff members. In 1998, Fr. Joseph Steger, with the aid of the few able-bodied men and women who lived in Lanet, began construction of the primary school. In 1999 a small chapel and mission house named Holy Cross Prayer Community and four classrooms of Lanet Umoja Primary School (LUPS) were dedicated. That same year the CCO sent missionaries from America to live in the mission house and children began filling the classrooms.

In the ensuing years, the population of Lanet grew from 1,000 families in 1997 to over 2,000 families in 2007, each family comprising approximately five people¹. People from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, including members from different tribes bought plots and began to set up their homes. The teachers at LUPS were predominantly Kenyan, but the American missionaries were invited to give Bible and English lessons. The CCO was known as the sponsor of the school since it had initiated and followed through with the construction of the building. By 2007 the school employed 28 teachers, served almost 1,000 students and held classes for children in preschool and kindergarten through Standard (grade) Eight. There were between 40 and 60 children in each classroom, with one teacher assigned to each grade level. One principal or ‘head teacher’ oversaw the entire school. Lanet Umoja Primary is a government school, so the government determines the curriculum and pays the teachers and the head teacher. The following year the school’s population increased dramatically when thousands of Kenyans were forced to flee their homes due to a post-electoral crisis that threw the country into months of turmoil. By June 2008 the enrollment at LUPS had reached an

¹ This number is based on information retrieved from a local census that was taken in Lanet in March 2007.

all-time high of 1400 students. Classrooms that had been built to hold 40 to 50 students now held 90 to 100 students. Many spent the school day standing and sharing textbooks with two or three other people as desks and supplies became scarce commodities. During the conflict the Kenyan government had deemed Lanet a “safe area” and had encouraged displaced or marginalized people to re-settle there.

During the years that Daniel arap Moi was Kenya’s president, parents of primary students paid tuition and were required to supply their child with a desk and a uniform at the beginning of each school year. When opposition leader Mwai Kibaki won the December 2002 presidential election, he initiated several reforms, one of the first being to establish Kenya’s Free Primary Education Policy, thereby abolishing primary school fees. The response was overwhelming and primary schools across the country were inundated with close to 1.7 million new students who registered for school by the end of 2004. LUPS was among those schools affected and from 2004 to 2007 the student population nearly tripled in size. Enrollment in other schools in the area grew as well, but Lanet had more students than any of the other primary schools in the Dundori Zone (in Kenya, each district is divided into zones). Many of the villagers attributed the high enrollment to the academic success of the school and the aesthetic beauty of the building structure. As of January 2008 there were 20 primary schools in the Dundori Zone; 13 were public schools and 7 were private schools. From 2003 through 2005, LUPS ranked first among 13 public schools in the Dundori Zone on the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCP). In 2006 the school ranked second place on the exam.

Additional Schools

During the construction of LUPS, people from neighboring villages began requesting that the CCO sponsor the building of schools in their villages. Leadership from the CCO responded by establishing “Kids in Kenya,” a program with the sole purpose of building schools in Kenya. The mission of this program was to promote education and training for children in Kenya through participatory partnerships with local leaders and citizens by building self-sustaining schools that supported community development, access to quality education and a better life. In 2003, a school that presently has 12 classrooms and 780 pupils was constructed in Kiti. In 2005, The Lord’s School, a school with 5 classrooms and presently 380 pupils was built in an area called

Kampi ya moto. Classrooms were also added at LUPS, allowing children to be educated from preschool through eighth grade. By 2007 fundraising efforts from the CCO – members and non-members alike had facilitated the construction of three fully operational primary schools in three separate Kenyan towns with total enrollment reaching over 2,400 students. As more and more children graduate from these schools, the need for church sponsored secondary schools has become apparent. Efforts to build a secondary school in Lanet began in 2009, with fundraising occurring in the USA and construction being provided by the Kenyan community members.

Caring for Orphans

In 2005 a school was built in an arid region of Kenya called Kampi ya moto, which translates literally to mean “Camp of Fire.” Soon after the school was built, children whose parents were victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic were identified. In addition, most of the children attending the school were malnourished and unable to learn. Again the CCO responded by providing funds to organize an orphan-feeding program for these children. Since that time, every day during the school week, all of the children attending this school are given a bowl of porridge to sustain them. Additionally, in all three schools, orphans and other needy children are given a daily meal of rice and beans. The cost for feeding the 500 children who are currently benefiting from this program is between .10 and .30 cents per child per day, depending on food costs. People across the United States continue to contribute to the ongoing effort to sustain the orphans and underprivileged children in all three schools. Since the inception of the program, hundreds of children have benefited from this daily provision of food.

Provision of Clean Water

One noticeable condition affecting the quality of life in Lanet has always been the accessibility of water. From the outset, the need for clean, potable water was apparent, as acquiring clean water was a challenge for everyone living in Lanet. Church leaders had responded to the report given by members of the first mission trip in 1997, making the availability of clean water in Lanet a major goal.

In their well-researched text about rural communities, Flora and Flora (2004) state that “[t]he availability of clean, potable water has been called the number one challenge

facing the world and its people today” (p. 146). For the citizens of Lanet, the most accessible water came from a nearby river. The villagers dubbed this “typhoid water,” because anyone who drank it before it was treated was likely to become infected with typhoid. A spigot installed at the primary school in 1998 allowed families living in Lanet to get this water without cost. They arrived after school hours and carried large containers home on their backs or in wheelbarrows. Others accessed the river water via a rudimentary piping system set up outside their homes. Many people boiled their drinking water; those who did not usually contracted typhoid or some other type of dysentery. Rainwater was an important commodity and was available only when it rained, collected in containers from the runoff on the often rusted, corrugated metal roofs. Those living in traditional Kenyan houses often had thatched roofs, making rainwater collection impossible. Only those who could pay for it used borehole or underground water. This water was retrieved via a surface mounted or submersible pump connected to a narrow, deep vertical shaft. It cost US \$40,000 (in 2007) to dig a hole, purchase a pump and install a three-phase system to make the pump work. Over a 10-year period (1997-2007), villagers and church members worked side by side to install a water-pumping system from a nearby river that would sustain the school and the mission house. After tireless fundraising efforts, a borehole was discovered and dug on the church property in Lanet, giving access to safe drinking water for the school as well as members of the village.

Messages of Mercy

“Messages of Mercy” is a writing program between students and teachers who attend public and private schools in the United States and orphaned students who attend any one of the three schools built by the CCO in Kenya. Simply by writing a letter, American children have been able to make a connection with hundreds of Kenyan school children who have been orphaned due to the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic and the post-electoral crisis that rocked the country in December 2007. Students in public and private schools in the United States are invited to write a “message of mercy” that begins “Dear Friend,” encouraging the orphan receiving the letter to continue with their education. Public and private schools in central Vermont, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts have already begun reaching out to kids in Kenya in this way, helping students in both countries to feel connected, important and needed. The response has

been tremendous on both sides of the globe, with children of all ages developing friendships as they engage one another to learn about life on the other side of the planet. In America, a child became so enamored with the thought of having an African “sister” that her family plans to travel to Kenya when she is older, simply to expose their daughter to a culture other than their own.

The Present - Establishment of Everyone’s Child

When the primary school opened its doors in 1999 in Lanet, all of the children attending had at least one living parent. Ten years later the situation changed as more than 30 out of 900 students were orphaned, most of them due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. That number has since grown as more children and adults in Lanet battle the disease that has taken Kenya and neighboring African countries by storm. Greene (2006) and many others have written about the staggering numbers of children affected by this disease, with predictions of the loss of life for at least 30 million Africans in the next twenty 20 years being reported. Kenya’s early reaction to the AIDS epidemic was to establish many programs mitigating the spread of the disease, but there has been a paucity of programs addressing the needs of HIV/AIDS orphans. In more recent years, communities faced with a growing orphan population have responded with the same “harambee” (Swahili for “let’s pull together”) philosophy that built schools in the 1970s and 1980s, assembling themselves around the shared ideal of caring for their nation’s children, especially the most vulnerable in their midst.

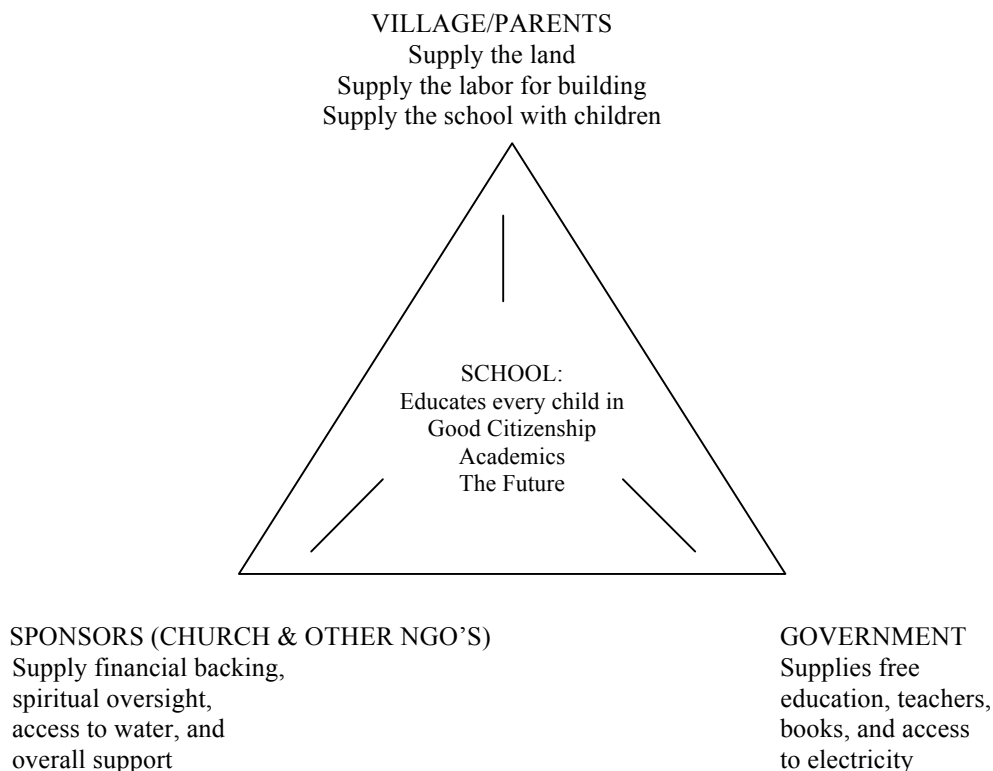
This attitude toward caring for orphans was prevalent in Lanet as well. In 2006, the government solicited the help of teachers across Kenya, asking them to respond to the needs of orphans in their schools by reaching out to parents and villagers, asking them to bring whatever supplies they could to give to the orphans in their schools. The staff at LUPS put this concept to work by sending notices home at the end of each term, asking parents to bring in items for the orphans and the families caring for them. Since 2007, villagers have responded generously, sharing from their surplus, or in many cases, from their own want as they brought in sacks of maize, beans, clothing, money and other essentials. This response has led the teachers to name the program “Everyone’s Child,” a title that has become synonymous with assisting orphaned and impoverished students throughout the school year.

The principal of Lanet Umoja had this to say about the orphans at his school:
You know, that child doesn't belong only to those who raise him, because one day that child will be educated, and then he will belong to the whole country, in fact, to the whole world! And his job will be to help others! So that is why he is called 'everyone's child' - he belongs to all of us, even America.

(Fr. Thomas Mugi - Principal, Lanet Umoja Primary School, Nakuru, Kenya)

Collaboration of the Village, Government, and Sponsors

Throughout her stay in Lanet Umoja, the emergence of a relationship became apparent to Dr. Young. The villagers maintained that they (predominantly the parents) had supplied the land, the labor, and finally the children to fill the school. The government had installed electricity, and had provided access to free education, free books, and had hired and paid teachers for the school. The church sponsors had supplied the start up money for the school, made clean drinking water available to both the school and the village, and provided spiritual oversight and continued support. A conceptual model representing this relationship is shown below:



Although these groups weren't holding meetings or collaborating to effect a change, their aspirations were the same. They shared a single goal in this country, and the fact that they weren't working against each other allowed students to reap the benefits of their combined effort to provide quality education for Kenya's future generations. In effect, their unspecified relationship was giving an opportunity to these Kenyan children that they might not have otherwise been able to receive. That collaborative effort is still in effect today, as villagers, teachers, government workers, church members and NGO's such as Everyone's Child work toward improving the quality of life for the Kenyan child.

In 2009, Everyone's Child, Inc. was established and incorporated in the United States to participate in the support of existing programs and to expand services to other areas. Since its inception, Everyone's Child has participated in the orphan feeding program in Kenya, made contributions toward additional classrooms at the Lord's School in Kampi ya moto, donated funds toward the building of a secondary school in Lanet, and in 2009 supported a medical mission trip to Kenya to provide medical care for the children and adults in communities where our schools have been built. During this medical mission trip, in conjunction with the Kenyan Health Ministry, over 1000 people were seen and provided with medical care.

Everyone's Child, Inc. is currently fundraising to support the following projects:

1. Expansion of the primary school in Kampi ya moto
2. Establishment of a secondary school in Lanet
3. Well for fresh drinking water in Kampi ya moto
4. Program for continuation of medical clinics in Kenya
5. Establishment of an orphanage and medical dispensary in Lanet

The Future

Everyone's Child, Inc. is dedicated to serving the needs of children around the globe, particularly those who live in impoverished circumstances. For the past ten years, people across the United States have contributed to our ongoing efforts to sustain the needs of orphaned and underprivileged children in Kenya. Our goal is to continue building schools, providing food and support for children who have no parents or

guardians, and connecting children in different nations, and to expand these programs to other developing nations such as Jamaica, Brazil and India.

The following are the future goals of Everyone's Child, Inc.:

1. The Building of Schools and Classrooms
 - a. A school is needed in Kampi ya mete as the tin building that the school is housed in is falling down.
 - b. Seven more classrooms are needed at the Kiti School.
 - c. Begin a sponsorship program for students with realistic life goals who want to attend secondary school & college but don't have the financial backing to go to school needs to begin.
 - d. Create a means of tracking students from EC primary & secondary schools.
2. Caring for Orphans
 - a. Orphan Feeding Program
 - b. Building orphanages in three locations.
 - c. Sponsoring an orphan ~ providing education, clothing, health care and food for orphans.
 - d. Messages of Mercy - providing opportunities for students in the USA and orphaned students in Kenya to write letters to one another.
3. Provision of Clean Water
 - a. A well at Kampi ya moto.
 - b. A well will be planned in each new school location is fresh drinking water is not locally available.
4. Medical Care
 - a. Medical care is needed for students and adults in school communities.
 - b. Plans are underway to support an annual medical clinic in school areas and to explore avenues for continued medical care in these areas.
5. Expand programs to other developing nations, potentially including Jamaica, Brazil and India.

Please visit our website at www.everyoneschild.net for more information.

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