



Child Sponsorship News March 2009

Our child sponsors are helping to give some very vulnerable children the opportunity to complete their education and to move forward in life. We thought you'd like to hear about some of the children being reached through our sponsorship scheme and through the wider work of Action for Children in Conflict.

New school, new opportunities

One lazy Sunday afternoon when most of the Interim Care Centre boys were playing football in the field, a small group of teenagers started to gather in the garden. Each boy carried a large, coloured metal trunk with their name written on the lid in heavy black marker pen. They were gathering around Daina, AfCiC's Education Empowerment Officer.



One aspect of Daina's job is to prepare boys their move up to secondary school. That morning she had taken Antony, Samuel, George and Kennedy to buy brand new shoes from a local shop called Bata. Each had returned with a bag carrying a pair of shiny black lace-ups and some baseball boots for sports. It was the first time any of them had been taken into Bata, and the first time they had owned such smart shoes.

The shoe-shopping expedition was the latest of many school-related shopping trips Daina has been making over the past few weeks. For the next few minutes the four boys went backwards and forwards from the centre, emerging with various bags and packages which they added to the growing pile on the ground. Daina had a list for each boy, and was ticking off the many and assorted items they would need for school. There were plastic-wrapped, brightly coloured mattresses decorated with flowers, complete with sheets, pillow cases and a blanket. Bibles, Oxford Dictionaries, A4 exercise books, novels, textbooks and pens for the classroom. A backpack to carry them in, complete with quirky cartoon character and caption. Buckets, soap and towels for washing, plates and cups for the kitchen. Polish and brush to ensure new shoes stay smart. Five envelopes each – no more, no less - for writing to friends and family.

Plastic wrapping littered the ground as items were pulled out, labelled in bold, scruffy writing, and stored compactly in the metal trunks. One by one over the next two weeks, the boys went with their metal trunks to begin their lives at boarding school.

Starting boarding school is a huge, exciting thing for any child in any country. But for these boys it was something a bit more – it was unlikely, much anticipated, and a rare opportunity only made possible by their sponsors. It is their chance to work their way towards a career and a life far away from the streets.

What's your dream?

Our Interim Care Centre in Thika is a place where ex-street boys can have the opportunity to turn their lives around. They receive counselling, life skills and education. The aim is that after around 6 to 9 months, the boys will be ready to return home and to re-start their schooling, and their families will be ready to receive and support them. Many of the boys are keen to go back to school and complete their education.

We spoke to some of the boys currently in the centre about what they'd like to be when they are older.



“I want to be a **pilot**. I am going to learn and **finish my education.**”

Newton

“I want to be an **engineer.**”

Robinson



“A **policeman.**”

Samuel

“When I am finished my education I want to be an **engineer**. When I'm not being an engineer I want to be a **soldier**. I will defend Kenya and also go to England to defend England.”

Edwin



“I want to be an **engineer** because I want to be rich and **I want to keep my family well.**”

Dennis

“An **artist** or an **engineer.**”

Anton



“I want to be a **soldier** because I am Kenyan and I want to protect Kenya when another country tries to attack.”

Lucas

“A **pilot**. I will fly to England to get more education. I will fly to Nairobi and England and Nakuru and Tanzania. **I will fly jet fighters.**”

Jack



Reaching the most vulnerable

Towards the end of 2008 the AfCiC social workers met a young girl called Mary. We were approached by her neighbour, who told us Mary was deaf and mute, caring for two younger brothers and had never been to school. The children's mother is dead, and so at just 12 years old Mary was the woman of the house.



AfCiC social workers decided to visit Mary to see how we could help her and her family. She was taken to the local doctors' to have her hearing tested and obtain official recognition of her disability, so that she would be eligible to go to a specialist school. While at the doctors, getting to know her, the social workers established that Mary's home was not a safe place for her. Because of this we decided not to take her back, instead giving her emergency accommodation for the night before placing her in a home, until the day she was able to move in to Kambui Boarding School.

Kambui School for the Hearing Impaired is set on the side of hill in a quiet, rural village about an hour's journey from Thika. With 300 pupils, it is the largest school of its kind in Kenya and takes in children from all over the country. The head teacher is warm and friendly and clearly has a genuine desire to reach some of the most vulnerable children in Kenya.

Without the help of schools like Kambui, children who are deaf and mute have little chance of leading a fulfilling life in Kenya. They are at risk of abuse – in many ways even more so than other children, because they are unable to speak out to fight for themselves. In areas where little is known about disabilities, children are hidden away from society because they bring shame upon their family; ancient African beliefs condemn people with disabilities as being cursed and in some places the effects of these beliefs are still felt. Added to this, there is very limited awareness of schools like Kambui, and due to the cost, few opportunities for families to send their children there.

Mary has been at Kambui for 2 months and her life is being transformed. Already she is picking up sign language, and is starting her education in the nursery class. Through our social workers, the local community and schools like Kambui, AfCiC hopes to reach and support many more children like Mary in the future.



A Fable

By Anton, who wants to go back to school.

Once upon a time there was a cat and a rat. They were friends. One day Cat said to Rat, "Let's make a boat, and let's go to the other side of the river." So they made a boat and started to go across the river. On the way, Cat said to Rat, "We don't have any food, what shall we do?". Cat continued, "Because I am hungry and we don't have food, I am going to eat you!". The Rat said, "But I am also hungry! We can eat the boat and then swim to the other side of the river." So the Cat and the Rat ate the boat and started swimming. They swam and swam and swam and swam, until finally Rat got to the other side of the river. But Cat didn't know how to swim, and Rat wouldn't help Cat out of the water. Because of this, when Cat eventually got to the other side of the river, he decided to eat Rat.

Do you know anyone who could sponsor David?

As one of our Child Sponsors you are making a huge difference to someone's life and future. David is another child who needs the opportunity to go to school. Do you know anyone who might be able to sponsor HIM?

*“My name is **David**, I'm 15 years old and stopped going to school because I lived on the streets. I want to go back to primary school, I need to go back to standard 6 level. I hope someone will sponsor me so that I can go back to school this year and hopefully to secondary school eventually. My mother is dead and I don't know where my father is so I hope I can go to boarding school, I don't want to go back to the streets.”*

David's mother died when he was quite young and both he and his younger brother were rejected by their father who re-married. Since that time they were living initially with their Grandmother, when she died they were then taken in by an Aunt who has children of her own and struggles to care for them all. The Aunt and Uncle unfortunately do not care for the welfare of David and he often went without food and other basic items. Living in this poverty in an overcrowded house where he was not wanted, David turned to the streets.



David slept in the main stage, surviving on collecting scrap metal and begging, using glue to curb his hunger for a long time. We recruited him through our street children outreach programme and he attended our Day Care Centre for 6 months before being referred to our Interim Care Centre for intensive rehabilitation.

Since joining our Interim Care Centre in October 2008 David has been found to be a very bright, hard working boy with the potential to do well if given the chance. David loves drawing and maths and thinks that going to back to primary school would make his life better and enable him to be something in the future. David is still grieving heavily for the loss of his Mother and it often makes him angry, but through counselling and creative art therapy he is learning to deal with the permanent loss of his mother.

For David, only a primary boarding school is a viable option because despite ongoing home visits and family support the Aunt is not able to cope with another child in her very small household. David needs a secure and stable home and to complete his education so he has a genuine chance at a positive future.

If you or anyone you know could sponsor David and secure him a place in school, please email Kenya@actionchildren.org.uk and let us know.

For more information about AfCiC's Child Sponsorship scheme, please email Kenya@actionchildren.org.uk or have a look at the website – www.actionchildren.org.uk/child_sponsorship