

Family Sponsorship Newsletter

Welcome to the April edition of the Family Sponsorship newsletter.

Drought Brings Hard Times

Traditionally in Kenya, April marks the start of the short rains. In a country as hot as Kenya, where many rely on the produce of their land both for sustenance and income, the rains are vital for survival. Unfortunately, due to global warming, the weather systems in Kenya are radically changing and many areas of the country are experiencing severe droughts. The lack of rain is pushing the prices of staple food such as maize flour, rice, sugar etc. to a level well above the international poverty line, meaning that those Kenyans who live below this level of \$1 a day are facing severe hunger and even starvation.



Drought in Kenya has caused many crops to fail

Save the Children estimates that there are up to 100,000 more malnourished children in Kenya today as a result of last year's rise in food prices. Food shortages have reached crisis point, and even worse, are expected to last for at least a year unless urgent action is taken. David Mepham, Save the Children's Director of Policy, said: "Poor people in the poorest countries were hit

hard by the rise in food and fuel prices last year. The financial crisis will hurt them even more, and children are most at risk. Without a big increase in financial resources for the poorest countries, large numbers of children will fall into poverty, drop out of school, suffer ill-health or be more exposed to violence and exploitation."

Many of the families supported through family sponsorship are facing very hard times, with the income they make from their businesses barely stretching to cover the cost of basic foodstuffs. As a result, AfCiC is working closely with the families and, if necessary, offering extra support to ensure that they are able to meet their children's basic needs.

Another Successful School Holiday Club

This time of economic hardship also coincides with the school holidays, meaning that children place extra demands on their families whilst unoccupied during the day. The school holidays are a crucial time for AfCiC as many children take the break from lessons as an opportunity to go to the streets to beg. Sometimes parents even urge their children to carry out small casual jobs in order that they can bring an extra income to the family. Unfortunately there is the risk that, once the schools reopen, children who have become accustomed to earning money during the holidays fail to return to school.



"Yoghurt": Children in a yoga lesson at Holiday Club

To overcome this problem, AfCiC runs a school holiday club targeted at the most vulnerable children in the local area. This month we ran a 4 week holiday club at Thika Primary School, catering for approximately one hundred children, including many of those from sponsored families. Classes ranged from Maths to Child Rights to Yoga (which many of the children mistook for "yoghurt"!). Thanks to Thika's Hindu Women's League, local wellwishers (notably Mr and Mrs Devraj Meghji Shah) and foodstuffs collected through a collection at local supermarket, Tuskys, we were able to provide lunch to all children who attended the club. The holiday club was a huge success and is a testimony to the good relationship that AfCiC has with the local schools and community. Thankyou to all staff and volunteers who took part.

Write to your sponsored family

One of the challenges NGOs often face is challenging the way in which charity is understood, or misunderstood as the case may be. Charity isn't simply about giving handouts to those less fortunate, it is about empowering people to work themselves out of poverty so they have the best possible chance in the future. Charity is also about giving people hope. Often one of the biggest things we can give to a street child is the knowledge that someone cares about them. When children live on the streets and suffer daily abuse, they lose self confidence, self worth and feel they have no one to turn to.

Having a sponsor is a huge privilege for a child and something for them to feel very proud about. Knowing that there is a person in a different country who cares about their wellbeing and wants to help them motivates children to turn their lives around. Your sponsored family would be most happy to receive a short letter from you or a photograph of your family. If you wish to do this, please feel free to email them to sponsorship@actionchildren.org.

*Best Wishes,
Jo*