

ACTION
for children in conflict



Protecting street and other acutely vulnerable children in Thika, Kenya - June 2010

Welcome to the AfCiC June Newsletter

Street Census Quiz: In November of 2009, AfCiC and partner organisations conducted a census of street children in Thika Town and surrounding areas. The final report has recently been completed, yielding many interesting results. The quiz below highlights some important findings. Answers can be found at the end of this newsletter.

- 1) What percentage of street children are total orphans, having no parents to keep them at home? A: 11% B: 52% C: 75%
- 2) How do street children normally survive on the street?
 A: Begging B: Collecting scrap metal C: Stealing
- 3) What percentage of street children are beaten on the street?
 A: 20% B: 55% C: 70%
- 4) When do most children first come to the street?
 A: Early childhood B: Early teens C: Late adolescence

Appeal for Land: Progress Update

In AfCiC's March Newsletter we launched our Appeal for Land, seeking £50,000 to buy land for a new Interim Care Centre in Thika. The response to our appeal has so far been heartening, as we have been able to raise over £20,000! Friends and contacts of AfCiC have sent us contributions of whatever size they could afford, along with their encouraging wishes. We are deeply grateful for the generosity we have received so far. We launched the appeal in March, hoping to raise the full amount in 9 months, by the end of 2010. With 3 months gone, we are over one third of the way there, just ahead of schedule! However, the appeal and the need for new land remains urgent.

As described in our last newsletter, we rent our current centre, a situation which is holding us back from providing the best possible services to street children. The ICC is a residential rehabilitation centre for the most vulnerable street children, helping them to get off the streets and return to home, school, and happy childhoods. Our current rented premises are in a poor state, and do not have adequate space or

facilities for our sensitive work. In renting our land and buildings, we not only spend money on rent that could be better spent on services, but also can not develop agriculture, residential flats and other income generating activities for AfCiC's sustainability.

The ICC is a key part of AfCiC's programme model, and we remain dedicated to buying land for a new facility before the end of 2010. Please help us reach our goal of £50,000 so that we can assist more vulnerable children and families and improve the quality and range of our services. To contribute, please see our fundraising page at this link:

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Appealforland>

Solar Power Comes to ICC

In January of 2008, electricity at the Interim Care Centre was cut off due to a protracted dispute between our landlord and the Kenya Power and Lighting Company. As a result, the children undergoing rehabilitation have been forced to carry out evening chores, eat their meals, and prepare for bed each night with only the aid of a few candles and paraffin lamps. The reduced visibility posed challenges and safety risks for the children and staff, every evening from 6:30pm.



The boys posing with the solar panels before installation

However, in April a team of solar power technicians came to the ICC to install solar panels on the roof of the building which provide enough energy to power lights throughout the centre. After a year and a half of darkness, the boys and staff are able to see comfortably as they go about their evening activities. The solar equipment was donated by a US-based sustainable energy company, OneWorld Sustainable Inc. We would like to graciously thank this donor for improving life at the centre, and providing what is considered a basic amenity throughout much of the world.

The change has not gone unnoticed. Moses Karanja, a current resident, said "when I'm sleeping and I want the toilet, I can see. When no electricity, I can be scared in the dark." Duncan Njoroge agreed, saying "it give us light so we can see at night, and it is good for reading. Before it was very dark." On behalf of AfCiC and all the boys at ICC, we would like to thank OneWorld Sustainable Inc. for the generous donation.

Mediation Training

On 25 June, KCLAW volunteers organised a mediation workshop for lawyers in Thika. Many of the cases that are brought to KCLAW are concerned with child support. It is in the best interests of the child that such cases are resolved speedily and with the agreement of both parties, a solution which the courts often cannot provide but mediation can.

Mediation (the consensual resolution of a conflict with the support of a neutral third party) is currently not widely practised in Kenya although draft proposals have been discussed with the Chief Justice. We hope the workshop provided the lawyers with encouragement and confidence to pre-empt any changes the government may introduce and incorporate mediation into their daily practice, particularly cases involving children.

This was our first event targeted specifically at the local legal community and we intend to build on these foundations in the future to work together in the protection of children's rights.

New Counselling Space at ICC

AfCiC's Interim Care Centre strives to provide a full range of rehabilitation services to street children who have decided to change their lives. As part of this programme, the Centre's staff includes a full time counsellor to help the boys deal with the difficult issues from their time on the street, and the home lives that drove them away. AfCiC's counsellor, Catherine Mugo, works with the boys both individually and in groups to help them through their problems. Typically among ex-street children, the boys who come to ICC have problems with their confidence and self-esteem. Body image is a specific problem that stems from street life, especially in relation to cleanliness and clothing. According to Catherine, "it is important to first talk and listen to their thoughts about themselves, encouraging them to appreciate how they were created." Lack of self-esteem is dangerous for a child, as it creates a "what do I have to lose?" attitude. It can lead to destructive behaviour like drugs, working abusive jobs, vulgarity and untidiness. Through counselling, children are able to change their attitudes about themselves, and understand their worth.

At the end of 2009, the ICC counselling programme received a wonderful facelift. Through the generosity of Wings of Support, a private initiative of the staff of KLM airline. AfCiC received a shipping container which has been converted into a private counselling room at ICC. The conversion work was completed in April, and through innovative and creative design we now have a warm and inviting private space for counselling, away from the other distractions of the ICC. Catherine appreciates the change, saying "it gives the privacy required by counselling, away from the noises and activities of the centre. The boys feel safe and are able to concentrate, which is important for counselling." The boys have noticed the change as well. Danson Kimani says, "you can tell your secrets and your story and nobody can hear it." Peter Gatama agrees that the new space is beneficial, saying "it is not good to have

counselling and eating in the same room," as was the case before the container arrived.

The counselling programme is a very important part of the ICC's rehabilitation work. The goals of the programme are to help children learn new behaviours in the area of personal interaction, and to put what they've learned into practice. It also aims to help them manage their anger better, especially if the parents and situations they will return to have changed little. Catherine says it is most rewarding when "the boys finally capture that counselling is worth it, and they begin to initiate counselling on their own." With a new facility like the one at ICC, the success of the programme can only be enhanced, and the children will finally have an appropriate and conducive place to work through their problems. Once again, sincere thanks to Wings of Support and their representative Paul Rommerts for their generosity in supporting vulnerable children in Thika.

Run the Standard Charter Nairobi Marathon for AfCiC!

Calling all runners! We would like to invite our friends and supporters to consider taking on an exciting challenge, and raise money for AfCiC at the same time. The Standard Charter Nairobi Marathon will be held on October 24th, bringing together the best runners in Kenya and around the world. Registration for the race has begun, and we invite anyone who would like to use the event the challenge themselves and raise funds for AfCiC to find out more at www.nairobimarathon.com.



If you are interested in running this race in the capital of Kenya, home of the world's greatest distance runners, please get in touch with our head of fundraising and running club coach, Kathryn Becher (development@actionchildren.org).

Thanks to our readers!

As a communications volunteer for AfCiC, I have been living in Thika since October 2009. One of my jobs has been to write quarterly newsletters like this one, aimed at our friends and supporters in Kenya and abroad. I have really enjoyed the challenge of helping people thousands of miles away to understand AfCiC's complicated work here in Thika. We are all grateful to all those who have been reading our updates and supporting the charity, and are looking for ways to improve our communications. If you have an idea that could improve AfCiC's newsletters, please feel free to get in touch with me at provenzam@gmail.com. Unfortunately, my time

as a volunteer is coming to an end in June, but I will pass along all comments or ideas to the next communications volunteer who will be joining AfCiC in October.

Thank you again for supporting this organisation and the wonderful children it works with. Those of you who have worked with us in Thika will know that it is a difficult place to forget, and I encourage those who have not visited to come and see what we do first hand.

Sincerely, Michael Provenza

Thanks to our supporters!

Sponsors

AfCiC would like to thank the following people who became new child or family sponsors over the last quarter:

Karen Bell
Anne Lancaster
Jem Kimchi
Malcolm & Sharan Lock

Vikki Lock
Einar Kvam
Alex Gallopin & family
Clare Lamont

Andre Neto
Margaret & Godfrey Thomas
Duncan Maclean & family

Trusts, Organisations & Individuals

AfCiC would like to thank the following trusts, organisations, and individuals for their generous support in the last quarter:

The Laura Case Trust
Allan & Nesta Ferguson CT
ArcAid
Hurtwood House
Charlotte Pritchard
Michael Provenza
Freddie Meberhtu

Emmanuel College, Cambridge
Barclays Capital
Action for Street Kids
JEB Charitable Trust
Martin Love
Terry Nicholls
One World Sustainable Inc.

Jesus College, Cambridge
Kempthorne Smith Trust
Ingrid Abrahams
Emma Smith
Rachel Lock
Wings Of Support
Ilsham C of E Primary School

All our regular givers!
All our Land Fund supporters!

Street Census Quiz Answers

1) Answer: A, 11%. Most children on the streets have a home, and at least one parent in their lives. They are on the street because of problems at home such as lack of food, lack of school uniform and fees, or abuse. Parents have the most important role to play in keeping their children in school and off the street. Good parenting goes a long way towards a child's success.

2) Answer: A and B, 34% collect and sell scrap metal and 36% beg from strangers. Street children normally rely on others to survive on the street. When people give money to a begging child, it encourages him to come back to the street again. When someone pays a child under 18 for scrap metal, it does the same thing. We encourage well-wishers in Thika to help street children not by giving them money, but by sponsoring or supporting a child through our organisation.

3) Answer: C, 70% of street children are beaten on the street. Beatings are a serious danger for children who are forced to live on the street. Whether it is older youths, adults around town, police or security guards, street children are always at risk. AfCiC encourages the public to show mercy to these children who are on the street because of problems at home.

4) Answer: B, Early teens. Most street children first come to the street between the ages of 10 and 15 years. This age is when children are in extra danger of leaving home, so AfCiC encourages parents and teachers to be attentive to children at these ages, watching for danger signs and intervening whenever possible.