



*Protecting street and other acutely vulnerable children in Thika, Kenya. June 2009*

**Welcome to AfCiC's June Newsletter! Bore hole drilling for clean water, a 6year old child wanting to build a house for his grandmother and details of our new TV and radio fame are all below!**

### **Director's Summary**

It has been a busy three months in Thika, with economic turmoil in the country exacerbated by high levels of government corruption and impossible food prices, pushing new families into abject poverty and destitution. AfCiC is working to assist these families both economically and educationally, thereby preventing new children from dropping out of school and turning to a life on the streets, whilst continuing our innovative and highly successful work with more long term street children and older youth. In May, the residents of our Rehabilitation Programme all left our centre and returned to school, which was a fantastic achievement and a tribute to our hardworking staff. Many thanks for your continued support with this great work.

Eleanor Harrison, Director, AfCiC Kenya

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### **Family Sponsorship Borehole Project**



*"Thank you for helping me to go back to school. Living with my uncle is good and I am very grateful for all the help AfCiC has given us. Without your help, I would still be on the streets."*

Dorin is 14 years old and is one of five children to a single mother with mental health problems. Her mother has been living on the streets for more than five years now and two of her siblings have followed this example and are also on the streets. Unfortunately one of these children has disappeared now. No one knows where he has gone.

The other three children were initially left with their Step-Grandmother, who is very old and unable to look after them. Our outreach workers, who had been working with the family since they identified the mother scavenging in rubbish dumps in Thika Town, eventually managed to trace her brother, Jackson (Dorin's Uncle) to Nairobi where he was living with his family and surviving through casual jobs. We were able to convince Jackson to return to his rural home and take-over the care of the children where they could have access to free primary education. We agreed to assist him with support for the children to attend school and also to build a borehole to allow him to grow crops and to provide clean, safe drinking water for the family.

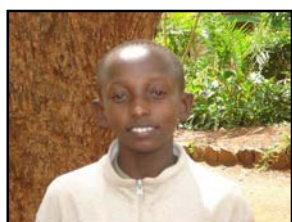
Jackson now takes care of Dorin and her siblings as well as his own children and we have been able to assist with the purchase of school uniforms and other vital items for the younger children and with the provision of a skills training course in barbership for the oldest nephew, Stephen. The borehole project has been a great success and the family are currently preparing seedlings so they can grow vegetables both for home use and as a source of income. Unfortunately, Dorin's mother cannot be persuaded to return home, although now and then she visits her children, which is a positive start.

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### Holiday Club for Vulnerable Children



During the month of April, we organised and ran a holiday club for vulnerable children as a preventative measure to keep them from going to the streets in search of food while the schools were closed. Each day over 100 identified at risk children and former street children attended life skills and educational classes, were provided with free lunch and took part in sports and other fun activities. The children, boys and girls aged 6 to 18, took a lot from the classes run jointly by our staff and volunteers. Classes covered a wide variety of subjects such as Maths, Communication Skills, Child Rights, Art, English and Sign Language. The children were taught many valuable skills in a safe, fun and educational environment and as a result were well prepared for the start of the next school term.



*"Holiday club is helping us because we get to eat there and also exercise the body. When I eat then play football I feel healthy! I have been learning things I didn't know before, like about different countries and names of mountains in geography. I am going to understand things better. It is fun and we meet lots of new friends there."* **(Onesphon, age 13)**

*"I like holiday club, especially drawing and playing football. Holiday club is helping me to know new things and I am practicing speaking English".* **(Melissa, age 9)**



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### Hear Our Voice! Recording



Hear Our Voice is a unique and innovative performing arts project that allows children to turn their real life experiences on the streets into pieces of theatre. This allows them to reflect upon their pasts in a safe and creative environment thereby positively contributing to their rehabilitation.

Throughout April the children were working with a Nairobi based record producer – David Muthami – to turn their theatre play 'Chokora' into a radio play. The play was recorded in both Swahili and English with the aim of broadcasting in both East Africa and the UK. In

recording both versions of the play the children demonstrated how far they have developed their language skills and confidence.

Through the interest our recording has generated, we have been given opportunities to appear on radio and TV stations in Kenya to talk about our work in front of a wide Kenyan audience who can often hold very negative perceptions of street children. With the eventual broadcasting reaching a vast number of people in Kenya, and hopefully around the world, it will enable a better understanding of the real lives and experiences of street children, a recognition of what these children are capable of despite their hugely difficult circumstances and a heightened awareness of this issue thereby encouraging further support to help improve the lives of these children.



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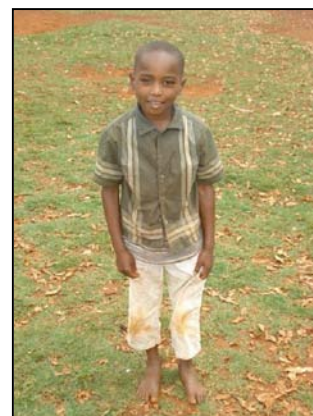
### Successful Rehabilitation!



*"I'm Kevin and this is my brother Njungwa. We used to go to the streets looking for food because our parents left us alone but now we are lucky because our Grandmother looks after us. She works very hard to give us what we need, but I know it's hard for her. I want to work hard at school so I can help her one day."*

Kevin is 12 years old and his brother Njungwa only 6. Both their parents are drunks, when they separated some time ago, the two boys were abandoned by their Father who is irresponsible and does not care for them. Their Mother frequently left them alone in the house to fend for themselves meaning that rather than going to school, or nursery in Njungwa's case, they would go to Makongeni market to beg and scavenge through rubbish for anything they could eat. They then went home and cooked for themselves with whatever they found.

AfCiC rescued the boys from this extremely vulnerable situation last year and they spent 4 months living in our Interim Care Centre. Thanks to the support of our social workers, they are now living with their paternal Grandmother. Kevin is in class 4 at a local school and Njungwa has now started class 1 and says he likes being in school because the teachers can correct his mistakes. Kevin wishes that one day, if he works hard at school, he will be able to not only support himself, but his Grandmother also. *"When I grow up, if she's still alive, I will build a house for her."*



Both boys appreciate very much how hard their Grandmother works to support them. She is a widow with no job, so her income is very uncertain. We are currently supporting her with provision of uniforms and other essential items, however with the help of a sponsor we could do much more!

The difference a private school would make to these boys would be huge. Public primary schools in Kenya are underfunded and overcrowded, with sometimes up to 80 children per class. It is difficult for the teachers to track the progress of each child and they have limited access to books or other resources. If we can find a sponsor willing to send Kevin and Njungwa to a private day primary school, they would benefit from smaller class sizes, more individual attention, books and learning materials and guaranteed school feeding, which would take some pressure off their Grandmother. This would allow them the ability to progress in their education and give them a chance at a brighter future.