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Wamumbi Orphan Care Newsletter 26th October 2012

Written by Genevieve Lamond (CEO)

These last few months have been very busy and we are now focusing on projects leading on from our completed chicken project in May/June time. I went to visit our group in Kenya during August and September to check on progress, discuss plans with my colleague Martha, and hold meetings with our group of children and their guardians. We now have 36 households in our group, with 55 orphaned children in total, and they all need support with basic needs, school fees as they enter secondary school, and life skills trainings that we are providing through a range of workshops. It has been an exciting time for us as we move on with our activities and we have been receiving great feedback from not only members of our group but also the wider community who are recognising the work we are doing and appreciating it.

Now that we have reached a stage where we are more firmly established as an organisation, we have running costs to ensure that adequate follow-up is done with each of our households. This means transport and communication costs need to be covered for Martha and our Project Management Committee - which is made up of three of the grannies and three of the grandpas of the children. We are all working on a voluntary basis so other than these costs, all money raised goes directly to the children's needs.

Below are some pictures showing the impact we are having on one of our girls, Mary Mwangi* and her family of two sisters, little brother and elderly grandmother who has been suffering from depression.



Mary as she arrives home from school one day in June to find 4 chickens and a cockerel waiting for her...

* Name has been changed



Kathy and Magdaline teaching the older children about sex, STDs and HIV/AIDS. Mary is pictured holding a condom packet just before they practised putting them on carrots.

In September, we had a day just with the children and split them up into older and younger groups. The teenagers had a very practical sex education class with two experienced trainers (one from the U.S. and the other from Kenya), whilst we did drawing, singing and games with the younger children. They all really enjoyed the day and were all given some clothes and exercise books at the end. During this time with them, we set up a Youth Committee so that they can take part in decision-making and have some responsibility within the organisation. We felt it was important to meet with the children separately from their grandparents so they could feel free to discuss things more openly. The following day, after meeting with the children, we had a meeting just with the grandparents and discussed many many issues with them. They gave us feedback on our work so far and helped us with ideas for the future.

After meeting with the children's guardians and our project management committee, it was decided that we should focus our efforts over the following few weeks on two of our most needy households. Both are headed by elderly grandmothers who are unable to cultivate the small portions of land they have and can't afford to hire labour. Martha and I went to visit both of these households so we could discuss with them the way forward. The chickens they were given a few months ago hadn't been laying eggs because they couldn't afford the layers mash and there weren't enough scraps left over after meals so we decided to help them with that for two months while we figure out the best way of handling this. Layers mash costs 600 KES for 20 kilos per month (about £4.50) but the eggs that will result will far outweigh the cost of feeding them. It may mean we continue to help them with this cost if there's no other way they can afford, but a big issue is also feeding the family.

When we arrived to Mary's house she was crying in her bedroom from not having eaten since the previous day. She is taking strong medication every day, often on an empty stomach. We chatted with the grandmother for an hour to see where we could help out and what they needed most of all. She has been very depressed and was crying as she narrated what a struggle it's been bringing up her four grandchildren with the oldest girl going looking for casual work every day, sometimes coming home with something but often nothing. They didn't have proper beds or blankets and were sleeping on clothes on the dirt floor of their home. Many of their neighbours had turned their backs on them when they needed help the most. Our Secretary, Mrs Njuru, has been helping this family as much as she can and said that she will be able to motivate people to help them set up a kitchen garden with a bit of extra support. The family has a bit of land but at the moment it's not producing much other than a bit of maize and bananas. If we can help

them set up a vegetable garden, then at least they will have access to some nutritious foods to supplement any maize or rice they manage to get. After drawing up a list of what this family needed the most, we started tackling it straightaway. We bought not only blankets for them, but also beds and mattresses, and we put together enough money for layers mash and household food for two months, which Martha has been buying for them and dropping off every two weeks.



Martha with Mary's grandmother and our Secretary Mrs Njuru, standing where we will establish a kitchen garden for them. The other photo is of me next to their chicken house that we built back in June for them.



Martha with Mary at her home when we went to discuss their most urgent needs with the grandmother.



Delivery of mattresses, beds, blankets and foodstuffs - Martha with Mary, her older sister and little brother.

When we delivered everything to Mary's family, the beds and mattresses were a big surprise as they'd only asked for help with blankets and food. Martha and Mrs Njuru spent 7hrs at the household, putting together the beds, clearing out the old bedding, and showing the teenage girls how to clean the place properly and advising them on how to maintain cleanliness. There were lots of tears and smiles which made it all more worthwhile and Martha was absolutely buzzing at the end of the day despite being exhausted!

Before we had told all of our Project Management Committee about what we had done, they had already heard because the news had travelled so fast - Mary was so excited that she had told everyone about the new beds at school the next day. We have had feedback since and have heard that the neighbours are now talking to the family and helping them more with small things, since they realised that if outsiders can come in and help such a needy household then so can they. This has been really good news to hear as this is exactly what we want to encourage within the wider community – to support one another and not stigmatise those who need the most help.



Throwing out the old bedding and bringing in the new! The grandmother was given a single bed and the children a bunk bed to share, with new mattresses, sheets and blankets.



Martha giving them foodstuffs for the next two weeks. The older sister with the little brother enjoying trying out their new bed!



The little brother clapping with joy at the new beds

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development now have an office in Kangema and they have been extremely helpful with giving us advice on potential sources of funding and how to organise ourselves properly to benefit from these. Martha is in the process of creating a file for each of the children in our group, with their birth certificates, the death certificates of their parents, and their life stories up until now. We are also hoping to have an office for Martha to work from in the coming year so that she'll be easier to reach for our members and will have the space she needs to work well and host meetings.



Our Project Management Committee and Martha set up a big nursery bed on one of their pieces of land in the second week of October. They were given advice by the manager of a Biointensive Agricultural Training Centre in a nearby town and bought seeds of vegetables like spinach, kales, onions, leeks and carrots. The seedlings will soon be ready for transplanting as there have been good rains and they have been sprouting well. They will establish kitchen gardens on five of our members' land to inspire our other members to implement the same practices on their own land. Through this project, we hope to increase the nutritional status and health of the children and their elderly carers.

To see more photos and latest news in detail, visit our website at: <http://www.wamumbiorphancare.org.uk/>