

NYUMBANI VILLAGE *Bulletin*



Welcome to the first edition of the Nyumbani Village bulletin. The central theme of this bulletin is to draw in, in ever enlarging circles, the Nyumbani Village community, the immediate neighbours, Kitui District, the Kenyan Nation, Africa and the world into this valiant effort. We are setting the pace in the caring settlement of the destitute and neglected orphan families. Grim projections show that by the year 2010 the HIV/AIDS orphan population in sub-Saharan Africa will be 30 – 35 million, of which more than 18 - 21 million will be desperately destitute.

There is also the accompanying problem of the elderly who were counting on their children to assist them in the twilight of their lives now being called upon to raise their grandchildren. Oftentimes they are sick and weak and disillusioned having had to nurse their sick adult children all the way to the grave. The extended family that was so much a part of Africa's landscape has been eroded as the most educated and productive members of society are being killed by this scourge.

HIV/AIDS is gradually becoming more of a chronic disease in the west, a trend that we hope will soon appear in Africa. In the seven months that we have been constructing the Village, it seems to be an answer to the quest for rural socio economic development under these new conditions. What has been our experience is that during this process, outlooks gradually changed, courage gathered, the value of adversity as the best teacher has dawned as the undoubted presence of spiritual guidance is felt.

Such is a triumph, sadly paid for with millions of lives, arising from a monumental tragedy for it is now capable of turning 100 000 orphans into 1000 surgeons. It is within the realms of possibility. Holding true to course, one suddenly realises what it means to be in agreement with Fr. D'Agostino, Sr. Owens and all Nyumbani supporters in their selfless and indefatigable pursuit of shelter for the destitute orphan families. It is in this spirit that all are invited to join in this hopeful task, where none is greater or lesser, within which the fullness and meaning of the great gift of life becomes clearer in our sharing. *Karibuni!*



Sr. Mary Owens, Deputy Executive Director.

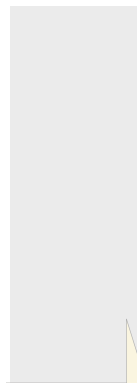
Nyumbani Children of God Relief Institute in Karen, Nairobi is the first hospice for HIV positive orphans in Kenya. It was founded in 1992 to provide comprehensive nutritional, medical, spiritual and psychosocial care. From this came to idea of being able to cater for the many more who needed such a facility. Nyumbani Village is the first planned response to the catastrophe on this scale. It aims at housing and nurturing 160 families, comprising around 1,000 children and 200 elderly grandparents. Currently, the Village is under a three stage construction in Mikuyuni, Kitui District, Kenya. Site preparations commenced mid November, 2004 and intakes in August, 2005, April 2006 and April 2007 of about 250 children each are planned. These are vacation months so school will not be interrupted. We expect the Village to be self sustaining in five years time.

In a nutshell what we intend to achieve is:

- * To restore the basic rights that our orphaned children as well as the elderly have been deprived of.
- * To provide a supportive environment for the children through psychosocial support while ensuring that their efforts are not undermined due to stigmatisation.
- * To provide parental care that they have been deprived of by the

pandemic which can lead to emotional trauma.

* To protect the orphaned children from all kind of abuse, violence, and exploitation from some of the community members because of their vulnerability due to lack of protection and care from their deceased parents.



The site, on day one



The Village will be self governing through a ubiquitous, benevolent Council of Elders with cordial inputs from interested parties



Accountability and delivery of quality work is what is emphasised which is why group rather than individual labour is encouraged.

Community groups therefore get involved in all activities pertaining to the welfare of the Village. The groups donate 25% of their work to the orphan families by doing a large piece of work for which they are paid and a smaller piece of work for which they do not charge. In this way they are the closest donors of the Village.

The advantages of having group over individual work is that it is self supervising, large amounts of Labour can be raised at short notice, theft and vandalism are minimised and project funds are distributed evenly throughout the neighbouring communities. Additionally, the target for gender equity has been surpassed and as a result of lump sum group payments, capital for self help projects is readily available without harambees

Each group works on a different day allowing members to coordinate other activities ensuring that the family does not crumble due to neglect and prolonged absence.



The **Mbolea Kwa Mutonga Group** is a local self help group which deals with the recycling of resources, in particular manure from the novel ecological sanitation systems in order to conserve the environment. This includes compost manufacture, production of liquid fertilizer, eco sanitation together with experimentation on human, animal and vegetable fertilizers. The goal is to conserve the environment, education on hygiene principles as well as any savings made by using our own resources.

Weaving

The incorporation of local traditional skills in weaving has generated employment for our women. They have recently been motivated to unite and begin weaving baskets best known as kiondos.

They weave the baskets within a period of two weeks using sisal fiber threads and dye the threads with colours from local trees like *Acacia Nilotica* and *Commifora Africana*.

The women then sell the kiondos to individuals at an agreed price. This fulfils the self sustaining aspect of the project as well as being used for storage purposes on the project and benefiting the elderly grandparents who use them to harvest a variety of products from their yards. We are of course, looking for ways to market these kiondos further afield.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Several personalities have had the privilege of working at the site for a while now. Some were among the first to set foot in the Village. They will let us into their experiences so far.

NEHEMIAH MBOGORI



Awesome! was my first reaction to the Nyumbani Village project. My day as a Construction Team Leader begins at 6.00 a.m when I start two hours of walking to the site in Kwa Mutonga. We start our day with a word of prayer.

Our cement/soil building blocks begin arriving on the days assigned site. As our material arrives and preparation is underway, I get a shout: THERE IS NO WATER! I'm off. (Where is this water?) Most of all where is the foreman? Luckily, I find him in his office. Now I can do my shouting. WATER, is what I need. Naturally, I have to add something else. What pops out of my head is corner blocks. Extremely essential in the type of building we are doing.

Back to the foreman: Where is the water?? He shakes his head. I shake mine.

Have some tea he suggests. I gladly accept the offer. (I badly need the tea, but I desperately need great amounts of water). You'll get your water shortly he tells me. I'm mollified and take off like a bullet to see the guys who prepare our lintels. They are not there but the lintels are there. Alright. I'll go prepare some transport.

Back to site. The most gorgeous site hits my eyes: Water on a two-wheel cow driven cart is now being parked at my site. Nobody is shouting at me. The exquisiteness of these buildings is the way they raise out of the ground once you get out of the sub-structure. Makes all the hassles worthwhile.



Back to work and someone has fallen off a scaffold, that's about six foot off the ground. First Aid is administered and the next stage is hospital. After all the necessary treatment my guy is up and about.

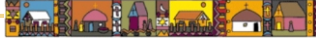
On my way back to site from the main office I go back via the production section to find out whether I will receive a fair share of cement/soil blocks in order to keep all my people on duty for the full day. We have been having some shortages and laying off of staff is something I abhor.

The ups and downs at work are normal and can be expected on any construction site. They have to be taken in our stride and work continues. The knowledge that what we are doing will ultimately benefit destitute children is almost enough payment on its own.

My spirits are high and it makes me proud to be involved in making this project a reality. My emotional involvement in this cannot be underestimated much less undervalued. My experience here proves that out there in the world, there are people who care about others.

Since God is with us there is nothing we cannot do!

ALLUTA CONTINUA.



LITHA MUTHUSI



Mrs. Litha Muthusi was the second person to work at the Village (the first was her husband who delegated to her). Her first duty was when she was instructed to clear a path from what was to be the gate down to Mikuyuni river which would act as a passage route. Determined to work under no supervision, she worked tirelessly, though at the time with Anthony and Bro. Paul, and cleared almost half the work. Later during the day, two more people were recruited to assist.

After a day's work, workers who had been recruited usually demanded payment of their wages in a harsh, rowdy and uncontrollable manner. Litha, a natural at communicating, was able to calm them down. She intuitively understood that as a result of the intense hunger in the area, nobody wanted to go home empty handed and watch their children cry themselves to sleep on empty stomachs!

Not only did Litha clear bushes but she also worked in the vegetable garden and prepared the shamba (farm) during the sowing period. She gave out her oxen to plough the shamba without expecting any pay.

She hopes that the project will benefit their children so that they will not be forced to move to the city to seek for employment, rather being employed near home at Nyumbani

After several months, Litha started her own business; a food kiosk where she sells food to the workers in site. However, why the business? In response she says Some two months ago workers were being laid off and lost my job. She decided to start the business to support her family economically and also engage herself in an activity that brought forth some benefit.

Asked about any demerits met while in line of duty in Nyumbani she says that every situation has its pros and cons and she prefers to let sleeping dogs lie for the cons cannot compare to the benefits she has received from the village.

Capturing the Spirit of Nyumbani Village

There is an amazing use of resources because at the Village we have taken the time and the trouble to train initially unskilled locals as opposed to bringing in skilled professionals from elsewhere. On a site of about 200 people, only six are outsiders, yet the project is intensely complex and sophisticated.

We started agricultural systems right from the start so that the indigenous people could see for themselves that growing different kinds of food was possible with some hard work, a little patient innovation, learning and courage.

This just goes to show what a great impact a few people can make on an entire community. When this project is completed, virtually everybody who has worked here will have a skilled trade to offer. This will in turn enable them to get a decent job as a mason, tile maker, blockmaker, surveyor, or whatever their job description may have been during the duration of the project. In many ways, this concept is as important as providing orphans with homes because the families of the workers the families thereafter have the possibility of attaining a much better standard of life. Already, many have bought bicycles, their children will be able to attend secondary school&&& ..



The hydraform and its capabilities to make blocks using locally obtained materials eg, loam soil, water & cement



Excavation of the soil



These roofing tiles have also been made by hand.



The wells on site have been dug by hand. The riverine wells have water at 15ft. and are to bottom out at 30-40ft. Wells in the higher southern reaches are much deeper at 60-70ft.

Actually, the Nyumbani Village concept is that everything with the exception of the steel, cement and glass is produced on site. This is completely unheard of on a construction site in America.



Making trussed rafters for the roofs

Permaculture is the concept of planting a variety of crops in a canopy format. Food crops of differing types and heights are interspersed in such a way as to form water vapour retaining canopies. This method is much more effective in retaining rainfall. When the moisture undergoes evaporation, it evaporates upward through each layer of growth rather than evaporating into the air but most importantly it transpires them to the plant, producing food



This type of agriculture works very well in areas that are extremely dry and have limited rainfall. We do, however, expect that permaculture will play its part in the self sufficiency goal of the Village, which is in a region that receives rainfall in two seasons a year, most of which evaporates or runs off, eroding the landscape.

Finances are required in order to achieve the following:

Construction, which includes

- Buildings**
- Water tanks**
- Wells**
- Culverts**
- Houses**
- Classrooms**
- Community hall**
- Police Post for 6**
- Guest House**



Construction of the Police Post

Farming

After completion of the first phase of the project, the Village will need to buy household materials such as blankets, mattresses, curtains, lamps, furniture and everything else that goes with getting a home ready for new occupants.

Farm implements and other tools will also need to be purchased.



Fr. Angelo D'Agostino, Founder and Medical Director



We were privileged to have the First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, Mrs. Lucy Kibaki officially open Nyumbani Village, Kwa Mutonga, Kenya.

Production Team: Leah Musili (Reporter)
dflowers2004@yahoo.com +254 735 361995

Marie-Annick Gachechek (Editor)
gachechek@yahoo.com +254 735 661580

A. Kariuki Kiragu (Project Director)
quelago@yahoo.co.uk +254 735 284501