

give a girl a chance snapshots

A Femenza International newsletter

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Zachary Taylor Orphanage



In October 2009 the dormitories of Zachary Taylor Orphanage burned down. Zachary Taylor Orphanage provides a home for 125 children in Kisii, Kenya, housing girls and boys who have been orphaned, mostly due to AIDS/HIV. The fire left the children with no place to sleep and only the clothes they were wearing during the night. Fortunately none of the children were badly hurt, but it was clear that *Give a Girl a Chance* needed to step in to help, and by mid-November we were able – through the many generous responses from our donors – to raise US\$12,000 in emergency funding, which provided, beds, mattresses, clothing, mosquito nets, sheets, bedding and other essentials.

In late November 2009, a team from Femenza, including staff members of *Give a Girl A Chance*, visited the Zachary Taylor Orphanage. After being shown around the burnt dormitories, they were shown the two small classrooms which have been converted into temporary dormitories, with all the mattresses and blankets that had been purchased through



the donations from GGC. It was clear that the children are still quite traumatized, but the teachers and Chief Josiah, Dr Enos (the Chief's son) and his wife Judy, and Chief Josiah's amazing mother (who is in her nineties), are doing a fantastic job of keeping the school going, and doing their best to maintain the dignity of the children under very difficult circumstances.

The GGC team then saw where the children are currently sleeping. Two classrooms, one for the girls, and one for the boys, have been converted into dormitories, with the mattresses covering the entire floor space, and the children sleeping two or three to a mattress. At the moment there is not enough room for all the mattresses, so some of them are in storage along with blankets. During the team's visit, a graduation ceremony for some of the younger children took place, and Elizabeth Hamill, GGC's Chair, publicly thanked a young boy named Victor for his courage in helping get the children out of the fire. Later in December we received some lovely thank you letters from the children at the Orphanage.



Next Steps for the Orphanage



The next step towards improving the difficult situation for the children at the orphanage will be the rebuilding of the Dormitories. *Give a Girl a Chance* has decided to assist this year and is trying to raise the US\$31,160, that is needed to build proper dormitories that include separate washrooms for the girls and boys.



The children's washroom.

When the team was in Kisii in March and April, several meetings took place with the staff of Zachary Taylor, to look at the requirements for rebuilding the dormitories and evaluate the accountability of the emergency funding. The emergency funding was handled to our great



satisfaction, with every shilling properly accounted for, and an architect had already drawn up a plan for new dormitories.

What is next, of course, is to raise the funds to start building! Many ideas are already on the go, but of course your help is more than welcome! A group of young people in Kenya have expressed their willingness to help as well, by using their skills as musicians and dancers to help raise funds in Nairobi, and the GGC team is working out a plan to make that happen. ☸

— *Janny Slagman and Dana Bjerregaard*

Lionella



Lionella is a refugee from Burundi living in Nairobi, Kenya. Alongside of Rwanda, Burundi went through a civil war of tribal ethnic cleansing in the early 1990s.

Femienza met Lionella a few years back whilst visiting UNILAC University and have been supporting her to go to college and learn some IT skills. Her dream is to be able to go back to her home country of Burundi and take Femienza there and share it with others.

It is amazing to know such a young woman with huge hopes and dreams to be fulfilled. Here

is an excerpt from an interview with her in 2007:

“I came here in 1995, and came with both my parents and my siblings. But due to the kind of life we are living here, we were struggling, and it was not easy for my parents to get a job. My dad had to go back to Burundi. But when the war broke in 1993, in my country, there was some terrible things that I don't remember, but I remember we went first to the Congo, and then things got worse there. We went to Tanzania, for a short time, and then from there we went back to Burundi, and then came here.”

The struggle Lionella is referring to is the fact of being a refugee in Kenya. Although it has offered some refuge, the kinds of human services available in the West are not available in developing countries, and further, being a refugee is like being a second-class citizen. Jobs are not easy to come by, even for most Kenyans, and as a refugee, they are very far and few between, and it costs a lot of money just to get a work permit from the government. So, it is not an easy life being a refugee in Kenya.

What is incredible about Lionella is her drive to overcome the obstacles. What is also incredible is that she has huge hopes and dreams to want to help others less fortunate than herself. It is amazing the resiliency of the human spirit—that a young woman can move on and want to be of account, and find a way forward towards improving her life, not just by helping herself, but by striving to help others as well. ☸

—*Elizabeth Hamill*

The Young Ambassadors of Give a Girl a Chance

In Feminenza North America there is a newly forming group of young people who have taken up the mission of GGC. It is truly inspiring to witness them as they share their excitement about the idea of helping others. They are now known as the 'Young Ambassadors' of GGC.

Leah Wiser of South Florida, with the help of her twin sister Rebecca, were motivated by their desire to find a service-related project. When they heard of the GGC *Brightness of Life* bracelet project, they were excited about the prospect of helping out other young girls in far off places. They realized how lucky they were to have the opportunity of an education, and by selling the GGC bracelets and raising money, they could help others to have this very same chance in life.

They started with friends and family, and were soon able to find other young people, teachers and staff members at their school who were willing to purchase the bracelets. Soon, other young girls were inspired and they too began to sell bracelets and create awareness about GGC. Another South Florida girl invited all her friends and their mothers for a luncheon and bracelet party at her home.

Leah and Rebecca have been invited to speak to schoolmates about this project and promote the idea of service in the world. They will be putting together

a plan to reach other young people, all over North America, and growing 'The Young Ambassadors' into a large team of helpers.

The concept of helping others is spreading through Schools, Synagogues and Churches and we are proud that GGC will be working alongside these young people to offer hope and assistance for women. It is important to the Young Ambassadors to create awareness about the plight of women and girls around the world, and to let others know that it is up to each one of us to do our part to help.

One day Leah and Rebecca hope to go to Africa and meet the young women who benefit from GGC.

If you know of any young people that would want to be part of this endeavor and help to release the brilliance of the future, please contact us at:

ggc.info@giveagirlachance.org

—Lisa Marcus



Cash for Cards

The company I work for has quite a family nature to it. One of the ways this is expressed is to give a birthday card to each staff member, signed by everyone, and present it to them at their birthday morning tea. Even their spouse gets a birthday card!

A couple of years ago, I realised that we were spending several hundred dollars per annum on commercially printed cards. Being an avid crafter, I asked if it would be alright to supply handcrafted birthday cards as a fundraiser for *Give a Girl a Chance*. As the company also supports a variety of charitable organisations, the CEO kindly gave his approval.

The amount raised is small—just a few hundred dollars each year—but it's enough to fund the *Give a Girl a Chance* website, with the rest put aside to contribute to larger projects when needed.

If you or your company needs cards, then this is an enjoyable, easy fundraiser you could consider. For more information, please contact us at:

ggc.info@giveagirlachance.org

—Catherynne Mattar



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