



Change is happening



A look at a classroom in Kitui catering to a special group of students

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to another edition of Kusini.

I have a feeling that in some point in our lives we've all come across the famous line: 'disability is not inability'. Not the most original quote to introduce to our Kusini readers but one that is proven time and again, as you will see in the story shared by Innocent Muhumunza, a VSO volunteer from Uganda as he discovers the high level of resourcefulness of persons with disabilities in Isiolo, Eastern Kenya.

Julius Ssenabulya, also from Uganda and serving as a VSO volunteer in Vanuatu tells us about the challenge of not having policies in place that protect the rights of people living with or perceived to be living with HIV and AIDS in this part of the world; and how he has led in the development of a HIV workplace policy at his placement organisation. And if you're thinking, "Where on earth is Vanuatu?" we've taken care of that. Read about these beautiful islands in the South Pacific Ocean and the unique culture of the inhabitants.

Our cover story takes us through the journey of positive change happening in a special classroom in Kitui, Eastern Kenya. Sandy Klos, a VSO volunteer from the U.S. tells us why the change she has witnessed in the lives of deafblind students is rewarding and inspiring. What appears to be a 'small' change in one student speaks volumes – you'll see why when you read about it.

'A day in the life of a volunteer' is turning out to be my favourite Kusini section. In this edition, Rachel Bannerman takes us through her adventurous day-at-work which includes piki riding with a passenger, delivering loaves and biscuits and visits to shops and schools. It's also interesting to learn why various professionals opt to take the volunteering route. A VSO volunteer from Kenya serving in North West Namibia and a returned volunteer from the Netherlands show us why.

Happy reading!

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New Staff Profile

Maureen Oduori joined the VSO Jitolee team as Project Coordinator – ISL (Improved Sustainable Livelihoods) in May 2010.

Maureen is working on empowering marginalised women in Eastern and Coast provinces to ensure sustainable livelihoods through development of

small enterprises that are linked to business development and micro financial service providers.

Previously, Maureen was working with one of VSO Jitolee's partners in Western Kenya as a Business Development Officer where she coordinated an Economic Development Programme for 4 years.

Her previous experience entailed developing and overseeing implementation of Enterprise Development Strategies targeting the poor and marginalised micro and small entrepreneurs.

Karibu to the VSOJ family!



The views expressed in the Kusini Newsletter are not necessarily those of VSO. Share your stories with us; send an email to: boka.nyachieo@vsoint.org
For more information on volunteering, partnering with VSO Jitolee or if you would like to make a donation please visit our website: www.vsojitolee.org

ON CHANGE

“ I am a volunteer working with Sense International, East Africa, which is an NGO that advocates for the deafblind, double sensory handicaps in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

In my time here, I've found that things happen slowly when it comes to addressing the needs of handicapped children. In the United States, parents are vocal about the rights of their children to get a good education. It is the parents who, in the past, went to court to demand quality appropriate education for their children with disabilities. But here in East Africa, the story is quite different. Historically, handicapped children were seen as shameful, a sign of a curse, something to be hidden, or left to die.

The right to education for children was and in some areas, is still considered a foreign right, imposed by the outside world. Parents and grandparents are often not educated; there are no books in the homes, except possibly the Bible because in Kenya, the Education for All campaign has not reached into the rural and most remote regions. Even with the existence of public schools and free primary education, the cost of uniforms and books is often out of reach of the families who live on a subsistence basis, living off their land, depending on government handouts of food when there is drought or flood. There is no transportation to school, children must walk many kilometres, and children, especially girls, are expected to do the chores when they return from school.

This situation poses a major block for children with disabilities - when the brightest and the most able of children are not able to get an education, the idea of sending a disabled child to school becomes an even more foreign concept to many families in East Africa.

Education of children who are both visually impaired and hearing impaired is a very specialized type of education. The teachers require special training to know how to reach the child. They require special types of classroom materials, costly ones. The cost of transportation to special schools is prohibitive, as is the cost of boarding

fees.

However, I'm happy to share that there is change happening - the special classrooms are growing in number and so are the students.

When I first arrived in Kenya I went to visit one such classroom in Kitui, a town in the Eastern province, about 3 hours by bus ride from Nairobi. The classroom had been established in a school for the deaf about two years previously. The teacher in charge of the class had been a teacher for the blind. The other two teachers had completed a course on teaching

blocks, a few balls, stuffed animals, a rough pegboard, some beads, and the remnants of a battery powered electric guitar that the children had enjoyed, saved for the memory of the pleasure it once provided the children, were the only materials available in the classroom.

In 2009, Sense International provided funding to equip the classroom and as part of my role at the school, I had the responsibility of ensuring that the funds went toward obtaining the appropriate teaching materials and equipment for the special class. I purchased various materials and



Student exploring a tactile board with various textures

the deafblind that had recently been introduced at the Kenya Institute for Special Education (KISE). The three teachers and two aides took care of ten children. Many of the children had stayed home until the ages of 9, 10 and 12 before ever attending school. A few were totally deaf, a few totally blind, the rest with some minimal ability to see and hear. The limited nature of the children's previous interaction with the outside world was evident in their physical postures. One child squatted on the floor constantly. Another, weak throughout her body, lay on the table as she fingered the limited materials the teachers had. There was no paper, and only pale coloured pencils for the children to draw with. Plastic

learning supplies such as paper, markers, crayons, paints, shape sorters, white boards, shape sorters, activity centres, wooden and plastic puzzles, graduated rings, yarn, beads, dolls, picture cards, cars and trucks and plastic animals. I also painted the tables and chairs in bright colours as this would help stimulate the learners with some residual vision.

The teachers at the school did not have any previous experience of contenting with so many supplies, at one time, and it was up to me to unpack, sort and organise the materials into a storage cabinet before the school reopened from the August school break. By the time the students arrived



Students exploring various new materials

for the last school term in September, the classroom was bright and inviting and the supplies were sorted and ready for use. Presented with the new materials to explore, the children were fascinated and smiled happily, feeling new objects and being shown how they work.

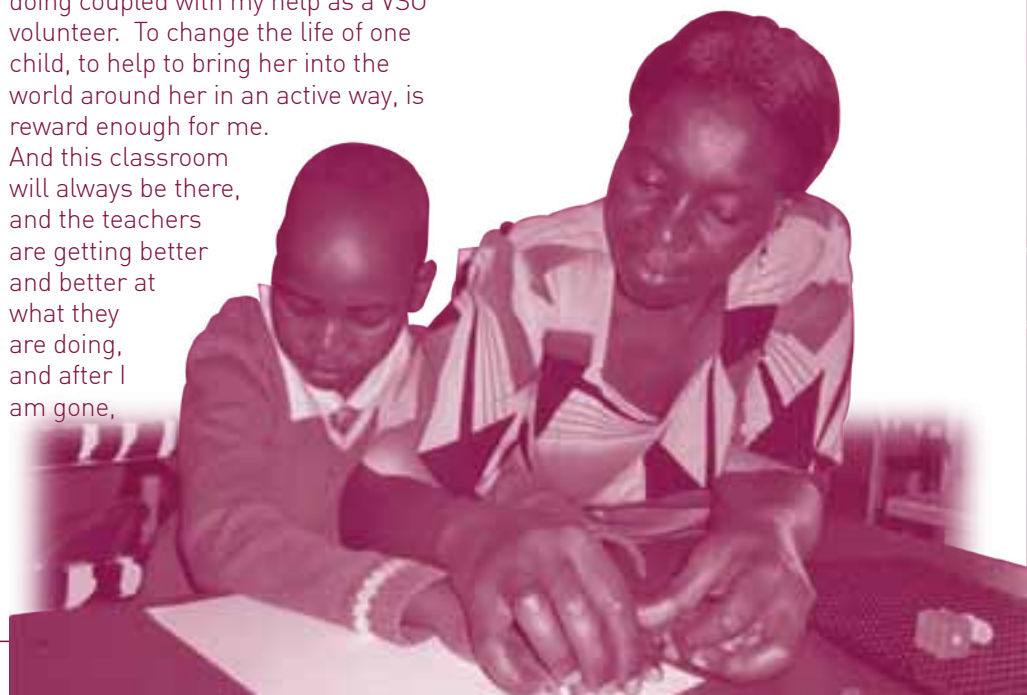
At the beginning of the January term I embarked on making tactile materials for lessons. The teachers and I sanded and painted wooden blocks and assembled a tactile board with different textures for the children to explore and match, to interest the children in learning with their hands. The reward came when Mutheu, a child who had spent the previous day squatting under the table, felt a corner of the tactile board, smiled happily, and ran to drag her chair next to the board to settle in and explore the new textures.

The teachers and the learners are busier and accomplishing more now with bright and stimulating materials. Two new teachers were assigned from the graduating class at KISE. Sense International provided consultation to the teachers on how to support language development. The new teachers assigned to the classroom said that it made their jobs easier to have good materials to work with and the energy levels in the classroom grew. There are currently 14 students in the classroom.

The teachers have designed some tactile letter blocks from wood scraps and upholstery tacks and made them themselves. The teachers will spend

their annual budget for materials from the Ministry of Education for the things that get used up, as basic equipment for beginning learning is already available. Sense International has had to provide funds for the teachers to go to the homes of some of these children in order to get them to attend school. Half the children have not been able to pay boarding fees, causing a financial crisis for the school, which does not want to turn them away. The children also arrived without the kits of toothpaste, soap, and socks and essential things that they need; it is a constant struggle against poverty and lack of basic resources within the school system to ensure the children get a good education.

On the bright side, I see a change in the students every time I go to Kitui. Their lives are changing, because of the work that Sense International is doing coupled with my help as a VSO volunteer. To change the life of one child, to help to bring her into the world around her in an active way, is reward enough for me. And this classroom will always be there, and the teachers are getting better and better at what they are doing, and after I am gone,



How is it different teaching a visually impaired student or hearing impaired student from a deafblind student?

Teaching a deafblind student is very different from teaching a deaf student or a blind student. Deaf students can benefit from sign language interpreters or other visual enhancements to the classroom. Blind students can hear what the teacher says and can easily take notes in Braille if necessary. Deafblind students, however, are unable to use either sense to make up for the other. Unless the student has strong residual sight or hearing, you may need to approach teaching him or her completely differently.

Students who are deafblind need special conditions and accommodations in the classroom in order for educators to effectively address their unique needs. Vision and hearing play such a critical role in learning, establishing relationships and mobility. When these two senses are impacted, classroom staff working and interacting with these students need first to be aware of and sensitive to this impact, and second to identify strategies to respond appropriately to it.

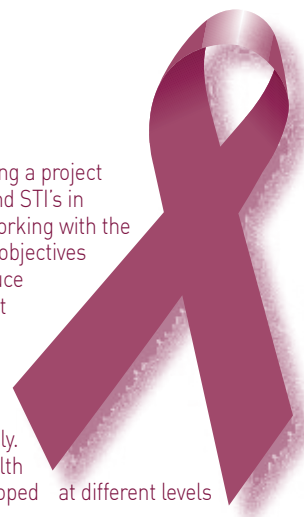
For more information on the fundamental classroom conditions to enhance learning for deafblind students go to:

- <http://www.brighthub.com/education/special/articles/57659.aspx#ixzz0sDouuORV>
- <http://www.cadbs.org/fundamental-classroom-conditions-to-enhance-learning-experiences-for-students-who-are-deaf-blind/>

their work will continue. That pleases me. I am grateful to VSO and to Sense International for the opportunity to affect the lives of these few children, and to contribute to making a place for more volunteers to come after I have gone home again. I believe that the Kitui classroom will never be the same again!"

By Sandy Klos, VSO volunteer working with Sense International, East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

HIV – A Safety Issue



Julius Ssenabulya, a VSO volunteer, leads a safety and health campaign at Vanuatu Family Health Association. Vanuatu Family Health Association is a charity and pioneer provider of adolescent and youth-friendly reproductive health services in Vanuatu. The services provided by the association include HIV & STIs screening; family planning contraception; counseling; treatment of minor illnesses and community capacity building. Despite numerous interventions to respond to HIV threat, reports indicate that absence of policies that protect the rights of People living with or perceived to be living with HIV & AIDS in Vanuatu still a great challenge. Stigma and discrimination related to HIV is cited as one of the hurdles in addressing prevention and care issues. Lack of a coherent HIV policy to protect the rights of People living with or affected by HIV creates room for violation of human rights.

respect for human rights. VSO has been implementing a project dubbed "Strengthening National Response to HIV and STI's in Vanuatu". The project is funded by AUSAID. VSO is working with the Government and other Civil society actors to realise objectives in the National Strategic Plan that include: 1) To reduce community vulnerability to HIV and STI, 2) implement a comprehensive intervention of treatment, care and support for people infected and affected by HIV; 3) create a policy and social environment in which an effective HIV response can flourish, 4) manage and implement the National Plan effectively and efficiently. The placement of a volunteer at Vanuatu Family Health Association demonstrates that policies can be developed at different levels to bring positive change to the society.

As the Advocacy & Network Advisor, Julius led the process of development and launch of a HIV workplace policy for the association. The policy was officially launched by the Director General for health, Mr. Mark Bebe who represented the Honorable Minister for Health, among the other dignitaries present were; The Police Commissioner, Colonel Joshua Bong; National AIDS Committee Chairperson, Chief Hendon Kalsakao; representatives from VSO, New Zealand High Commission, Ministry of Health, the Church, and Non government organizations. With support from the association, Julius introduced the HIV workplace policy as a practical step to promote prevention, non-discrimination and to protect the rights of staff and their families. There is optimism that stakeholders will embrace the initiative to protect their people in order to strengthen HIV response in the country. At the Vanuatu Family Health Association, workplace health and safety for employees and clients is an everyday affair and a core value. The policy aims to prevent possible infections and transmission of HIV, create mechanisms to care for those that may be infected or affected by the disease with major focus on

Contributing Writers: Julius Ssenabulya, VSO Volunteer from Uganda serving in Vanuatu and George Awalla, VSO Jitolee - International Placements Manager (HIV & AIDS)



The police commissioner receives copies of HIV Workplace policy and advocacy strategy from the Director General for Health as Mrs. Whelma Kennedy of VSO & the Executive Director for VFHA looks on.

SNAPSHOT OF VANUATU

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands with a unique blend of intact tribal communities, resorts, beaches and geography ranging from accessible volcanoes to pristine underwater environments, offering unique and memorable experiences. Vanuatu is located in the South Pacific Ocean about 1,750 kilometres east of northern Australia. With a population of approximately 221,000 (from the Vanuatu Statistics Bureau 2006), Vanuatu boasts 113 distinct languages and innumerable dialects. This makes it one of the most culturally diverse countries on earth. This amazing diversity is a result of 3,000 years of sporadic immigration from many Pacific countries. Although most settlers arrived from Melanesia, the larger built, lighter skinned Polynesians also settled in the islands. As with all nations and peoples, over millennia these different groups came into both peaceful and violent contact, sometimes intermarrying and sometimes having losing their cultural identity to a more dominant group. Over the millennia, natural boundaries; large open stretches of water, dense jungle and mountainous terrain, isolated many groups, even from the same ethnic origins, from each other. And isolation bred not just warfare, but quite different, sophisticated societies and political systems.

Like most traditional societies, Vanuatu's economies are based on produce from the land. Staple foods are mostly root crops; yam, taro and manioc. Seasonal fruits like breadfruit are



important mainstays. In most areas a portion of the jungle is simply cleared to plant crops. However in places where there is plenty of water, taro is grown in complex terraces hand built from earth and rocks. Pigs are a mainstay of the economy not just as food but as a form of money and prestige. Because of a long history of inter island and inter village trading, many in Vanuatu speak numerous languages. Since the arrival of Europeans, a lingua franca evolved. It's name, Bislama, derived from the Bech-der-mer (sea cucumber) traders. Essentially a phonetic form of English, with much simplified grammar, if it is listened to closely and spoken slowly, it can be understood by most English speaking people. For more on Vanuatu, got to: <http://vanuatu.travel/vanuatu/culture/vanuatu-culture.html>

MY LEAP OF FAITH - 'CAUSE LIFE WITHOUT SACRIFICE IS BOREDOM'

By Edith Ingutia, VSO Volunteer from Kenya serving in North West Namibia

My journey as a VSO Volunteer began way back in December 2007, I was an upcoming corporate executive living on the fast lane and enjoying life as most young people my age were doing. Being a single mom with a job in a nice area of Nairobi, I felt 'complete' until one day I asked myself: "What are the contributing factors to my success? Where do I come from? Have I given back to society enough of me except for donations in cash, food and clothes?" During this reflection I realised that my job had become routine and I decided that I wanted to do something different. I felt that it was time for me to take a risk - experience a simple lifestyle and understand why a person living in Kibera seemed to be much happier than I was, living in the so-called comfortable suburbia.

I shared these thoughts with friends and one day, while at a hair salon, I overheard another client telling the hairstylist about her experience in Croatia as a UNV (United Nations Volunteer). I got interested and she advised me to attend the IVD (International Volunteers Day) event the following week. On 5th December 2007, I distributed my resume to all the stands (booths) representing different organisations at the event. A week later VSO Jitolee responded positively and I was invited for an interview, which, I attended and was successfully selected as a VSO volunteer. However, two years down the line I had no placement; I became worried and wondered if I made the right choice. With support and reassurance from VSO Jitolee, my patience finally paid off and I was notified of VSO partner interests flowing in from Vanuatu, Philippines, Pakistan and Namibia. When the Namibia Placement became available, I did not hesitate, as it felt closer to home compared to the other countries. I was ready to take the leap of faith: leave my son for two long years and adjust to a simple life far away from home. On March 8th 2007, I kissed my sleeping son goodbye at three o'clock in the morning and 5 hours later I was in Namibia, the 'land of the brave' as it is commonly known, with a



Sunrise Orphanage children with Edith

rich and diverse culture and some of the most breathtaking landscapes that I had ever seen. I was also surprised at how modern the cities and towns are, with tarmac roads and modern shopping malls – quite different from the 'poor' and quite clearly, wrong image that I previously had of the country. The first week, at my placement 500 kilometres out of the big city, was all about induction and being introduced to the community during various meetings. Working at Welwitschia Development Trust proved to be quite challenging for the first six months. The NGO's lack of basic administrative equipment was a major obstacle in completing my tasks as was the language barrier since the staff spoke mostly in their local dialect and spoke very little English. I had to learn to simplify my speech so as to communicate and as the community saw me as a stranger, it took time for them to open up and work with me to meet my placement objectives as a VSO volunteer. Thankfully, having other VSO Volunteers in the areas has been helpful as we socialize and give each other moral support by sharing challenges and possible solutions and coping mechanisms.

I was recruited as a Business Development Advisor and together with my local team staff we oversee three huge conservancies in Kunene South Area. Our aim is for the conservancies to become sustainable. With the support of donor funds, we run various projects with the conservancies, offer technical assistance and advice the conservancies on different ways they can obtain income for their allocated Wildlife Quota. We negotiate joint venture partnerships; offer environmental education sessions in



Photo session after a week long training Traditional Authority Leaders and Conservancy Members held at Ombinda Lodge from 7th-11th June ,2010 on Good Governance and Disciplinary Codes as per Namibia Labour Act.



Top: Field Trip with Ministry of?cials on CPP Project Below: National Workshop on HWC

schools; support women groups in coming up with viable business projects and we empower young people with agriculture as a means of making a decent living and ensuring food security. We also offer assistance to orphaned and vulnerable children robbed of their parents by HIV & AIDS and participate in human rights policies advocacy for the marginalized; disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; sexual, gender based and domestic violence that is, unfortunately, on the increase in the Kunene area.

Most recently, for example, we founded an LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Trans- gender) Forum that caters for this target population in Khorixas, as a new initiative to fight against HIV & AIDS, stigma and violence from bisexual males. The community is warming up to them and the forum became members of the Umbrella Body (LGBT Network in Namibia) on 20th June 2010. Alongside my official VSO role, I have ended up engaging in community advocacy, good governance and lots, more which has expanded my knowledge in spheres I had only dreamt of. I can say that I am now 'a jack of all trades': I know more about conservation and conservancies and when I get home I intend to participate in initiatives that protect and support environment conservation, such as the Lewa (Safaricom) Marathon. I have also gained more experience in facilitating and conducting trainings and on the social end, I have wine and dined with the mighty and humble of the Namibian population...what more could I ask for? Come join my world and be a volunteer through VSO, be that change that you always wanted. All you need is your skills, passion, commitment and lots of faith to take that leap. I came, i saw, I conquered so will you."





Just a reminder that we all come from the same planet: The vital importance of global education

We've recently celebrated 40 years since we humans first landed on the moon. The incredible photographs of earth as seen from the moon – a beautiful blue sphere, hanging delicately in the black void of space – continue to be a powerful reminder of how fragile our planet is. They also send a strong message of how the fate of everyone living on this earth is bound together. As a VSO volunteer in Kenya you may feel a long way from home. But when you see those pictures you remember that at least you are still living on the same planet!

So how has the world changed since Neil Armstrong made that "giant leap for mankind"? In 1969 there were only 3.7 billion people living on earth, now there are over 6 billion people and predicted to reach 9 billion by 2050. In 1969 the Internet was not to be heard of for another 20 years. The computers in Apollo 11's moon lander had about the same computing power of a digital watch today. Now 1.5 billion people use the Internet and 4.1 billion people have mobile phones.

In 1969 the world was divided both between communism and capitalism and between colonial powers and newly independent developing countries like Kenya. Today, with the rapid expansion of capitalism there is more international trade than ever. This means that economies are becoming interlinked in a way never seen before. All of these trends – the population explosion and the rapid expansion of information technology, international trade, capitalism and democracy mean that people from different countries are interacting with each other more than ever before. This is what is commonly known as the process of globalisation. And with these changes there are great opportunities as well as challenges

for countries like Kenya. Many African countries hope to follow the lead of India, China and other Asian economies who have already achieved rapid economic development and lifted many millions out of poverty by supplying goods to more open international markets and selling "outsourced" services, such as customer service call centres over the Internet. In East Africa, Kenya is leading the way in this process with its new, under-sea, fibre optic, Internet connection. However, the process of globalisation also poses many challenges for Kenya. For example, industrialisation of agriculture means Kenya can now make money by exporting flowers and vegetables to Europe. But it also uses up a lot of water needed by local communities and causes damaging pollution.

At the same time rapid economic growth around the world is using up scarce resources and carbon dioxide pollution is causing damaging climate change that threatens to cost many millions of peoples homes, lives and livelihoods. Meanwhile the expansion of global capitalism has caused the rise of powerful multinational corporations, which are increasingly unaccountable to governments and are in some cases able to exploit workers and the environment without fear of punishment.

In short, capitalist development often creates massive and damaging inequalities between the rich and poor, men and women, persons with disabilities and the non-disabled, and is often devastating to the environment on which we depend for our survival. The challenge is to promote economic growth in which everyone can participate and benefit from, and which does not cause serious harm to the environment. VSO volunteers are in a great position to address these issues because we can help the communities where we work understand how these global trends are

affecting them. We can also use our first-hand experience to help our people back home (UK) to understand more about Kenya, how it is being affected by global trends and what our own governments could do to address these issues. Specifically we can ask our governments:

- to support action on climate change that is fair to developing countries that are suffering most from climate change but contributed least to cause it. Rich countries should make greater cuts in their carbon dioxide emissions than poor countries and give money to help developing countries like Kenya adapt to climate change.
- to make trade rules fairer so that producers in Kenya and other African countries are able to get a decent price for their goods in international markets.
- to encourage multi-national corporations to create decent jobs in developing countries and to stop them exploiting workers, natural resources and the environment.
- to give more aid to developing countries which promotes equitable development for everyone and will reduce the gap between the rich and poor by, for instance, investing in health and education; funding HIV & AIDS prevention and treatment and increasing the participation of marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities and women in aid projects.

The moon landings not only gave us a powerful reminder that we all live on the same planet but also demonstrated the incredible achievements we humans can make when we work together. Truly sustainable and equitable development could be the greatest of those achievements."

Peter Hulme - VSO Volunteer from the UK DPO Capacity Building Advisor National Council for Persons with Disabilities Nairobi, Kenya

A day in the life of a volunteer

Thursday, 18th March 2010



Today we have planned to visit several retailers and schools in the local vicinity to sell the idea that the public and children want our loaves. So, I left Homa Bay yesterday, where I live, for the 40km journey to Onjinyo, a small village centre in Rangwe where my project is based. This journey takes an hour on my piki piki so bright eyed and I make off at 7:30 am. It's a nice journey on good dirt road and thankfully it has not rained in the last week so I won't have to ride through the mud pools along the way and thankfully I'll turn up in a clean and decent state unlike previous times when I've had to take a shower and make a change of clothes when I arrive.

We have arranged 4 school visits and 3 centres and one of the Mamas and I are taking samples of our loaves to these places on the back of my piki piki. Aside from one of the schools I don't know where any of the other schools and centres are. Even if I'd been there before, I'd never find them again or be able to get back from them on my own. Quinta Adongo, the Mama, is in her mid thirties and has two children and has been a member of Kinda Women Group for 6 years. She's offered to attend the meetings with me today meaning she's had to leave their youngest child at home with her husband (the older one is away at school), something she doesn't do very often.

At 10:30am, with a bag of 12 loaves and a

packet of biscuits for our prospective retailers to sample, we set off for our first meeting in Niawitha town. "It's not far away" I'm told. Great! I don't mind riding with a passenger since I don't do it that often, though I'm not very confident with it either, especially when I'm taking a route I've never been on before.

Niawitha turns out to be quite 'far away'. It's approximately 15km away on some good and some not-so-great road. It is a big centre – lots of shops and shopkeepers for us to speak to. Unfortunately as it's Friday, the main market day, a lot of the shops are closed as the keepers have taken their wares to Oyugis (the largest town in the area). A few shops are open though so armed with biscuits and bread we head for the first shop. We meet and introduce ourselves to Jane. Handing over one loaf and a couple of biscuits, which she opens and starts to sample. She then brings out a loaf of Baraka bread which like ours is also a 200g loaf and goes for 15 shillings, is twice as costly as ours and looks more appealing. Oh dear! Fallen at the first hurdle. I think to myself that it must be the yeast they use. Thankfully for us, she agrees to take biscuits. We tell her we can start supplying from next week and thank her for her time.

Each week at the bakery a different mama is responsible for the management of

the

bakery and baking the bread.

I've realised that depending on whose is in charge, we may have beautiful looking and tasting loaves or not so attractive, dense bread. Unfortunately this week the mama who bakes the not so attractive kind is in charge. We then move on to the next opened shop and, the man behind the counter seems more receptive than the first shopkeeper. I see he also has some Baraka loaves behind him but Quinta is a good sales lady and explains our loaves are 'rich' in vitamin A due to the 'high' content of sweet potato flour as has our biscuits. Sold. He's happy to take both bread and biscuits and can we supply from Monday.

The third and fourth shop also give good results. Things are looking up, we're in business, and with only a few shops opened.

Quinta and I agree to come back again between Monday and Thursday the following week, when all shops will be open and we can





the school and see how they'd feel about us supplying the school canteen; so we head out to see the principal. He's not available but we are invited to meet with the deputy principal in her office. A nice woman, she seems eager that we leave more than one loaf so her colleagues are also able to sample our bread. She's had bread from Kinda Bakery before and has really liked it and seems quite keen but it's not a decision she can make on her own. We leave three loaves, a few biscuits and exchange details. At 1pm, Quinta and I move to the next centre of Manyatta. To get there we make the 15km ride back to Onjinyo, past our start point and on a further 1.5km to our destination.

Here we're successful with one café, 2 shops and a primary school kiosk all interested in either biscuits, loaves or both. We're really short on samples now as we head to the third and final centre. It has to be the final as with only three loaves left and 4 biscuits we can't do much more. On the way to Onanda, we pass Luore Secondary School. I've arranged for Quinta to take a few samples of our loaves to the Principal next Tuesday, as he's unavailable today. I'm pretty sure we'll have success with this school but like the other schools, and rightfully so, they want to sample our goods before they make a commitment. This place could be great for business, they're very close (3km) and there are over 250 students at the school and the school has a food programme. If we could supply them it could make up the bulk of our income.

Quinta tells me to stop abruptly at the school. She knows the owner of a little shop opposite and we should try her. So with one loaf and biscuit in a bag we head to her. With the school opposite Grace, the shop owner, knows that the biscuits will be popular and probably the bread too so she agrees to a trial period and we exchange our details. Right, it's now 2:00, the sun's high, it's hot and I'm now eager to get end the day. Onanda isn't too far away. Just another 2km heading west and so we go. We enter a courtyard style centre and head for one of the 2 shops opened. The lady behind the counter tells us she normally sells United bread but they don't deliver every day and if we could guarantee a daily supply, she'd sell for us. We tell her we can and move on to the next and final shop. Mara is the keeper. We make our sales pitch and give her our final loaf. She seems to like the small amount she tastes but tells us it's her husband that makes the decision about stock and he's not around. Quinta asks to take her number but she tells us she doesn't

have a phone but will take our numbers. I think we've lost this one but that's okay. A possible 10 out of 11 is not bad going at all.

Now the really hard work has to start. We have several orders to fulfil starting Monday. Thank God we've spent the last few months preparing for this. It's almost 3pm by the time we get back to the bakery and I'm hot, sweaty and quite satisfied with our outcome. A good few hours work. We've already had several meeting and training sessions on all aspects of running this venture. There's Rose and Perez in charge of hard cash and procurement, Quinta and Jane - book/record keeping, Elizabeth - transports, logistics... everything is in place and ready to go. I spend the next hour arranging an immediate meeting with the women of Kinda Women Group for the following day to inform them of our progress and that production will be starting immediately! I feel things are moving at warp speed but this is what we've been working towards so it's 'feet in first' we go. After our meeting it's time to ride home. Forty kilometres return trip to Homa Bay and Lake Victoria.

Once I reach home I realise I have no water or food so I drop off my overnight bag and head into town. After a light bite to eat I visit the town's wholesalers to pick up my pack of drinking water, 12 1.5litre bottles, equipping myself for Homa Bay, known for its water shortages and power blackouts. I head home again, shower, change, turn the computer on and start to collate the information we've gathered. This has actually been an extremely productive day. For a task that had been assigned to one of the male members of the group several weeks ago and just never seemed to get done, we've managed to visit about two thirds of the locations around and all with positive results. By the time I get the computer work finished, it's around 5:30 and so I finally call it a day. My next door neighbour, a volunteer with the Japanese organisation JIKA is not around to visit with today so it's an evening with the internet, radio and a few phone calls to other volunteer friends."

By Rachel Bannerman, VSO volunteer and Organisational Development & Marketing Officer with Kinda Women Group (KWB), a CBO based in Rangwe, Homa Bay.

WESTERN EDUCATION ADVOCACY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (WEAEP)

Western Education Advocacy Empowerment Program in Kakamega, Kenya (WEAEP) is a result of a women literacy center, which begun in 2003 with the aim of women empowerment, with a specific focus on families' sustainability, increasing life skills, education promotion, healthy living, and shelter maintenance. WEAEP, through the implementation the R2L approach to peer education, are fully engaged in HIV programming in the workplace as well as within the wider Kakamega community.

VSO Jitolee, with technical assistance by the National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE) provide training and financial resources for the development of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials. WEAEP produce IEC materials that have a visual impact and create behavior change. The specific objectives that the VSOJ and NOPE training intends to convey through IEC material development includes:

- Increasing the adoption and continued use of safer sex practices
- Promoting visits to clinics treating sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and opportunistic infections - including increasing the demand for VCT, for MTCT prevention services, and for Increasing the adoption and continued use of safer drug-injecting practices
- Stimulating dialogue and discussion on risk, risk behavior, risk settings
- Reducing stigma and discrimination for those living with HIV & AIDS

WEAEP used the HIV Workplace, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice survey, carried out in 2009 by NOPE to develop the morale for peer educators to know their status and know how best to support the people within their communities on issues related to HIV & AIDS.

Currently WEAEP has submitted proposals for funding on new HIV & AIDS programs that they plan to implement. Additionally, they have developed concept proposal aimed at providing services to HIV positive women as well as ambitions to develop a VCT clinic and involve themselves in future AIDS Population Health Integrated Assistance (APHIA) partnerships.

When asked how the R2L training had impacted both the peer educators, personally and WEAEP as an organization, one peer educator shared: "Before the implementation of peer education at the workplace, we were uncomfortable talking about sexual health at work; but now people can freely talk about sex, condoms and things related to HIV".

Another peer educator shared her personal experience: "Before I was shy to talk about sex, now I am free to share and am creating a big impact and I'm able to counsel and guide friends and family. I have had the opportunity to share information with people that are (HIV) positive and people are now willing to share their status. One specific woman was positive and had a sick child, upon being educated she was referred to take the child for testing – and it was found out that the child was positive and is now taking drugs, and is healthier".

Another peer educator noted that she had become better able to identify service gaps in the community for HIV positive persons: "When I left the training, I realized that there is much stigma in the community and as a result I started a psychosocial group in October 2009, and we are currently linking people to the local Critical Care Center. We have 16 women and 14 HIV positive men in the psychosocial group. We provide information about accessing treatment and we are now looking for external support to increase the level of our service. After getting the VSO training, my eyes were opened to assist people in our community; as many were sick, but not sure what they are suffering from." When asked what prompted her to take on such an ambitious project outside of her regular job at WEAP, the peer educator confidently stated, "My goal is just to empower people living with HIV, so they can sustain themselves and live a productive and dignified life".

The Peer Educators also noted that, with the support of the management, they have developed a small farm on the grounds of WEAP. They supply food to persons living with HIV and also provide them farming skills to improve their livelihood.

WEAP peer indicators also conduct outreach projects at the workplace and in the community. – By Brian D. Wheeler, VSO Volunteer & Documentalist with National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE).



The RV Angle

Interview with Anique Van Der Putten – VSO volunteer from Netherlands who worked with Dzarino Community Based Organisation in Mtwapa, Coast Province of Kenya from October 2007 to April 2010.

Why did you decide to volunteer with VSO? I always wanted to do development work and I felt I was at a stage in my life that I could not only learn a lot from working abroad and about development work, but I also had something to offer in terms of work experience in business management which I had built up over the years. Looking back, it was the right assumption since I learned a lot from working at Dzarino but I could also contribute to the organisation. The balance was just right.

What was your official title at Dzarino? Organisational Capacity Builder.

What did that entail, what did you do exactly?

The project I was facilitating was Improved Sustainable Livelihood (ISL) for Women in Kenya. My main tasks included implementation of the ISL project at the partner organization; capacity building partner organization on new work processes; facilitating improvement of micro-finance products (credit, savings and insurance); monitoring and evaluation structures; developing human resource policies and structures with clear segregation of duties and performance indicators. In my role at Dzarino, I also facilitated capacity building in technical areas of enterprise development, including all aspects of product development and marketing; business planning and management; networking and building links between partners and relevant organisations.

On product development we started up a few projects to expose our women groups to new income generating activities and new markets. For example, we introduced making flip-flops, tie and dye as a material for producing handicrafts or use of mathenge tree bark to make ropes that are then used to make furniture.

You've since returned to the Netherlands and I know you donated your VSO 'coming home payment' to Dzarino, a total of about Ksh 200,000...what prompted you to make such a noble contribution?

(Laughs) Thank you for the compliment but I am not that noble. The donation was a joint contribution from a few friends and myself... it was not all mine. Like when I was in Holland for holiday, one of my friends set up a band, which they called Dzarino Band, and played in a bar to raise money. During the performance we raffled products from Kenya and we collected about 1200 Euro! It was awesome!

Besides the 200,000(Ksh) that went to Dzarino I used the rest of the grant for the

Flipflop project. I placed an order at Creative Alternatives, an organisation that we worked together with to set up the Flipflop project, to try and sell the Flipflop products in Holland. If sales pick up I will proceed to follow up on the project from Holland so that eventually the women affiliated to Dzarino can be included, alongside Creative Alternatives, to sell their products. I am also looking into the set up of more projects... but lets first see how it goes with the flipflop sandals.

Do you think you gained or learnt anything from your volunteering experience in Kenya? How has it translated or made a difference in your life back in the Netherlands?

Working for VSO and being placed at Dzarino has been the best experience I had ever on every level in my life. Everything was so different from the life I was used to back home. The fact that you are working so close together on a level that really shows you the complexity of development work is a great learning experience. Dzarino really showed me the ropes. They have so much experience, especially Mrs. Mutua, the Director at Dzarino, who was a great teacher for me. Next to that, VSO helped me to gain a bigger picture on the issues of development work. So yes I learned a lot. Also on the social side... to interact with so many different cultures and to learn how to get around in Kenya most certainly added to my personal growth.

I am now working in India as an interim project manager in IT. Regrettably it is not development work for the moment. However, because of my experience of working in a culture different from the Dutch culture, I have been able to address various communication problems with my colleagues in India. I have had the opportunity make my Indian and Dutch colleagues see things from both cultural points of view in order to work out solutions and work well together. This is most certainly a competency I learned working for VSO.

Would you do it again...would you re-volunteer? Why?

I most certainly would volunteer again if I had more financial occasion for it. Next time I would sign up for shorter assignments, which are specifically on organisational development. The projects are quite challenging and give opportunity to use your competences and learn new ones in an intricate environment.

Recently I found out that somebody I got to know when I just started working for Dzarino has re-volunteered. She helped me out a lot in the beginning to find my way in Mtwapa. It's wonderful she takes over my placement since I know she has a lot of experience. Dzarino is a great organisation and there is still a lot to do, for I only did the initial implementation of the project. I would like to wish her and Dzarino all the best.

CLOCKWISE: Members of the community during a training at Dzarino, Mrs. Mutua at the Dzarino office, Anique at her desk while at Dzarino, Mtwapa



RESOURCEFUL PERSONS with Disabilities

“I’ve been working with Isiolo Welfare Group of the Disabled (IWGD) since November 2009. In those 8 months I have interacted with the most resourceful people who, had I seen them at face value and noticed only the fact they had a disability, I would have missed out on learning about their inspiring life stories.

Case in point 1: Ms. Stella Ntoti:

Stella Ntoti, born in Meru is a forty six year old mother of two; a 15 year old daughter and a 6 year old son. She is a visually impaired lady with some of the finest skills in knitting that I have ever seen. She attended St. Lucy School for the Blind in Meru South where she completed her primary level education in 1976 and later joined Thika High School for the blind where she completed her O Levels in 1980. As is the unfortunate situation with many other Persons with Disabilities in Kenya, Stella experienced the challenge of obtaining productive employment until 1992 when she was employed as a telephone operator in Machakos Training Center for the Blind, a position she held till 1993.

In 1999 Stella joined Irene School for the Blind, for vocational training, where she acquired skills in knitting and graduated from the institute in 2002. She is currently self-employed as a knitter, a profession she has pursued with enthusiasm for the last 8 years. Stella works from her humble house in Checheles, in central Division of Isiolo District. Her main clients are primary schools and parents with primary school going children; for whom she knits school uniform sweaters and pullovers. Stella’s wish is to acquire space in the town center where she can expand her trade and provide training for other visually impaired persons and anyone else that would be interested in learning to knit.

Case in point 2: Mr. Paul Ekai.

Paul Ekai was born in Isiolo and is living with a physical disability following an unfortunate road accident. Like Stella, Paul had professional training in his trade; albeit in a somewhat different institution. An ex-convict, Paul underwent various trainings while serving his sentence in Kamiti Prison. He is trained in carpentry and upholstery, tailoring, creamery, brick laying, bakery among others.

Paul is especially proud of the chair on which H.E the president sits on in Parliament and the parliamentary wood work in the parliament building. Among Paul’s other works include the VIP Chairs in all the provinces of Kenya, coffee tables, side stools and sofa sets, wall units in office of the President and other 280 seats distributed in ministries. Paul desires to train fellow persons with disabilities, at NO COST if he is availed the necessary equipment and working space.

Case in point 3: Ms Fatuma Said

Fatuma is a physically challenged lady in her fifties and a professional tailor. Fatuma remembers a difficult and unhappy childhood when at one point, she was locked in a dark store room; a sad reality for many children with disabilities in the Kenyan society who are considered outcasts and are hidden from society. Fortunately, a social worker visited her house and eventually enabled Fatuma to attend a rehabilitation centre.

Fatuma does not have any formal education and learnt her trade as her mother’s apprentice. Tailoring has enabled Fatuma to

provide food for her family; educate her children and two siblings. Many of Fatuma’s customers have become her friends and with their support the excellent work she done for them has advertising for itself and has fueled her business.

In the short term she hopes to buy an additional sewing machine and employ someone who can help her increase her production thus increasing her sales and income. She has an ambition of building a house as a form of investment and security for the future of her children. Fatuma also hopes to expand her trade and offer training to persons with disabilities at no cost.

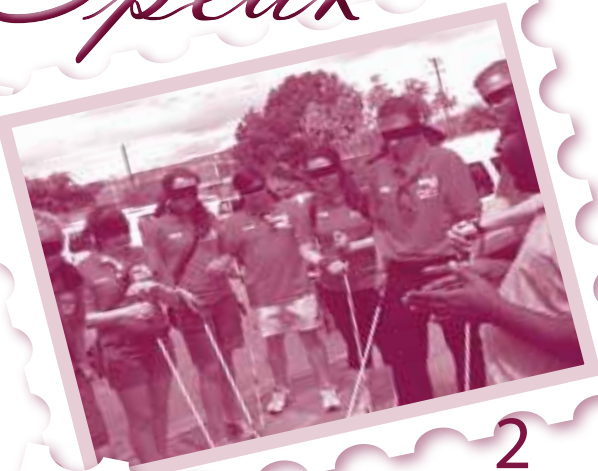
I find these resourceful persons underutilised and this presents an opportunity to find avenues for better engagement of their services for the benefit of many. It is for this reason that we, at IWGD, are eager to actively seek funding for IWGD in order to tap into these resources. We have, for example, presented a proposal to National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) Kenya for the development of an IT centre for persons with disabilities in Isiolo which when granted will be a good starting point for resourceful citizens such as those presented here.”

Story by Innocent Muhumuza, VSO volunteer working as a Programme Advisor with IWGD



Top: Stella Ntoti, busy at work on her knitting machine. Left: Elly Owuoti, Programme Coordinator of Isiolo Welfare Group of the Disabled with Fatma Said

Picture Speak



Pic 1 - Ten Roses and Escorts from the Rose of Tralee Festival (2009) visit Kenya Union of the Blind (KUB), the national organization of visually impaired persons in Kenya, on their way to Tanzania to make the Kilimanjaro trek.

Pic 2 - the trekkers were blindfolded and given a five minute lesson on 'how to use a cane' by KUB Executive Officer, Martin Kieti

Pic 3-5 - the trekkers experience life without sight at the KUB offices - climbing stairs to the KUB board room and using computers while blind folded

Pic 6 - KUB Board Chair, Dr. Chomba Wa Munyi shares on the history of KUB and the organisation's partnership with VSO Jitolee

Pic 7 - Tali Alexander (right), VSO volunteer from Canada listens to Irene Khasiru of KUB as she shares on the positive impact she's having on visually impaired youth, like herself, by training them on using computers at KUB.

Pic 8 - Margaret Mliwa, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) and Makena Mwobobia, VSO Jitolee Head of Programmes during the National Youth Volunteering Scheme (NYVS) evaluation process in Mombasa.

Pic 9 - Margaret Mliwa conducting the MoYAS NYVS pilot programme evaluation in Msambweni.

Pic 10 - Kombo Swaleh Omar, NYVS volunteer and P1 teacher, teaching Class 4 students at Mwijabu Primary School in Changamwe District.

Picture Speak



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Pic 11 - Sally Kesa, NYVS volunteer and peer educator with Dream Achievers, a youth community group, leads an outreach event on HIV & AIDS and drug use in Mtopanga, Kisauni District.

Pic 12 - VSO Jitolee Board of Governance pose to show their support for the 1GOAL, Education for All Campaign.

Pic 13 - John Collins, Esther Olwith, Douglas Rasugu, Doris Keya and Emma Donovan (VSOJ staff and volunteers) participate in the 1GOAL sign up event organised by VSO Jitolee.

Pic 14 - Posing for 1GOAL after signing up is Ken Mambo, VSO Jitolee staff,

Pic 15 - Prof. George Godia, Secretary Education in the Ministry of Education 'cuts the tape' to officially open the Kasarani Primary Autism Unit. Looking on is Rita Kavasha from General Motors East Africa, the donors of the new unit.

Pic 16 - Felicity Nyambura, Autism Society of Kenya Director (right) shares a light moment with Prof. Godia and Kavasha as she shows them and other guests around the unit.

STRATEGIC PLAN FORMULATION WORKSHOP AT KIRANGA YOUTH POLYTECHNIC



Strategic Plan Formulation Workshop - Kiranga, participants at the STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

The Kiranga Youth Polytechnic (KYP) is a Community Based Organization (CBO), which, since its inception in 1959 has been providing the poor, school dropout children with technical courses like carpentry, masonry, plumbing, welding, motor vehicle mechanics and tailoring at subsidized costs. KYP is an ideal example of a rural CBO that has, for the last half century, been equipping the youth in Thika area to fight exploitation and unemployment by gaining skills and training to enable them to either find employment or start their own income generating activities.

Kiranga YP is a partner of VSO who place volunteers to build capacity at the CBO. Kiranga YP is currently working with the third VSO volunteer, Sachin Sharma, a Business Development Specialist who has been at Kiranga YP since May 2008.

In March 2010, Sharma and the KYP manager requested Pauline Kamau; VSO Jitolee secure livelihoods programme manager for support the polytechnic by linking them to specialists in strategic planning. VSO Jitolee then sent two other VSO volunteers, Marufelia Dagondon and Kirsteen Powell, to Kiranga YP to help draft their strategic plan. A 2-day workshop was held at Kiranga, facilitated by the VSO volunteers and was attended by BOG members, the Thika area Councilor and Rao Damarla, another VSO volunteer working with Baraka Youth Polytechnic in Murang'a.

The workshop was a milestone for the Youth Polytechnic as it was the first ever, strategic plan for Kiranga YP. In the workshop, the participants carried out a SWOT analysis, reviewed and developed a new mission and vision and completed a 4 year Strategic Plan for the YP. The strategy identifies the objectives for Kiranga YP with a complete plan to achieve them within the 2010-2014 period.

The Strategic Plan will provide a unique impetus to the YP for carrying out its humanitarian duty in a highly planned, organized and a more fruitful manner ensuring higher success for the YP which will in turn, extend to success for the youth in the local community. The Strategic Plan will also be a unique representation feature of Y.P. when engaging with the Government, Local Community and Funding Agencies which will all play a vital role in sustaining the Youth Polytechnic and all it has to offer for development of the community.

By Sachin Sharma, VSO volunteer from India.



The VSO volunteers from UK, India and Philippines pose for a picture

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