



Advantage Africa News

Issue Four, April 2005

ADVANTAGE AFRICA
SUPPORTING INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE

Dear Friend,

When the Government published its five-year plan for the future of schools last year, *The Independent* highlighted the state of education in the UK. It reported that in the previous 12 months, 10% of parents appealed against their allocated school, and described how funding was set to rise to £5,500 per pupil by 2006.

Just one week before, I had been in Kenya reading a similar article on the state of their education system in a national newspaper, *The Daily Nation*. The report highlighted the achievements of the Kenyan Government since it came to power and introduced free primary education (FPE) in 2003. FPE caused the enrolment in Kenyan schools to rise from 5.9 million to 7.2 million. At the same time that 10% of us here were complaining about our schools, more than 20% of parents in Kenya were rejoicing that they could send their kids to any school for the very first time!



Maybe when my own daughter starts school I will have something to say about whether £5,500 is enough to buy the dedicated teachers, spacious classrooms, quality books, sports and music facilities that I, and any other parent, wants for their children. But for the moment I am struck by the inequality highlighted by the two articles; in *The Nation* the Kenyan Ministry of Education proudly reported how they had supported the country's primary schools with an allocation of 335 Kenya shillings per pupil. At today's exchange rate, that's a little over £2.50.

The Kenyan Government's commitment to education for all as a fundamental human right is a major step forward for the country's development. However, there is much work to be done to increase funding and raise standards; secondary schooling, with its high fees, is still beyond the reach of the vast majority of ordinary Kenyans, and the still higher costs of colleges and universities mean that less than 1% of young people are able to attend them.

Advantage Africa's partnership with dynamic community-based organisations and the government in Kenya is working towards ensuring that the goal of education *for all* really does become a reality. Our support is focused on disabled children and young girls and boys orphaned by AIDS for whom there are few facilities, and who currently remain untouched by the FPE programme. We are working with inspirational community leaders, activists, parents, guardians, volunteers and teachers who, just like you and I, simply want the best for their kids.

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Ultimately, the kind of poverty we are working to address in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa will only be defeated when there is genuine global political will to tackle it. That is why Advantage Africa is an active member of the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** coalition – a group of more than 200 non governmental organisations, trade unions, faith groups and celebrities that will be campaigning throughout 2005 to demand an end to the injustice of poverty in so many of the world's countries.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

This year, the UK is at the heart of global decision-making, hosting the annual G8 summit in July and heading up the European Union in the second half of the year. The government has pledged to use this opportunity to take a lead in focusing the world's attention on global poverty. The **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign is demanding that rich countries provide more and better aid, cancel poor countries' unpayable debts, and change the

rules of world trade so that they are no longer unfair towards people living in poverty. In this newsletter we are inviting you to contribute towards the campaign by asking Tony Blair to use his international leadership to call on world leaders to deliver policy changes on these issues. Please take a few minutes to fill in and send the enclosed postcard; you will be adding your voice to many thousands of others who believe that a child in Kenya, or anywhere else in the developing world, should have no less opportunity for an education, a job, a life - than a child in the UK.

Andrew Betts
Director

'Do we have the will to make poverty history? Some say we can't afford to. I say we can't afford not to' Bono.

'Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom ... Make Poverty History in 2005. Make History in 2005. Then we can all stand with our heads held high.' Nelson Mandela.

Development in Obambo

Like most people in Africa, the population of Obambo in western Kenya largely rely on subsistence agriculture. They use small plots of land, often only a few acres, to grow food such as maize and beans and rear livestock such as chickens and goats to provide for their families. The majority of cultivation is done by hand, and the death and sickness caused by HIV/AIDS has a major impact on farm productivity, causing many people to become caught up in a cycle of ill health and poor nutrition.

One of the aims of Advantage Africa's Obambo project is to make cultivation easier and help people in the community to gain new farming skills. In February 2005 this work began with training in drip irrigation of vegetable crops for a group of 25 women, many of them widows, and 5 men. During the training, a demonstration plot (pictured) was established near Obambo church from which people can learn. The small scale method of irrigation uses buckets and plastic pipes to help families grow nutritious vegetables in the dry season, particularly important for young children and people affected by HIV/AIDS. With our support and that of the enthusiastic Siaya District Agricultural Officer, more families will soon be using this method to grow tomatoes, kale and other leafy vegetables.



Women apply mulch to the demonstration plot in Obambo



The new clinic in Obambo under construction

With funding from individual donations and two churches in the UK, Advantage Africa and the members of Obambo church have constructed a clinic that is providing basic healthcare in their community for the first time! The clinic opened in March 2005 and is now operated by a qualified nurse who treats between 20 and 40 patients every day. It has also been used for a day of voluntary counselling and HIV testing, attended by nearly 40 people, to complement the AIDS education that has taken place in the community over the last year. Window panes, flooring, plastering and water tanks are now needed to complete the clinic and Advantage Africa has recently sent a further grant to enable this work to go ahead during April 2005.

We are also subsidising the salary of the nurse until the clinic is established on a sustainable footing. In line with most clinics in Kenya, a nominal charge is being made for each consultation to help cover running costs. Pastor Jack Okoth says *'the clinic is making a real difference to the people here; it's a major development for the community'*.

Inspirational People Wanted!

Advantage Africa is seeking enthusiastic and experienced individuals to advance our vision of supporting inspirational people in Africa. We need a project officer to support our partner organisations in their work with people disadvantaged by poverty, disability and HIV/AIDS and a part-time administrator/fundraiser. If you are interested in applying for either of these UK-based positions please contact us for details.

Vulnerable Children find Hope in Nakuru

Philip Ndeta, Director of Advantage Africa's partner Learning and Development Kenya (LDK), together with his wife Benta and their three young children, spent last Christmas in the Ronda slum of Nakuru with a group of orphans who have no guardians of their own. The children celebrated Christmas with a decent meal and the love and care that their families can no longer provide.

A 16 year-old-girl recently came to Philip's office with two young girls whom she was taking care of. The older girl had gone to hospital for an HIV test because she had had sex with a man who promised to help her with the other children if she did so. He even promised to marry her, but she later realised he was already married and was deceiving her. *'There was nothing in the house where they stayed'* said Philip, *'they turned their clothes into blankets at night. They had not eaten the previous day and were not sure where their next meal was coming from; these children live a very miserable life'*. Advantage Africa is working with LDK to ensure that over 600 vulnerable children like these have access to education, food, water and a caring environment in which they can grow up. We have recently provided a grant to enable the derelict kitchen at LDK's orphan centre to be replaced inside a new classroom and dining block which is in turn being funded by a German organisation called Leben und Lernen in Kenia.



Left to right: Philip Ndeta; the old kitchen; the building which will house the new kitchen, classrooms, dining hall and library under construction

Other News in Brief

- In November last year, Michael Mwangangi, a boy at the Mitaboni Special School, was found dead in a nearby smallholding. Michael's tragic death demonstrates the vulnerability of many of the children with whom we work and we have extended our sorrow and prayers to Michael's parents. Advantage Africa has now provided funding to our partner organisation the Ngelani Rural Development Centre towards improving the School's security through a sturdy fence. We have also provided a grant to bring electricity to the school which will ensure that the smoky and hazardous paraffin lamps currently used during the evening become a thing of the past. The second phase of work at Mitaboni has connected the school to a water project that provides safe water in the dry season when rainwater is insufficient for the school's needs. Another matron has also been employed to look after the children there.
- Advantage Africa is helping to organise a major Make Poverty History event in Milton Keynes on 25th June. Two days later, on 27th June, our patron, singer/songwriter Martyn Joseph will perform a concert to highlight the campaign and raise funds towards our new programme in Uganda. Call Milton Keynes' Stantonbury Theatre on 01280 706876 for tickets at £12 each.
- Advantage Africa's Director Andrew Betts attended two consultations held for British non-governmental organisations to communicate their views to the British Government's Commission for Africa. The Com-

mission, which is chaired by Tony Blair and includes African Presidents and Sir Bob Geldof among its members, aims to accelerate progress towards a strong and prosperous Africa and published its report last month. Among the recommendations put forward by Advantage Africa and our partner organisations were specific targets for aid, more grass-roots projects, the inclusion of disabled people in development and greater understanding between communities in Africa and the west.

- Paul Winnan, an experienced charity accountant has joined Advantage Africa as Treasurer.
- Postgraduate development student Jacinta Sweeney did six weeks work for Advantage Africa supporting Agnes Musembi and the Kikumbulyu Disabled People's Organisation in Kenya. Jacinta's work will form the basis of Advantage Africa's report on the links between disability and HIV/AIDS to be published later this year. Jacinta described her work in the Kisayani community as a 'fantastic, humbling and thought-provoking experience'.
- Advantage Africa Trustee Jane Betts recently became a member of the co-ordinating committee of the Global Partnership for Disability and Development. The GPDD supports international NGOs, governments and donors to mainstream disability into their strategies and work.
- In April 2005, Advantage Africa's Director Andrew Betts and our partner organisations will be meeting in Nairobi for a training workshop to gain new skills in leadership, project management and fundraising.

Funding News and Needs

- We are delighted that Advantage Africa is now working in partnership with Andrews' Charitable Trust (ACT). ACT, which owns the Andrews chain of estate agents, was instrumental in the founding of Oxfam, Action Aid and Help the Aged. Earlier this year we prepared a four-year plan for ACT and met with their representatives to present our vision for the future; one month later our request was approved by the ACT Trustees. Their support is a major boost to our efforts and will include a grant towards the core costs of an office and staff as well as management advice from their Director and Trustees. In partnership with ACT, Advantage Africa aims to reach over 100,000 people through 18 projects in three countries by 2009.
- We recently received several donations from supporters in memory of their relatives. We have also produced a short leaflet called 'Legacy for Life' on how to include Advantage Africa in your will, which is available on request.
- Andrew Betts spent two days giving lessons at Stanway School in Colchester about the difficulties of collecting water (see picture) and growing food in Kenya as well as the resilience of people facing such problems. The older students discussed causes of poverty in Africa and how debt relief, trade justice and aid can make a lasting difference. Prior to Andrew's visit, a hundred of the younger students were given £1 and the challenge to invest it in fundraising activities. By selling cakes, holding raffles, sponsored runs and similar enterprising ventures they raised an astounding £1,500 towards our work!
- *Thank you* to everyone who has made a donation towards our work with disabled children in Kenya following our last newsletter; as a result, new projects have now begun in Thinu and Kisayani.
- Andrew is about to travel to Uganda to establish a new partnership with the Single Parents' Association of Uganda (SPAU) and meet with other potential partner organisations. We are now seeking funding to start our programme there which will help disabled people and families affected by HIV/AIDS to meet their needs for food, education and income.



Advantage Africa supports the ideas and work of inspirational people in Africa to overcome poverty and disadvantage. We work in close partnership with determined individuals and community groups, supporting their ideas and plans so that disadvantaged people can improve their lives. This particularly includes people who, alongside poverty, face prejudice and stigma as a result of disability or HIV/AIDS. Advantage Africa provides encouragement, resources, advice and training as well as links to other sources of knowledge, skills and funds.

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Carry this 20kg of water for 5 miles?!

✂

I'd Like to Support the Work of Inspirational People in Africa

Every £1 you give to Advantage Africa goes a long way: •£5 a school desk •£20 HIV/AIDS education materials •£100 an ox plough •£300: one year's special needs education training •£1,000: a tank for safe water •£5,000: a village health centre.

1 Here's my gift of £ payable to Advantage Africa; OR: I would like to make a regular gift of £ to Advantage Africa every month by standing order (a regular gift is especially valuable as it helps us and our partners to plan ahead) starting on: (date).

Bank/building society name and address:

Account name:

Account number:

Sort code:

Signature:

Date:

Instructions to your bank or building society: Please pay the amount above, starting on the date indicated and on the same day of every month thereafter to: HSBC Bank, 19 Midsummer Place, Milton Keynes, PO Box 1888, Coventry CV3 2WN; sort code 40-33-33; account name Advantage Africa; account number 81549200.

2 My name and address:

3 If you are a UK taxpayer, please tick the adjacent box to add 28p to every £1 you donate at no cost to you. I am a UK taxpayer and I would like Advantage Africa to treat this donation or standing order and any future donations as Gift Aid donations. I understand that I must pay an amount of Income or Capital Gains Tax in the relevant tax year equal to any tax reclaimed by Advantage Africa in that period.

4 Please send this completed form to: Advantage Africa, 3 Lowland Road, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes, MK4 3AP. **Thank you!**