



A Periodic Newsletter of Africa Exchange

Volume 7, #1 - October 2005

Change for Children

In partnership with CBF, in conjunction with *Buckner Africa* and the 'KidsHeart Africa' initiative, we seek ways of effecting lasting change in the lives of children in difficult circumstances.

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Building with new technologies

Pre-fab buildings, soil block bricks and more

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**Beginners Mind**

A few thoughts on our attitudes when approaching the new or unfamiliar, especially cross-cultural encounters.

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News and events since our last AFEX newsletter in 2004

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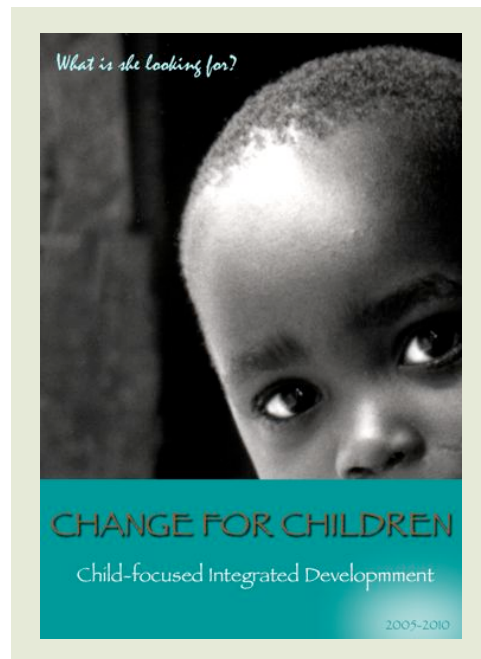


Change for Children

"If you do not repair the crack, you will have to build a wall."

Swahili proverb

For several years we have sought to meet the needs of children in difficult circumstances. Our *Change for Children* project has been an umbrella under which all programs related to children have been grouped. If you have followed our news for long, you are no doubt aware of our many efforts and partnerships including *Kids to Kids*, *Baptist Children's Center*, *Eroret Preparatory School*, *Kariobangi Youth Center* and others. Our goal in each of these projects has been to come along side communities, projects and individuals and be of what use we can in terms of the education and well-being of children. Assistance has ranged from master plan development, project design and management, financial assistance, capacity building, etc. In each case, we have chosen to work with local and/or



international partners in accomplishing the task. As a result, we have built up quite a body of experience not only in participatory project development, but also in relating to partners who have different styles, methods and backgrounds. Certainly the challenges have been many, but we admit that we would be nowhere without the valuable assistance of our partners.

Looking forward . . .

In each case, as particular projects and

initiatives gain the ability to stand on their own, we move on in search of new opportunities and partnerships. Our latest efforts are in conjunction with an initiative called '*KidsHeart*' which is the result of a partnership between the **Co-operative Baptist Fellowship** (our primary enabler) and **Buckner Orphan Care International**. We, together with Buckner's local affiliate, *Buckner Africa*, will work together to implement projects in Kenya. We are all soliciting the help of individuals, organizations, churches and other groups to commit financial resources to this initiative.

Focus on Children under 6 years

The focus of our projects will be in providing pre-school education facilities, health services and related community development activities geared towards the development and protection of this most vulnerable age group in the most neglected and marginalized regions of the country. We eagerly anticipate your assistance in helping us to achieve lasting *Change for Children*.

To view the entire proposal as it relates to Africa Exchange, click below on the link which will take you to our website.

[*Change For Children*](#)

BEGINNERS MIND

This summer I very much enjoyed time spent interacting with visiting groups who had come to help us with various aspects of our work, projects or simply to learn from and share with our Kenyan colleagues and partners. During the course of our travels and work, we would try to begin each day with a thought, focus or prayer that would serve to guide us throughout that day.

A principle that I shared repeatedly (and continue to try to learn) is the idea of "Beginners Mind." I first heard it described this way by Richard Rohr in a talk of the same title. Richard says,

"Ignorance does not result from what we don't know, but results from what we think we do know."

According to the great spiritual teachers, we must seek a balance between knowing and not knowing and somehow resist the temptation of equating knowledge with wisdom.

Nowhere is this more true than in encounters with people of different cultural traditions. What might at first appear nonsensical or ridiculous to the outside observer, usually has a good and reasonable basis according to the particular context.

Further, we note that it seems often the case that circumstances within which we arrive at the 'end of ourselves,' the end of our knowing, our answers, our solutions, are precisely the points at which learning is possible. At these points is where we realize that we are part of a much larger 'story' than our own and suddenly find ourselves in a much better position to be taught.

Through our development activities, our sharing of ourselves and bearing witness to the Guidance that directs our lives, our prayer is that we will ever be 'beginners,' willing to receive as well as give answers.

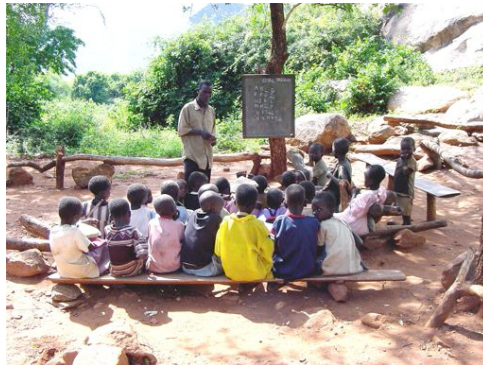


Director, Africa Exchange

New Technologies Feature in Classroom Construction

The goal of building 'Integrated Child Development Centers' (ICDCs) in each province of Kenya together with our partners has necessitated experimentation with techniques that are affordable, reproducible, durable, 'community friendly,' in terms of construction skills needed, and quick to erect.

Not included in the recent 'Universal Free Primary Education' implementa-



Typical 'tree shade' nursery school

tion by the government in Kenya are nursery and pre-schools. This leaves a very significant void in the education system, not to mention that children in the 'under 6 years' category are the most vulnerable of all.

Our concept includes upgrading facilities already in existence as in 'Church Operated Nursery Schools (CONSEPs) and constructing new 'Integrated Child Development Centers' (ICDCs) where indicated.

For ICDCs, we will use a prefabricated steel superstructure (impervious to termites!), a coated galvanized roofing material that will facilitate water catchment with integrated gutters and water tank



Hydraform block machine

and will be of a color that reflects rather than absorbs heat. Cyclone vents will further insure a comfortable environment.

The floor will be a concrete 'raft design' utilizing locally gathered sand, gravel and stone. Walls will be constructed using a soil and cement mixture compacted into interlocking blocks using the Hydraform block making machine, a technology imported from South Africa. Suitable soil will be sourced locally, reducing the incidence of transportation and haulage costs which are a major factor in rural construction. Blocks are dried and placed without mortar to form a wall that, once sealed, is impervious to the elements and structurally sound.

Solar lighting kits using LED bulbs and solar panels mounted on the roof will make each center usable even in the evening hours. An office and storage area will be used for community outreach in health related areas such as immunizations, distribution of treated mosquito nets, emergency food assistance. Finally, we will complete the building with desks and benches, and education materials necessary for classrooms. We also hope that the building will be the focus of other community-



"Pilot" steel structure in Sigor

related activities.

We wish to relay special thanks and appreciation to those that helped us to purchase the necessary equipment and provided funds for pilot testing. These include:

- Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Knollwood Baptist Church, NC
- Rosalind Hills Baptist Church, VA
- Lights for Learning via Project Albert, RAF
- BTSR Mission Immersion participants
- Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church team, FL



The Great Migration . . .

Perhaps that is what would best describe the period since our last newsletter. First, the Africa Exchange office moved to a new location in Nairobi (along with the Harrell family). We are now located in the leafy suburb of Wispers, a quiet secure neighborhood on Nairobi's northern boundary. We have plenty of room for all of our equipment, workshop, office and residence, not to mention room for plenty of visitors!

Off field assignment in the US during the months of June and July of 2004 gave us plenty of opportunity to share our story with members of our supporting organization, CBF. Like the Wildebeests in the picture above, however, we soon made our way full circle back to Nairobi to continue our work and launch in some new directions.

Much of our work is now in very remote regions of Kenya as we seek to make a difference in the lives of children and communities who seem to have been left behind in terms of development. This means lots of travel, many bumpy rides and long days in the hot sun.

Our field work is interspersed with visiting groups who come to assist and learn in many ways. With their help we are able to continue to make a difference here. Not only do they bring with them many of the resources that are necessary for our work, they are also a great encouragement to us.

Highlights of the past few months include:

- **KidsHeart Africa** partnership launch with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Buckner Orphan Care International
- Five **Mission Immersion Experiences** including seminary students and church groups
- Establishment of the **Kenya Health Partnership** with Knollwood Baptist Church in North Carolina
- Development of **Kenya Partners** relationship with College Park Baptist Church in Orlando, FL in support of Change for Children
- **Passport Kenya 2005**, a gathering of American and Kenyan youth for a week of camp that was an inspiration and testimony to our common humanity
- Distribution of **relief food** to famine stricken areas of **West Pokot** district, northern Kenya.
- **Pedestrian foot bridge building** with and on behalf of Bridging the Gap, Inc.
- Community survey work for the initial **ICDC and CONSEP** projects.

Newsletter relaunch!

In the interest of economy, we are making the shift to an e-based newsletter format that we hope will keep all our friends up-to-date on happenings here with Africa Exchange. We will attempt to publish this bi-annually, (although our description of AFEX as a "periodic" newsletter is not by accident!) email to subscribers and post it on our website under "news." We also would like to print and distribute an "annual report" at the end of each year. So, keep your eyes open!



Photo by Melody Harrell - Masai Mara, 2005



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