

KIDS IN KENYA: MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH BOOKS

Every child deserves an education and we can make a difference.

Kids in Kenya is proud to share the news with INCITE readers that we've completed building the Usonga Community Library in County Siaya, a remote part of western Kenya. Construction finished in late 2012 and we've been putting up bookshelves, installing furniture, and getting books on shelves ever since.

KinK is an Australian not-for-profit registered charity aiming to improve the education of disadvantaged children in a remote corner of Kenya by raising funds, purchasing basic school supplies in Nairobi, and personally delivering them to ensure that the materials reach their destination.

In 2004, founder Pauline Browne-Cooper visited the Usonga area and was appalled at the lack of basic school materials. Believing that education is the right of all children, rather than a privilege, she established the charity to assist in the education of disadvantaged kids in Kenya. The charity was registered in 2006 and has now grown to a team of committed and enthusiastic volunteers who believe we can help by "keeping it small, keeping it focused, one child at a time."

In addition to the library, KinK has provided basic materials such as pens and paper, as well as footballs, rubber thongs, and school uniforms for the children. Organising volunteer trips every two years, the team purchase the goods in Nairobi, and personally deliver them to the schools in Siaya District, thereby ensuring they arrive intact, and that they reach the children most in need. We've also installed water tanks to provide fresh drinking water in an area with no running water. KinK has no overheads or administration costs and all volunteers pay their way when working on the project in Kenya.

In Sydney, we organise fundraisers and have reached out to collaborate with other organisations – including Harper Collins, Kenyan Air, Rebel Sport, Allied Pickfords Business Relocations, Frank Coates (well-known Aussie author of Kenyan stories), and the Rotary Clubs

of Sydney Cove, Drummoyne, Fivedock, and the Kenyan Rotary Club of Siaya – who have supported our work and without whose help we would not have reached our goals.

While we intend to maintain the supply of basic resources into the foreseeable future, we're also planning on extending our work. For the library, we want to install solar lighting, create an outdoor covered area for studying, construct eco toilets, and build adequate library resources. Providing solar lamps for night learning would help in an area with no electricity. Beyond the library, we want to improve school classrooms and raise sufficient funds to assist deserving children to go on to complete secondary education, and, in some cases, even attend university.

Pauline says that, though "it's a hard slog keeping this project going, what with the global crunch, tsunamis, hurricanes, bush fires, and war zones", she is inspired by those who KinK supports: "These children are clever and very keen for an education. They speak Kiswahili, English, and a local language. Barefoot, they love to go to school, without a pen and sometimes without lunch."

We know that INCITE readers already believe in the power of libraries, books, and education. If you'd like to help us out, there are many ways to join us.

Our next event is not only a great way to show your support, but to meet and network with others who share your concern for social and corporate responsibility. It's on Thursday, 30 May 2013 at the Arthouse Hotel on Pitt Street, Sydney. Your tax deductible donation for attending will go towards books for the Usonga library and for deserving kids to go to secondary education. Why not organise a table for you and your colleagues?

Finally, if you're got an itch to travel at the same time as helping out, our 2014 trip will include a visit to the project as well as a safari in the world-famous game park of the Masai Mara tribe. Details will be posted on our website soon.

Please visit our website at www.kidsinkenya.net or visit our facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Kids-in-Kenya/123675184381955 for more information. Pauline can be contacted at paule@kidsinkenya.net

Written by Andy Quan on behalf of Kids in Kenya

