AN UPDATE ON BARAKA AND RIZIKI

Some of you may remember an earlier story about these siblings. Many years ago when the children were approximately one and two years of age, an elderly Makindu woman met them and their mother at a nearby train station. The young mother told the elder Lukia (pronounced Lou-ki-a) that she was ill and dying, and feared for the future of her children.

She later asked the older woman to watch the children while she went to a local shop to buy them some milk. With a meaningful gesture before departing, the mother bent over and anointed each of the children on the head with a loving kiss. After many hours had passed, it became quite apparent that the mother was never returning. The kids were too young to tell anyone their names or where they were from, so Lukia took them to her home to care for them. She reported the case to the chief and the Children’s Officer, and was given permission to stay with the children as the government pursued their mother (to no avail).

This woman was subsisting on only $15-$18 per month, yet she gladly cared for them. Instead of becoming completely overwhelmed with the situation, she literally viewed the children as gifts from the universe. In fact, she even gave the kids their new names of “Riziki” and “Baraka”, which translate in Swahili as “gift from God” and “blessing”. This is how she viewed the children... not as a burden, but as gifts from God. However, when I visited MCC last year, it was clear that both kids seemed sad and troubled; the staff discovered that while Lukia was in town daily to sell her vegetables, her biological daughter-in-law had started harassing the adopted children due to land ownership issues. This humiliated the young and outgoing Baraka to the extent that he dropped out of school, and ran away from home for days at a time. As MCC director, Thomas reports, “In April of this year, the case became so serious that Lukia reported the daughter-in-law to the chief, and she was cautioned and reprimanded. The chief’s office then embarked on legalizing the custody of the two children. Ms Lukia was recently given legal guardianship of Baraka and Riziki. From then henceforth, their Aunt realized that she was fighting a losing battle and that the children now legally belong to Lukia. The children settled down and are very happy...”

Baraka is back to being his playful and exuberant self, has rejoined school and is attending the Centre regularly. Riziki has reportedly become more confident and happy, and remains very devoted and tender with Lukia, accompanying and assisting her in their daily chores. Advocacy is a huge part of what MCC does for these kids; such a simple yet vital service!

In the process of advocating for them and solving such crises, the children feel supported and loved, and eventually more confident in themselves... and we hope, feel empowered to become their own advocates in the future.

-Winnie Barron, Founder
NEW DAIRY COWS FOR THE MCC!

Thanks to the generous donations of three donors, MCC now has three new dairy cows at the Centre! All three cows were purchased from Kikuyu land in Western Kenya, as these cows are generally hardier and more resistant to the tsetse fly, which can be so very lethal to the cows. (They were given Kikuyu names of “Wanja”- white, “Kairo”- black, and “Gatune”- red).

Milk (“maziwa”) is a precious commodity in Kenya. High in protein and calcium, it also provides essential calories for the children, and is especially ideal for the malnourished, sick and those who are immune compromised... not to mention that the kids love it! (Remember those old commercials with the “milk moustaches”? You’ll see quite a few of those demonstrated by the kids pretending to look innocent after dipping into the ladle in the kitchen...)

Prior to having cows at the Centre, we would generally purchase milk from the local Maasai passing by, but could not rely on this being available daily. Buying elsewhere was a challenge, as the milk sold on the street poses a health threat because it is often watered down and tainted with impure water, and buying from the local shops too expensive. In the early days of the program, we would even carry over donations of powdered milk---any way we could to get this vital nutrient on to the kids.

See photo, below, of Paul Baxter, MCP board member and former MCC volunteer, with Nzilani back in 1999!

Fast forward to 2013, where the Centre now has five healthy cows that produce plenty of milk for the daily needs of the Centre, plus enough to also provide a steady source of reliable revenue to MCC.

This gives the opportunity for local villagers and the town shops and cafes to purchase pure milk at the average market price, and provides the program with a daily flow of customers and income. (Also, with the biofuel project a success, all the waste products from the cows provide ethanol for cooking, without the need of so much firewood as fuel.)

Asante sana to these donors for this great contribution, which will provide ongoing income generation for the program!

-Winnie Barron, Founder

Kairo is already making new friends!

Wanja, or “white”

Gatune (“red”) in her new home
MCC SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our current sponsorship program donors for their ongoing support of MCC! The sponsorship program provides a unique and special opportunity for donors to connect more personally with a child, by following along with the children’s stories and daily lives. Donors receive regular updates on their successes and challenges, along with personal notes, drawings, and photos (see examples on the right, from Amina last year).

MCC currently supports 1,200 children, and the sponsorship program represents a way of highlighting certain children and their progress. Donations to the sponsorship program go to support ALL of these remarkable kids, and make a huge contribution to ensuring the continued success of MCC.

ASANTE SANA to all of our current donors... and a special invitation to all of you to consider becoming a sponsor today!

More information on the sponsorship program is available on our website. Please contact us for more information at makindu@peak.org.

There are many children at the MCC to sponsor!

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SCHOLARS ON BOARD

This is the first year MCP participated in the Scholars on Board Program. The program is part of the University of Oregon Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management in partnership with Pacific Continental Bank. Graduate students serve in local nonprofit organizations as board members for one year. Board member, Ellie Smith, followed a number of leads over several months resulting in contact with the program. She submitted a request for service which Amanda Kaler responded to. Amanda made valuable contributions this year. She co-designed and co-facilitated our annual board retreat and served on a committee to develop board orientation procedures. She connected our executive committee to the UO Nonprofit Clinic and explored potential funding opportunities. She launched our first crowd-funding campaign on Globalgiving.com, which successfully surpassed the initial goal of $5000. We are hopeful this initial partnership will lead to more involvement with talented and committed graduate students. Thanks, Amanda! -Ellie Smith

Amanda and Board Member Ellie Smith
Program Director at the Children’s Centre

Thomas Mwanzia is well into his second year as Program Director of MCC, with both university training and experience in social services and non-profit management. He brings a special vitality and enthusiasm to his work, and is making great strides towards refining MCC’s strengths, and developing new sources of increased capacity and sustainability for the program. Managing 1,200 children spread across five different regions and many miles with minimal staff is no easy task, but he literally hit the ground running... and hasn’t stopped since! He seems to have a special knack and love for this kind of work, and if you read his story, you will understand why:

“I particularly feel inspired working at MCC, for it reminds me of the desperate situation I was raised in – and the fact that if someone didn’t step in to assist, I probably would have just wasted away.

“I grew up in abject poverty, in exactly the same conditions of these kids. I feel so attached to them-- - when I was young, a Good Samaritan offered to pay my high school fees, after which I joined university on government sponsorship. So I fully understand what these kids go through: the low self esteem, the psychological trauma, going without food, and all of that. I always encourage them and their guardians whenever I’m talking to them, that they really can make it through and succeed, giving myself as a living example. This is why I’m ever willing to go an extra mile if need be, to change their situation, however small the impact might be. Because back then, someone did exactly that... for me.

“I feel great being part of the team that is making a lasting impact in transforming these children’s lives. It greatly motivates me knowing that every single effort I make could touch a destitute child’s life-- even if in a small way, which can go on to make a great difference. We ever appreciate your efforts and sacrifices in changing the lives of these needy kids over here. “

-Thomas Mwanzia

Stateside Staff Changes

I have enjoyed working as MCP’s Stateside Coordinator over the past eight years, and I have been especially impressed by the long-term and dedicated donor base and Board of Directors. Makindu Children’s Program is lucky to have a board that has in depth experience in Africa, personal dedication, and hands-on involvement! I have accepted a full-time job in California, which will allow me to live near my son, daughter, and new grandson, Mason. I also look forward to spending winters in the California sun! I will remain working as a volunteer for MCP, working with the board, and communicating with staff in Africa.

MCP is very lucky to welcome Kerry Edinger Snodgrass as our new Stateside Development Director and Office Manager. Kerry is experienced in organizing, development, and event planning. Kerry will be in the office processing donations, communicating with donors, coordinating fundraising events in the Pacific Northwest, and helping develop the newsletter.

Remaining with MCP is our current bookkeeper Dorna Baumann. Dorna is sharing her twenty years of experience as a bookkeeper and has been with Makindu Children’s Program three and a half years! We appreciate the continuity, dedication, and integrity that Dorna brings to the job. Dorna is well-connected with many non-profits in our community and helps us build our base of support as well as being our excellent bookkeeper!

I look forward to continuing as a volunteer with Makindu Children’s Program and participating in the future growth of the organization. Asante sana (thank you very much) for allowing me to work with you as part of the Makindu community!

-Lou Enge

Are you on our email list?

We’d love to have you! Email makindu@peak.org and we’ll keep you updated with emails, too!
We need your help to keep the Makindu Children’s Centre in operation. MCC provides food, education, medical care and a place in the community for the Makindu orphans and their guardian families. Your donations help sustain a grassroots organization that is making a positive impact every day. Here are some ways your donations help:

$35 provides food, elementary schooling and medical care for one child for one month.

$50 provides school uniforms and shoes for 10 children.

$100 provides milk for 100 children for one month.

$200 provides bulk food (maize, beans, oil, etc.) for 59 families for four months.

$350 provides a high school education (tuition, boarding, books and supplies) for one student for one year.

Remember, all donations to the Makindu Children’s Program are tax deductible. Please consider becoming a sustaining donor or child sponsor.