



the longest journey begins with a single step

In our final newsletter for this year we would like to say a very big thank you to everyone for all their support. Over the five years that Footsteps has been working in Kenya many people have given up their time and money over and over again to help the people of Kisumu and we have achieved far more than we ever hoped for. This is all down to our volunteers in Africa and in the UK, and to everyone who has ever handed over their hard earned cash to help someone thousands of miles away. So, a very Merry Christmas to you all from Footsteps, and from the teachers, carers and children of Kisumu.



Out of Africa Ball Raises Funds for Children's Ward

The Footsteps' Out of Africa Ball, held at the Roehampton Club in south-west London in November, was one of our biggest fundraising events yet.

We set ourselves a target of £30,000 to fund a much needed children's ward, adjacent to the medical centre we opened in Katito last year. Thanks to the generosity of the 158 guests that attended we not only met that target, but exceeded it, with just over £31,000 raised throughout the evening.

It may have been a chilly November night outside but, inside the club, guests were greeted by the sights and sounds of equatorial Africa. The function suite was decorated in beautiful fabrics typically found in Kenyan markets; six foot wooden giraffes emerged from the greenery of large plants; and iron African ladies, made especially for the event by a street vendor in Nairobi, graced the tables.

Guests played their part in creating the African atmosphere with many people dressing in theme. There were animal print dresses, safari suits and a fabulous spotted leopard.

Our auction, conducted by Marco Young, was a resounding success. Guests had the chance to buy all manner of items and experiences. Among the lots on offer were a trip to one of Kenya's most exclusive safari destinations, a stay in an exceptional French chateau, and a beautiful abstract painting of Mount Kilimanjaro.

We enjoyed an Africa- themed menu, all impeccably cooked and served by the Roehampton Club. After dinner we danced the night away to the singing of Noel Stephens and the club's disco.

Thank you once again to everyone who came along and helped make it such an enjoyable and successful evening.



Bravin Omondi A Life Transformed

At Footsteps, although we see children being cared for, medical facilities and classrooms being built and water supplies installed, it is not often we can point to a person and say, "We saved his life". Bravin Omondi, however, is one such case.

We met Bravin for the first time in 2006 during our Rafiki Volunteer Programme. Two of our volunteers, Naomi and Liesa, noticed a little boy hobbling around on crutches and took a shine to him because of his cute smile and bravery. After a couple of days they asked him what had happened to him. He told them he'd fallen out of a tree about a year ago and that he'd broken his leg and it still hadn't healed. His arm was also in bandages and apparently that was still broken too.

Naomi and Liesa asked if they could see under the bandage and, to their horror, when he took it off, they saw a bone sticking through the leg that was a nasty shade of green.

It turned out that Bravin's mother had no money to take the boy to hospital. He was staying with his elderly grandmother and was

generally being neglected. His teachers had not considered walking around on crutches for a year to be a worrying sign.

So we stepped in and had him taken to hospital for an operation on his leg and his arm. The doctors told us that the leg was in such a state they seriously considered amputation, and if it had not been treated then gangrene would almost certainly have set in and a painful death would have ensued.

During the first operation the green bit of the bone was cut off and the bone was put back inside the leg so that it could start to heal. Unfortunately, two years later, it was clear that the bone had not set properly and the lower leg was bending outwards. Footsteps helped out once more and had Bravin taken back to hospital where, this time, with a healthy leg devoid of infection, the bone could be broken and reset.

Bravin has just had his cast off and after five years he will be able to walk almost normally. Unfortunately his mended leg is one inch shorter than the other so he'll always have

to wear one shoe with a slight platform.

But what is so inspiring about Bravin is that he has been consistently top of his class despite all the disruption caused by his injuries. We have great hopes that this little boy will more than repay to his community the support he received from Footsteps that probably saved his life.



New Footsteps Office in Katito Market, thanks to a Community Initiative

Footsteps works on a shoestring budget. The UK volunteers and trustees give their time for free and, although we give small contributions to our Kenyan project managers, Rashid and Monica, we don't maintain an office, pay full time staff, or maintain a fleet of 4x4 cars like big charities do.

So you can imagine our surprise when, on our last visit to Kenya, Rashid presented us with a Footsteps office. "You know we are making more and more impact in this community," he said. "Other charities and individuals are hearing of us and coming to Katito to look for us, but they can't find us because we don't have an office, and this is something strange for them."

He explained that all the families receiving help from Footsteps through the sponsorship programme had agreed to each give 25 shillings a month (around 20p) to pay the 1500 shillings rent on the small office.

So with a new base, just over the road from the medical centre we opened last year, we can now keep all our papers and records in one place, welcome visitors and, who knows, maybe eventually install a computer and a mobile internet service so that we can have instant access to information.



Building Work Underway at Obingo Primary School

Our big project for this year has been the building of classrooms at Obingo Primary School. It is the most difficult school to reach in the district, with vehicles having to cross muddy rivers in the rainy season and risk becoming stuck. These days little motorbike taxis allow access within half an hour from the main road on a dry day – if you dare get on the back of one that is.

Obingo school has 320 pupils. When we first began work there it had four classrooms made of mud and sticks (as photos above) and had been consistently towards the bottom of the league tables. We have taken the school under our wing and have rebuilt it to a standard that should last for many years to come. Our

building projects, inspected by the local planning department, have solid foundations and reinforced concrete pillars and beams to enable them to stand up to the harshest conditions.

It is a year since we began our feasibility study at the school and we made two further visits this year to confirm details prior to the start of building work in November. On each visit the headmistress became more and more excited. A local woman, she is deeply committed to her community and, although ready for retirement, she is determined to do what she can to inspire and educate the children in her care. “I never thought I’d see the day when people like you would come to help my school, now I can die happy,” she said.

If all goes according to plan, building work will be finished by January, ready for classes to start again in the new academic year.



71% Increase in Pupil Numbers at Wenwa Primary School

The biggest programme we have completed to date has been the building of five classrooms at Wenwa Primary School. When we first came across the school it was in a pathetic state with its existing classrooms in such need of repair that you could see right through from one end to the other.

We are delighted to report on the impact our new classrooms have made in the short time since we inaugurated them back in May:

- School enrolment has increased from 169 to 289 pupils (with more expected when the new school years begins in January), a 71% increase!
- The Government has provided one more full time teacher.
- The community has come together to pay for the compound to be fenced.
- The school has started a gardening programme (something we encourage all our schools to develop).
- The school has leapt from bottom of the league table to mid way in the mid-year exams.
- This year, for the first time ever, pupils in their last year of education were able to sit their final exams in their own classrooms, rather than having to travel five kilometres on foot to the nearest primary school with classrooms decent enough to host examinations.

Wenwa School before work started



The new classrooms built by Footsteps



Nicholas and Tyson, Our First Secondary School Graduates

Nicholas Onyango and Tyson Okoth have been with our sponsorship programme from the very beginning. Now they have just taken their final exams at secondary school.

If the boys achieve a B+ or higher they will be offered a subsidised place at university. Lower than B+ and they will need to consider alternatives such as teacher training or vocational courses. Both boys say they want to go into Tourism which is one of the biggest employment sectors in Kenya.

We are hoping they will both make it to further education so that their sponsorship may help them to gain a qualification that will ensure them a job and the opportunity to put back into their community what Footsteps has given them in support.

In the Kenyan system exams happen in November, results come out in February, and higher education starts the following January. So, in the meantime, we are keeping them busy working with Rashid on our building projects, running errands, and generally making themselves useful.



Nicholas Onyango



Tyson Okoth