



# NEWSLETTER

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## HOPE FOR KENYA'S KIDS

PO Box 2883

Winter Haven FL 33883

Email: [kenyarafiki@yahoo.com](mailto:kenyarafiki@yahoo.com)

### Message from the President

You may recall that I reported difficulty with book shipments in our previous newsletter. This summer, I received a surprising Email from our Nairobi office notifying me that the missing books had arrived! These books had been shipped to Kenya via the US Postal Service in April and May of 2004. The first few shipments arrived about 3 months after the date they were mailed, and then we received a bag that had been tampered with. Our books had been replaced by some church hymnals that we did not recognize. We did not receive any shipments after that, so we assumed the books had been stolen en route. Amazingly, the rest of the books arrived in good condition in July, 2005.



I cautiously mailed a few more books in August, and received word that they arrived in late October. The school administrators have been very happy with the books we have delivered to date, so we are hopeful that we can continue shipments to stock their libraries.

In January, we transferred two female students to a new school where they will have access to a better quality of education. They were both in schools where they were not being challenged, so we contacted the Principal of a school where we had four other students enrolled. Both girls are struggling a little because the course work is more difficult than what they previously experienced, but they are both very happy with the new environment and will adjust to the challenges being presented by their new teachers.

In mid January, I will be visiting all of our schools to check on student progress and pay the tuition for the 2006 school year. We have just agreed to sponsor students in two new schools, so I am eager to tour those facilities and meet the students. I will be accompanied on this visit by two of our Directors: Joy and David Schaal. This will be the first time Joy and David have seen many

of these schools so we will be doing a complete tour and meeting with the staff at each school.

My sincere thanks to all of you for continuing to support our work on behalf of the children of Kenya.

Sandra Fenley

### Final exams, Kenyan style

Even though the course work is similar, the Kenyan school system operates somewhat differently than in the US. School begins in January with the first term which ends in early April. The second term begins in May and ends in July, followed by the third term which begins in September and ends in late November. At the end of each term, students receive a progress report listing the grades achieved in each subject.

Students attend primary school for 8 years and secondary school for 4 years. In March of their final year in both primary and secondary schools, students must pay a fee to register for the final exam called the Kenya Certificate of Primary or Secondary Education (KCPE or KCSE). The results of these exams are considered much more important than the grades received on the term reports for previous years, and there is a great deal of competition between the students and schools to achieve high marks.

Each candidate sitting for the KCPE is tested on 5 subjects. The KCSE covers 7 subjects. Each exam contains material they have studied during the years of schooling preceding the date of the exam. As a result, students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school attend 6 additional weeks (2 weeks each term) of tutoring to prepare for the exam.

In secondary school, all students are tested on English, Kiswahili, math and religion. They must also choose one of the sciences (chemistry, physics or biology). The remaining two test subjects are selected by each student from the four electives they have studied during the previous four years.

There is very tight security to ensure that no student or teacher gains access to the exam content prior to the date of testing. The examination papers are delivered to the

school via courier from Nairobi on the exam day. A security guard is posted in each classroom to oversee the distribution of the exam papers which are delivered to each student in a sealed envelope. Students are usually tested on only one subject per day to allow adequate time to prepare, so the testing period may continue for an entire month. Once each exam is completed, the security guard again monitors the collection of the papers which are sealed in individual envelopes and returned to the government education office in Nairobi for scoring. Results are published in mid February.

Any student scoring a B+ average or higher can apply for entrance into one of the four public universities in Kenya, but competition is fierce and students who score below this level on the KCSE have no hope of being accepted. However, there are a number of private colleges and universities which provide opportunities for continuing education.

We currently have students enrolled in 12 secondary schools located in coastal and central Kenya. In November, four of our students will complete their final year of high school. We are hopeful that they will all achieve high marks on their KCSE and choose to continue their education or find employment which enables them to live a more comfortable life than their families have experienced.

### **Profile of a Kenyan school**

Kerugoya Girl's Secondary School is a Provincial school located in Kerugoya town in Central Kenya. For those of you who have visited Kenya, Kerugoya is very near the town of Karatina which is on the main road traveling north from Nairobi to Mt. Kenya. The school was opened in 1964 by members of a community church to educate the children of coffee farmers.



As a Provincial school they receive more financial support from the government than the District schools and, their record of student performance on the annual KCSE is excellent. In the 2003 school year, out of 166 graduates

taking the exam, 49 scored a grade of B or above. There were two straight A's. An additional 107 students achieved a grade of C.

There are over 700 students attending the school which has a teacher population of 35. This year, there were 180 students enrolled in Form 1 which is the first year of secondary school.

Kerugoya is a very good school in terms of the facilities and resources available to the students. It is one of the few schools which have a computer lab but there are only 7 computers in the room. The average class size is 25, so students must share machines. Computer classes are relatively new in the Kenyan school system and most of the teachers have been recruited from the business community.

The dormitories at the school are some of the nicest



we've seen and the girls do a wonderful job of keeping them neat and tidy. Like all Kenyan boarding schools there are several dormitory buildings. Some of the girls are housed in a barracks facility and others live in individual rooms containing four beds per room. There is very little space for personal belongings. The students wear their school uniforms

exclusively and the only personal clothing allowed is their undergarments and sleepwear. The dormitories are kept locked until classes are finished for the day to ensure that the students are in class or studying in the library.

The classrooms at Kerugoya are fairly modern and the school has a very nice home sciences lab where the girls learn to cook and sew. However, the sewing machines are powered by treadle rather than electricity. The school also has a small farm where they raise crops, cows, goats and pigs which provides practical experience for the students studying agriculture. The school derives some revenue from the sale of livestock produced by their breeding program. The library is quite large but, like most schools in Kenya, they have very few books other than textbooks and periodicals. They are looking forward to our January visit when we will be stocking their shelves with some welcome reading material.

The kitchen and dining hall are also very large in comparison to many of the other Kenyan schools we have visited. Throughout the school system, meals are prepared in several large cauldrons which are fueled by burning wood.



The students are served a very simple diet consisting of ugali (a type of bread made from white cornmeal), beans vegetable stew, rice and potatoes. For breakfast, they are served porridge or sometimes just tea and white bread. Each student serves a six month rotation in the kitchen or dining hall to assist in preparing and serving the meals.

Meals are served in shifts since there is not adequate seating to feed all the students at the same time. Seating at the tables is assigned and students are rotated every few weeks so all the students in the school become well acquainted.



Kerugoya is the only school we have visited where the dining tables are set prior to each meal with cups and serving dishes. Most students in Kenya come to the dining hall carrying their bowls to be filled with the daily meal. Some schools do not have a dining hall at all and the students eat their meal sitting on the ground or on the entryway to their dormitories. One of the schools has recently raised their annual tuition by 2000 Ksh ( \$27.00) to create a fund which will be used to construct a dining hall.

## A day in the life of a Kenyan student

One of the requirements for students selected for sponsorship is that they must be enrolled in a boarding school rather than a day school. There are two primary reasons for this requirement. Since the students all come from very poor families, they may not be receiving proper nutrition at home which affects their ability to learn. Secondly, students who return home for the evening often have so many household chores to complete that they never find time to study and do homework.

A typical day for a Kenyan student in a secondary boarding school is as follows:

5:30 AM - the day begins with housekeeping chores which include making beds, sweeping or mopping the floors in the dormitory and cleaning the lavatories and showers.

7:00 AM - Breakfast followed by any housekeeping chores which were not completed before breakfast.

7:45 AM - Classes begin. Each class lasts 45 minutes and they study 7 subjects in the morning session with two break periods.

12:45 PM- Lunch

1:45 PM - Classes resume with four subjects presented in the afternoon. There are no break periods.

4:00 PM - Optional activities begin which vary depending on the day of the week. Some of the students have assigned tasks such as gardening or kitchen work. Others participate in organized games (soccer, badminton, tennis) and still others are involved in social clubs. School assemblies are also held at this time.

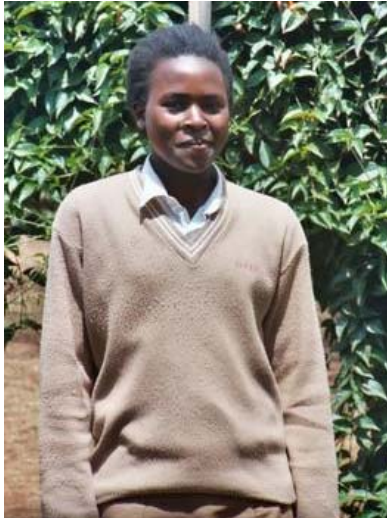
5:30 PM - Supper is served.

6:45 PM - Students return to the classrooms for study and homework. For 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students, study continues as late as 11:00 PM because they have extra work to prepare for their KCSE exam.

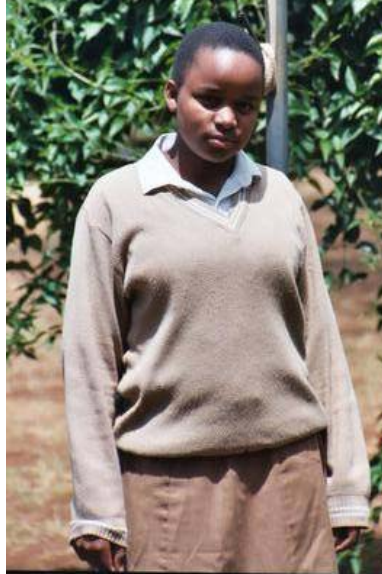
11:30 PM - Lights out.

As you can see, boarding school students have very little free time. The structure is necessary to enable them to meet the demands of studying 11 subjects during each of their four years of secondary school. The weekends are somewhat more relaxed, although they have laundry duties, additional homework and church on Sunday mornings. Sunday afternoons are usually free to read or enjoy a movie in the school assembly hall. Most of our schools have VCR equipment and regularly play videotapes for the students' entertainment.

## Our girls at Kerugoya



*Lilian is in her second year of high school and comes from a single parent home where she is being raised by her grandmother. She is currently carrying a B+ average.*



*Elizabeth is in her second year of high school and comes from a single parent home where she lives with her mother. She currently has a C+ average.*



*Mercy is in her second year of high school and is under the guardianship of the school principal because of difficulties in her family. She currently has a B+ average*



*Amina is in her second year of high school and comes from a single parent home where she lives with her mother. Her father died in an automobile accident in 2003. She currently has a C average.*



*Perpetua is in her second year of high school. She has 4 brothers and 3 sisters and her parents are unemployed. She currently has a B+ average..*



*Lilian is in her third year of high school and has 5 brothers and 3 sisters. Her parents support the family on a small farm. She currently has a C average.*