

KAASO March 2007 Update

Enrollment Increases and Facilities

KAASO's enrollment has been significantly increased this term! There are around 500 students and that means the need to build more dormitories, latrines, and classrooms has increased as well! The KAASO project's buildings are quite nice- bricks, cement, sturdy roofs, all that you would hope- but they are quite overcrowded. In fact, Kerry wrote how she had a different impression of what she'd find before coming. I'm copying a bit from her e-mail here so you know exactly what she means!

[Kerry] I must admit I had the impression that we were going to an orphanage, which the children were very sick and dying. I was quite shocked when we arrived at how good the facilities are.

In both the boy's and girl's dormitories you'll find children sleeping on the floor between the already-crowded triple-decker beds. For these children it means they have no true space to call their own and they find their mattresses getting dirty from all the other children stepping on them, etc. Many of the volunteers who come when KAASO is in a period of such overcrowding have wished to donate to the building funds rather than bring tangible donations from their home countries. You are more than welcome to do so of course, as the need to accommodate this increase with more facilities is great. (Dominic has also relayed the information that if additional monetary contributions (in addition to your Kids Worldwide Fees) are not practical or desired by you, the school would welcome the customary suitcase of donations. He has passed along some suggested items that I am listing in the section titled "Donations" below.)

As to the number of orphans at the project, it has increased in line with the general increase in student population. When the project had close to 400 students, about 100 students were considered "orphaned" (meaning had lost one parent) and about 30 were "total orphans", meaning having lost both parents. While an exact count is not yet available for this term, I was told the figures correspond.

Sponsorships

A number of former volunteers sponsor various children at the project. Jenny from the UK for example sponsors or has gotten sponsors for at least 8 children for example. And Kerry who recently left KAASO, would like to start a sponsorship program in New Zealand when she returns. I'm copying an account from an e-mail sent prior to her leaving:

[Kerry] I have been busy taking photos as I want to get a sponsorship programme set up for all the needy and orphaned children. I can't believe how many there are....I would like to hopefully get the Rotary in my home town involved as well as sponsorship and donations.

For now, the primary method is to bank transfer monies to the Director's account. He then ensures the money is given or credited for the specific child's school fees. So far this seems to

work, although at some time in the future the method might change (perhaps with the assistance of a future volunteer?) so that Dominic's personal account could be separate.

Current Volunteers

Ryon, from the United States, and Kim, from the Netherlands, are the current volunteers at the project, after Sam, from the UK, and Kerryn, from New Zealand, left towards the end of February.

I received an e-mail recently from Teacher Nsobya regarding Ryon. He wanted me to pass on his gratitude for all that Ryon does and says he has "never seen anyone as fast as him". I'm not sure if Nsobya meant Ryon can run faster than the wind or accomplishes much in little time or both (!), but it was a touching and thoughtful e-mail.

I know we'll be hearing from Ryon directly soon via his e-mail update to us all, but I thought I'd pass along Dominic's account: "We still have Ryon. He is ok [meaning he is healthy and well]. He is teaching English and in the evening he plays with the kids." It sounds fun!

When I called KAASO this week, Kim, was some distance away at a World Vision workshop in Mbale. The people at KAASO thought it was about HIV/AIDS, but couldn't confirm. When Kim is at KAASO she works as a matron in the newer boy's dormitory. Essentially, she does the work of ensuring her boys are well taken care of. This work has been so gratefully received and everyone is going to be quite upset and missing her so when she leaves.

Teachers

There have been some changes in teachers over the last number of months and I want to keep you up-to-date!

Alex Marc is no longer at the KAASO project but now lives in Kampala. Sam is the new science teacher, having taken Alex Marc's place. The report is that he is not yet up to speed, but is being "groomed" and should get there soon.

Teacher Dick has been teaching P7 English. Headmistress Rose used to have that position, but you can imagine the workload of teaching and running a boarding school! Teacher Andrew is teaching the P6 and P5 English classes.

Teacher Mathias now teaches P7 and P6 mathematics. That used to be Director Dominic's role, but Dominic is busier than Rose! Dominic is the Director of KAASO and the Director of a nearby government school in the village of Bikira.

The Director and Headmistress

As you know from above, their direct teaching duties have changed as a result of being able to hire needed additional teachers! For past volunteers they will be happy to hear that their baby girl, Prima, who was born at KAASO, is healthy and well. Despite it being months before her first birthday, she already fits the clothing labeled for a 12-month old. Dominic says "She is fine. She is big!" And their second youngest daughter Rona, who often spends time with the

volunteers, is not yet in Teacher Annette's Nursery class, but is already speaking English leaps ahead of her future classmates- a result of being around so many international visitors!

Dominic would like to announce his graduation from college. He has earned his Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education and his graduation party is scheduled for March 11! It's quite exciting news for him and everyone in the family; he has spent years earning this degree, all while working more than a full-time job!

Donations

Last year in early November I sent a package to KAASO which included a receipt book and cash ledger accounting book for the volunteer's donations. It arrived in February (3 months later!) and Dominic was able to receipt the KWW Fees Sam and Kerry brought, as well as documenting where and how the fees were used in the ledger. Dominic has pledged to be open and transparent in all his financial transactions. Be sure to get your receipt when you arrive and you are welcome, of course, to know what is being purchased with those monies! While there was no incident that caused there to be much concern with the accounting at the project, I wanted to be proactive about KAASO's accounting of the funds after I heard about another project in a different country where the volunteers had done something a bit shady monetary wise. This helps protect KAASO and the volunteers from potential misunderstandings and accusations.

As stated above, it is not necessary to bring the suitcase of donations if you'd like to contribute extra monetary funds to the building and expansion effort. However, Dominic's wish list includes the following if you prefer to bring items rather than monies beyond the KWW fee:

1. Sport's Equipment: for example football and netball uniforms, boots for footballers and spikes for netballers (that is sporting shoes)
2. Computers: laptops or updated computers would be a huge benefit for administration and for potentially teaching the students.

Solar Oven Update

The solar oven arrived at KAASO! Unlike what we had hoped, that they could cook posho and beans and save money and time by not using charcoal or firewood to cook the children's meals, it does not have any feature for boiling water, but bakes only. However, cakes and donuts have already been made and enjoyed much by the students! It's definitely been a happy time and has added something new to the diet. Of course, the problem with using much firewood and charcoal stills remains. Perhaps a future volunteer can help solve this- it'd be good for the project and good for the environment!

Laundry

Teacher Sarah would like to pass word along that she loves to help the volunteers with their laundry! Please feel free to ask her assistance as she "is so happy" when gets the chance!

That's all for our March update and our first "formal" newsletter (i.e., not a simple e-mail update)! Please let me know if there is any question or concern you'd like addressed in future editions and provide me with feedback! – Emma, Volunteer Coordinator, KAASO
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