



December 2009

KOINONIA

We belong to each other

Anita Girls Triumph at Koinonia Children's Day

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religion, sports, music and entertainment.

Children from Koinonia's Rescue Centre in Kibera easily won in the primary schools category. The secondary school category tightly contested, but schoolgirls from Anita Home proved the most adroit of the contestants. The girls brushed off a strong challenge from the Kivuli boys to win the contest.

This "small" win by the Anita girls was symbolic in a big way. In many traditional African societies, girls were perceived as "less capable" than boys, and men regarded superior to women.

Important strides have been made with the advent of modernity. Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president in 2006, and in Kenya, a female environmentalist, Wangari Maathai, beat over 130 nominees to win the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.

These milestones - as well as the relatively "smaller" victory by the Anita Girls - show that the African girl child is aiming straight for the stars beyond the ancient gender

Every year, the Koinonia Community in Nairobi sets aside a day to celebrate the deprived children that have come to form the axis of its existence.

This year's Koinonia Children's Day was held on Saturday August 15, 2009, at Anita's Home in Ngong. Gathered together were children from the various homes, Koinonia members and staffers.

There was also an enthusiastic group of Italian "work camp" volunteers, as well as Mr. Gian Marco Elia, the President of Koinonia's partner organization, Amani, and the

Dagoretti Division Children's Officer Fr. Pietro Caggiano said mass, then as the day got warmer, African songs and dances were performed. There was a volleyball game and a few short speeches here and there. The Italian work campers added colour to the celebrations, cheering the children on and later helping serve an outdoor lunch that left everyone sated. One of the highlights of the celebration was a general knowledge quiz contest pitting teams from the various Koinonia children's homes. It began just after lunch, with questions drawn from politics,

Letter from Fr. Kizito

Christmas brings us the realization that Jesus started out – just like all of us did - as a baby in need of the love and care of His Mother Mary. Yes, most extraordinary things sometimes happen in the most ordinary way, sometimes so unremarkably that we run the risk of not perceiving their meaning.

For us in Koinonia, the growth of the children under our care is one of these extraordinary things. We see them every day, and we do not marvel at the mystery of their growth. Then suddenly one day we are confronted by a different reality: a child who came to Kivuli in need of care, sick and missing even the most basic education is now a young man who is responsibly taking care of the others, writes poems, plays basketball, has a special talent in handling electronic equipment and is about to finish his secondary school. His classmate, who was equally deprived when he joined Kivuli, is now an enterprising young man with his own grocery shop a few hundred meters away and serves as a committed catechist in the nearby Parish. And so on.

Not all the growth has been positive, but the question comes, "When did these changes occur?" That is when we realize that tiny extraordinary things were happening every day, right under our eyes without us noticing them, and that is when we begin to understand and thank God for the miracle and mystery that He has created in every human being.

For me, when I underwent so many vicious attacks this year, the most moving thing has been to see that many of these formerly helpless children have been able to stand up and actively show their solidarity and care for me. All of a sudden I realized that the functions have changed: I used to consider myself their caretaker, now they take care of me.

One of the messages that the Child in Mother Mary's bosom gives us is that we need to be aware of our common humanity, of our bonds, of the fraternity which is not simply a nice feeling. It is rooted in our souls, and it is a profound part of our being that we cannot deny without denying ourselves.



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Koinonia is a lay Christian Community with a commitment to the plight of marginalized members of the society, especially street children, women and young people from deprived backgrounds.

Our initiatives are found in Kenya, Zambia and the Nuba Mountains of Sudan.

Koinonia Community
Shalom House
St Daniel Comboni Road,
P. O. Box 21255, 00505
Nairobi, Kenya.

www.koinoniakenya.org

Have a nice Christmas,
Fr. Renato Kizito Sesana, mccc.

Simba Na Mende: Kivuli's Acclaimed Mime



Koinonia's Kivuli centre has undoubtedly grown into a centre of excellence in talent.

By all indications, the centre has gone beyond its obligation to form and educate the children under its care into nurturing their sporting and artistic abilities.

This year, the centre has seen an old boy join Kenya's national soccer team, a member of its martial arts club has won medals at the World Cup in Argentina, and a team of child acrobats from the centre staged shows in various Italian cities last December.

One performance that got people talking is a mime staged by the Kivuli boys at a Christian arts festival held at Tangaza College between October 8 - 11.

Titled *Simba na Mende*, the mime was entirely delivered using gestures, facial expressions and body movements. It was an wordless narration of a rivalry between Simba the lion and Mende the cockroach over a chair.

Each of the two creatures wants to sit alone on the chair, comfortably and without sharing it.

The mime begins with both Simba and Mende jostling to occupy the entire seating space by displacing the other. Each tries his best, but when none succeeds to dislodge the other, they realize that the only option is share the chair. They agree to sit side by side, even cementing their new "spirit of sharing" with a reluctant embrace to prevent each other from falling off the shared seating space.

The fake smiles on their faces however betray each one's persisting desire to occupy the entire chair for himself, and a short while later, the two begin fidgeting, each trying to increase their occupied seating area. This renewed commotion causes the chair to drag backwards, symbolizing regression as a result of greed.

According to trainer Job Kihiko, the mime was not designed to carry one predefined meaning, but to allow each audience member draw a unique contextual interpretation.

"We chose miming for two reasons: to break the language barrier, and to suit the message to everyone, be they a child or an adult," Job explained.

The experts were very impressed by this open-ended symbolism.

"It was like peeling an onion," Scriptwriter Joseph Murungu remarked in his professional analysis. "*Simba na Mende* teaches children to prefer sharing instead of selfishness, yet adult minds can for instance interpret it in the context of Kenya's current political situation."

Murungu went on to explain his allusion to the perennial squabbles in Kenya's ruling coalition, which was formed by two competing political parties that opposed each other bitterly in a 2007 presidential election and were forced to share power after the contest failed to produce a clear winner. The brilliant performance also drew praise from Comboni priest

Pietro Caggiano, who was one of the main coordinators of the festival.

"The performance was mature, in both the art and symbolism of its deeper message," said Fr. Pietro.

* * *

Also present at the Christian Arts Festival was a team of artists from the Kivuli workshops, who had brought their work for display at the visual arts section.

Several exhibition halls had been designated, but the Kivuli artists came with a large variety of artwork and were assigned their own exhibition room.

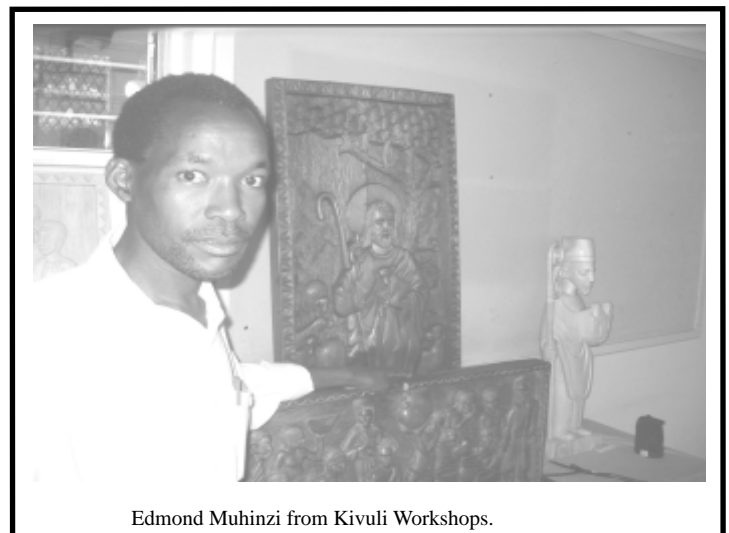
One of the artists in this room was Edmond Muhinzi, a 45 year old Rwandan sculptor from Kivuli.

Muhinzi came to Kenya as a refugee in 1997 and happened to settle near the Kivuli Centre. Living around artists, he learned to appreciate art and eventually took up sculpting. His work grew from a hobby into a passion, and finally a means to earn his daily bread.

He joined the Kivuli Workshops and polished his artistic skills as the years went by, later becoming able to sustain his family and school his children from his sculpting work. But now, economic times have changed and selling his art has become much more difficult.

"The world economic crisis has hit us hard," Muhinzi said. "Fewer tourists are coming to buy souvenirs, and the locals say they don't have the money to splurge on luxuries like artwork."

One can only hope that the Christian Arts Festival was a chance for him to network for new markets!



Edmond Muhinzi from Kivuli Workshops.

Free Dental Care for Koinonia Children



Children from the Koinonia homes received free dental services during this year's Oral Health Month Program sponsored by Colgate Palmolive, the Kenya Dental Association (KDA) and the University of Nairobi.

children to brush their teeth at least twice a day, in the morning after breakfast and before going to bed in the evening.

Dr. Stephen Irungu from the Kenya Ministry of Health explained to them that a wrong diet, eating sugary foods like confectioneries and staying without brushing teeth were among the main causes of dental problems.

A team of 15 dentists came to Shalom House on November 23 and took the children through a series of dental diagnoses and scans, and those with dental problems referred for treatment.

At the end of the day the children smiled their way back to the homes, each with a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste from Colgate

The dentists also taught oral hygiene, encouraging the

Domus Mariae School

P.O.Box 24082-00502, Nairobi-Kenya

Tel: 0725171751, 020.2117450

Email: info@domusmariae.ac.ke

Website: www.domusmariae.ac.ke



Domus Mariae means "House of Mary". As the Mother of Jesus cared for Him while Jesus grew in age and wisdom, our school wants to offer a place where young people can pursue academic excellence together with human and spiritual maturity. A holistic education based on Christian principles.

Domus Mariae, a mixed secondary school with a conducive learning environment and excellent facilities, invites applications for Form I, II, III and IV.



- The school is located in the Ngon'g Area along Kerarapon Drive.
- All students have access to a computer lab with an internet connection, under the supervision of qualified instructors.
- Boarding facilities for boys only.
- Applicants with a recommendation from their church or parish are given priority.

**QUALITY EDUCATION
AT AFFORDABLE COST**

Kivuli Represents Kenya in Sports



A member of the Kivuli Centre who represented Kenya at the 2009 Martial Arts World Cup in Argentina returned home with three medals in November.

Robinson Murundo won two silver medals and one bronze at the recently concluded world meet, which was held between October 31 and November 1 in Buenos Aires.

In total, Kenya bagged six medals – half of them won by Robinson.

Robinson is a member of the Kivuli *Tong-Il-Modo* Martial Arts Club. A teetotaller with a brown belt, Robinson is the best martial artist in Kivuli and the volunteer coach for the other 15 members of the group.

The Kenya national team was selected from among the best martial arts groups in the country.

Before leaving for Argentina, Robinson and the rest of the Kenyan team met President Mwai Kibaki at State House Nairobi.

"I felt very proud to represent my country and the Kivuli Centre at the World Cup," Robinson remarked.



Meanwhile, a Kivuli old boy has been selected to join Kenya's national soccer team.

Christopher "Kiri" Wekesa was among the first group of children that entered Kivuli in 1997. He is now coaching the Kivuli children's team and was elected the Secretary of Koinonia's new sports association, SYDI. Kiri also plays for the Kenyan premier league side Gor Mahia.

Listen to us street children

A poem by Samuel Ngugi

One takes a French leave,
Welcomed by strange friends,
Given a cold shoulder,
For no news is good news.
Out of the frying pan into the fire,
Cold, rain and even police are our best enemies,
Mosquito, lice even dogs attack us in all directions,
For no news is good news.
Hi waiter, can you help me with the menu?
Just a dream to us,
Eating left over as our favorite diet,
Some even forget they are vegetarian
For we don't choose what to eat,
For no news is good news.
Night gets even longer,
Living from hand to mouth,
Trying to take the bull by his horn all day,
For no news is good news.
Birds have their nest,
Kings have their palace,
But for us, the cold verandas and streets are for us,
For no news is good news.
Taking what does not belong to us,
Ending facing music in all directions,
Kill that one strange voice toward us,
For no news is good news.
Did any of us choose to be "chokora?"
Only a few of us,
Left by our parents
After the monster Aids took them away,
For no news is good news.
Born with great talents,
Using them to make both ends meet,
Trying to turn over a new leaf with them,
Only god will help the news be good news.
We have dream,
That one day people will treat us equal,
That they will stop discrimination over us,
That the news will be good news,
Looking forward to the future,
Hoping that we will shine,
Wishing that our tomorrow will be best,
For the news might be good if we try
To make our tomorrow be best.

Italians Donate Computers to Domus Mariae

In September 2009 a group of Italians donated 18 new computers to Koinonia's Domus Mariae School in Kerarapon.

The Italians donated the computers in commemoration of their long time friend Federico Ceratti, who died in a car accident

The new computers will help restock the lab after some laptops from a previous donation were stolen in a night robbery in June last year. They are all HP brands with flat

School principal Peter Apiyo thanked the donors for their contribution, saying the newly re-equipped computer lab will go a long way in helping the school promote computer literacy among its students.



[Click here to watch video.](#)

Domus Marie School now has its own website. [Click here to view it.](#)

New Uniforms for Ndugu Mdogo Rugby Team

A new rugby team from the Ndugu Mdogo Rescue Centre in Kibera received a donation of uniforms from Bergamo 1950, a professional Italian Rugby League side.

The supplies, consisting of 20 red uniforms with blue shoulder stripes, and four rugby balls, were donated by the Italian club in response to a request by 42-year-old Mario Bartorelli, himself a former Bergamo player, who served as the Ndugu Mdogo team's founding coach.

Mario's association with the team began when he visited the Ndugu Mdogo Rescue Centre in Nairobi's Kibera slum while on a personal mission to adopt a Kenyan child into his family.

Impressed to see a bunch of former street children playing his favourite sport right in the heart of Africa's largest slum, Mario instinctively added them to his schedule of commitments, visiting often and eventually organizing them into a rugby team with himself as a volunteer coach.

For three months between January and March 2009, Mario moulded the new team. Training sessions were held at the RFUEA grounds along Ngong Road, where the boys adapted to the rules and techniques of the sport with bubbling alacrity despite playing barefoot.



When Mario returned home to Italy, he implored his former league club to donate provisions that would help nurture the potential talent he had spotted at the Centre.

Rugby is one of the recreational activities that form part of the Rescue Centre's rehabilitation programme. The nascent team has 23 boys all aged between nine and sixteen. All of them have already been reintegrated back into the society after one year of rehabilitation.

"The rugby team is a great idea, because it teaches the children virtues like discipline, cooperation and teamwork," says Jack Matika, a social

worker at the Ndugu Mdogo Rescue Centre. "It is also therapeutic it helps the children bond after the busy week in school. It also helps them readjust to the home environment after a whole year of formation," Jack adds.

Other recreational activities at the Centre include soccer, scouting and acrobatics. The continued engagement of such reintegrated boys in these activities enables social workers from the Centre to maintain contact and a steady follow up on the boys' rapprochement with their parents or guardians.

Currently, the rugby team practices for two hours every Sunday under Coach Mary Mueni, a female tactician who volunteered to train the team after watching them practice at the RFUEA grounds under Mario's guidance.

Although soccer is easily the most popular sport among many Kenyans, and despite the global celebrity of Kenya's acclaimed marathoners, rugby has lately emerged as one of the country's most popular field sports.

The Tusker Safari Sevens, an international rugby tournament held every year in Nairobi, has become one of Africa's premier rugby tournaments, and this year, Kenya's national rugby team reached the semifinals of the International Rugby Board (IRB) Series leg in Hong Kong.

With the emerging prominence of rugby in the country, local and foreign professional leagues could one day become a source of employment for young Kenyans. About thirty per cent of Kenya's population is unemployed, and with support and nurturing, sports like rugby could provide some respite.

Perhaps in pursuit of this dream, the Ndugu Mdogo boys don their new uniforms and show up at the RFUEA grounds for practice every Sunday afternoon. They play, laugh and tease in apparent oblivion of the myriad cars swishing down the adjacent Ngong Road.

As they sweat it out in the hot sun - and sometimes in the rain - their vivid red uniforms are almost a metaphor for their hope for a brighter future, a fresh start miles away from the harsh, decadent streets of Nairobi.

In Praise of Ourselves: A reflection on the Mthunzi experience.

LUSAKA ZAMBIA

I have lived in Mthunzi for many years - actually half of my eighteen years of life! And I really feel I have to thank all the people who have contributed to our happiness: our friends from Amani, our friends from Mali, all the many other friends who visit and spend some time with us, and Father Kizito. In the first months of my stay here I could not believe that this 'stranger' would come every few months from Nairobi to see us, and be concerned about our education and our growth into good people. Now I understand, because he really is my father, as each one of us in Mthunzi would say.

Mthunzi is no paradise on earth. The people living here, both the staff and the boys, are not perfect. Mthunzi is a Christian centre whose vision is to educate and help the youth of today to become better and more responsible citizens of Zambia and the world at large. I feel that in spite of some problems we have to thank God because we are getting there.

Life in Mthunzi is a continuous exercise in sharing. We take great care of each other, we make sure that each one gets to know his inner talents and gets to develop them. We are inseparable, and we enjoy all the time we spend together.

The biggest gift that God has given me and all the rest of us is this big family of 58 boys, and we feel lonely whenever we are far from each other. We depend on each other, and as our motto says, WE BELONG TO EACH OTHER.

Our hearts are open and we welcome everyone. Do you think I am exaggerating? Come and spend some time with us!

Mike Mwenda

The 2009 Mthunzi Zamscot



The word "Zamscot" means "Zambian - Scottish cultural exchange."

It is an annual cultural exchange between the Zambian and Scottish people that joins the town of Lochgilphead and the Isle of Barra in Scotland in friendship with the Koinonia Mthunzi Centre.

The Scots Arrive.

This year's Zamscot started with the arrival of our Scottish friends on July 6. They attended some media interviews on the morning of July 9, followed by a trip to Luangwa district in Lusaka province on July 10.

First Performances.

Our first Zamscot performances took place at the Luangwa Basic School, where we performed with some local cultural groups. The second performance was at the Lusaka playhouse, which is a major theatre hall for artistes. People paid 50,000 Kwacha (about seven Euro) to watch this performance.

Visits to the Rural Areas.

After the two performances, the Zamscot team journeyed to the Copper Belt Province in northern Zambia, where we performed at the Chingola High School.

We also visited the copper mines, seeing both the "open cast" and the "shaft" or "underground" mines. Another trip took us to Mazabuka in Monze District, Southern Province, where we toured a sugar plantation.

Our fourth performance was on the night of July 16. After a visit to the Victoria Falls and Zambia's biggest museum on July 17, it was time to return to Lusaka.

Fr. Carlos' Anniversary.

On July 18, there was a big feast for Fr. Carlos, a Comboni Missionary who has been a priest for 25 years. We were invited to celebrate this anniversary with him at Lilanda Parish, where the fifth Zamscot performance took place.

End.

The Zamscot ended on July 20. Our Scottish friends said goodbye to us and travelled back home to Scotland.

Click for More News from Koinonia Zambia.

Bernad and Protazio

A New School for the Nuba



Sarbule, Sudan

In October, Koinonia inaugurated a new school in Sarbule, a village in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan.

Sarbule is a big village with over 20,000 dwellers. During Sudan's civil war, families from the area escaped into the nearby Kerker Hills, which provided some protection from aerial bombings.

Koinonia took over a "bush school" in Kerker as the war raged, bringing in teachers from Kenya and conducting classes in mud-walled classrooms. Pupils sat on stones and the rain sometimes poured in through the grass roofs.

When the civil war ended in 2005, the families began migrating back to the more agreeable terrain of the Sarbule valley. Koinonia decided to move the school to their midst, with permanent classrooms for better learning.

That is the story of the new Koinonia Model School in Sarbule!



Shalom House Kenya

"A Center for peace and Justice"



Shalom House has excellent facilities for tourists and business travelers who need to spend some time in Nairobi. There are 21 comfortable, self-contained, single/double room plus seven self-contained rooms for four persons.

Laundry services, secure parking and a spacious outdoor playground for children, are available with several conference halls that can accommodate up to 80 people, audiovisual services available upon request, high speed wireless internet connection, it is the choice venue for seminars, workshops and conferences. The green leafy garden provides extra space suitable for group events and outdoor celebrations.

The personnel is friendly and well trained. Guests can have their meals at the Baraza Café- with budget friendly choices - where buffets for conferences and seminar participants are offered - or at L'Arena, one of the best Italian restaurants in town, on a la carte menu.

A well furnished African Art shop, a cab, and a tourist trip service also operate from the premises.



P.O.Box 21255-00505, Nairobi-Kenya
 Tel: +254-725901248/020.3877553
 Fax: 020.3870656
Email: marketing@shalomhousekenya.org
Website: www.shalomhousekenya.org

Location: St, Daniel Comboni Road, about 7 km from the city center, off Ngong road to the right after Dagoretti Corner also easily accessible using matatu number 111.





The Koinonia Community in Nairobi wishes you joy and laughter during this Christmas Season and prosperity in the coming year.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2010!



We belong to each other.

www.koinoniakenya.org

Follow Our News Online

Our websites are getting richer with news, pictures and short videos. You can always find out the latest activities and developments on our website.

VISIT ALSO

- ★ [Father Kizito's blog](#)
- ★ [Shalom House](#)
- ★ [Koinonia on Wikipedia](#)
- ★ [Click here to read the reflections of a group of acrobats from Kivuli who visited Italy in 2008.](#)
- ★ [Spirit of service: A video documentary on Youtube about the Koinonia Community and its mission to serve the marginalized members of our society.](#)