

FRIENDS OF THE KAREN STREET

CHILDREN

December 2008

Happy Christmas to all our friends and supporters

For the past thirteen years the Karen Street Children's Trust has been working to build a brighter future for impoverished and disadvantaged children from the slums surrounding the Karen suburb of Nairobi. 2008 has been a happy and successful year for us all, despite the upheavals and destruction wrought by the post-election violence at the



beginning of the year. In January we took on eleven new students, whose lives had been turned upside-down in the mayhem, and all have settled and are working hard. Some are orphans, one girl had been promised in marriage (as a second wife) to a man old enough to be her father and begged us for help, and others were simply destitute with no hope of a future. **Faith** (left) has been with us for two years, is at a prestigious secondary school and is our first student to bring an end-of-term report with straight "A" grades. She had no hope of education beyond Primary School until she came to us, but now is fortunate to have a sponsor and a bright future. There are so many more like Faith in the slums who are bright but condemned to a life of drudgery without help.

The **Karen Street Children's Trust** has now helped 116 children to build a bright future. This year a further two of our original street children, **Kennedy** and **Joseph**, have "graduated" as qualified mechanics and have glowing letters of recommendation from their work experience. Ten students have completed secondary education, and

we are anticipating that several of them will qualify for University. All will undertake six months of community work before further studies. Five students are currently in University and Diploma colleges, **Mary** studying **Banking**, **Judy**, **Clinical Medicine**, **Joseph**, **Computer Engineering**, **Jackson**, **Community Development** and **Simon**, **Electrical and Electronic Engineering**. All are doing well in their academic careers. Five others are in various **vocational training courses**, including several girls rescued from dire home situations. It is so rewarding to see the development of self-esteem in those who arrive withdrawn and depressed, but are now self-confident and happy young people.

In addition to our ambitious high-achieving students, we also take on a small number of students, mostly girls, who have suffered unsupportable hardships at home and who need to be able to grow up in safety in the security of a boarding environment. We already have a flood of applicants for 2009, and will have the agonising task of

selecting those whom we can afford to take on. All the children are interviewed, and various things taken into consideration: academic ability, level of destitution, whether orphaned or lacking in parental support, and personal drive and determination to succeed. A "pizzazz" factor and charisma helps!

All our students are in boarding schools and colleges across the country, where they are getting an education in a safe environment, with food provided and a bed to sleep in at night. Many of our students are not assured of even these basics at home. We are proud to be able to provide for a small group of bright children what so many elsewhere take for granted.

The costs of educating a child for a year are as follows:

Boarding Primary School:	Kshs 60,000.-	GBP 515
Boarding Secondary School	Kshs 75,000.-	GBP 645

This is based on actual costs for the year 2008, and includes school fees, food and accommodation for boarding pupils, textbooks and stationery, all uniform, shoes, transport, tuck, pocket money and holiday activities, and a cover for medical emergencies.

Last year I received a Christmas card signed by all the children, saying simply:

"Mama, we love you".

I feel so privileged to be able to transform these lives, through all the generosity of our friends, sponsors and benefactors.

KSC has made a dramatic difference to the lives of many children. Poverty, strife and illness are taking a terrible toll in Africa, and many children suffer. We are able to give a future of hope to just a few of these children, thanks to the generosity of our donors and friends. We are always grateful for any donation, however small. "A little goes a long way"

Thank you so very very much to all of you, on behalf of all of us.

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Chairperson
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