



Emerging Humanity

November, 2009



Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

We're extremely proud of the work our staff, volunteers and partners have done this year. Hopefully after reading this special Thanksgiving newsletter you will be, too!

As always, we thank you for your continued support.

In May of this year, Emerge began working with 49 nursery schools in a beautiful, but very poor, area called Kajulu (*ka-joo-loo*), which lies just outside the main city of Kisumu. The combined enrollment of these schools is over 3,000 children, all between three and six years-old. They receive little or no support from the government or other organizations, despite their hard work and desperate circumstances. In response, we have begun a comprehensive intervention program that seeks to improve the quality of education for these children, and to have a lasting impact in their communities.



Our First Teachers Workshop

Happy teachers making sock puppets. In May, Emerge volunteers Roxanne Caires and Marcelo Blanco developed an eight-session workshop series based upon research conducted by the World Bank, and upon the Kenyan national syllabus for *Early Childhood Development* (or *ECD*). The workshops were aimed at improving both their teaching capacity and their access to resources. As we distributed copies of the national syllabus to each school, most of the head teachers admitted they had never even seen it. The Ministry of Education recognized these efforts to reinforce the national curriculum and agreed to certify the training sessions.

Each Saturday for eight weeks, more than 140 teachers joined us for our lectures and activities, which focussed on the importance of ECD, and on various ways of engaging with children of that age.

The specific themes of the workshops included: hands-on math, reading and phonics, participatory learning, storytelling and organizational skills such as lesson planning. Throughout the workshop series we also stressed the importance of teachers creating their own teaching and learning materials from available and affordable materials. Many teachers were thrilled to realize they didn't need money to have great materials in their classrooms.

At the last workshop, each teacher who regularly attended the training sessions received a notarized certificate from the government of Kenya. This is an invaluable asset for these teachers, many of whom have no formal training and so, despite years of



Marcelo watches as another proud teacher receives her certificate.

teaching experience, they remain unpaid for their difficult work. We're proud that our workshops and their certificates represent an important step toward achieving permanent, paid teaching positions.

Infrastructure Development Projects

In June a team of five volunteers arrived in Kisumu to join project managers Ty Hoegger and Marcel Ameda. In three short months they managed to accomplish an impressive amount of work. They built nine toilets, provided blackboards and other learning materials to 17 schools, and installed safe water containers at eight schools. And here's the kicker: along with the local community members, they built or renovated eight entire classrooms!

So how exactly does it work?

Let's look at the broad overview of the process before we dive into the exciting details of what we've already achieved. First we ask parents and community members to contribute a certain amount of building supplies or unskilled labor. Once the community contribution has been gathered at the site, we organize the rest of the needed materials and labor, and then we oversee the completion of the project.

This process has worked remarkably well, and has allowed us to involve the entire community surrounding each school. In this way we've been able not only to significantly reduce the chances of these young children contracting illnesses, but also to engage their parents and the rest of the community directly.

Our research and the early feedback we've received has given us a lot of encouragement that this method of community participation fosters a greater sense of investment in these projects, making it much more likely that the new facilities will be appreciated and maintained.



From left to right: Marcel Ameda, Alex Ingram, Ryan Butler, Marcelo Blanco, Pete Nkengasong and Ty Hoegger.

If you're wondering what these guys are pointing at, they'd just completed a mural inside an ECD classroom at one of our partner schools. As you can see, they were quite proud --

Latrines

Early on we conducted a needs-assessment of our partner schools and saw immediately that many ECD centers in Kajulu had unsafe and unsanitary toilets, or had no



Ty Hoegger admires a very scary latrine.

toilets at all. In fact, some of these structures were on the verge of collapse and it was only a matter of time before a child died. One school, Emmanuel ECD, had even been condemned due to the dangerous state of their toilets.

Thankfully, Emerging Humanity has stepped in and offered to help, starting with the schools that need it most. In the picture to the right, a group of volunteers stands proudly in front of Emmanuel's brand new latrines.

The teachers now have to put padlocks on the latrine doors at night to prevent the rest of the community from coming to use the nicest toilets in the area!



Sounds funny, but that's one beautiful latrine!



A freshly plastered latrine, ready for painting.

Now that their toilets are safe, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have both agreed to allow Emmanuel ECD center to continue helping the children of Kajulu. In fact, the teachers have reported a sharp increase in enrollment since the new latrines were completed. We are only just beginning to see the impact-potential of such a latrine intervention. It is a highly effective way that Emerge is able to make a big difference within a short time frame.



Thanks to Ryan for painting so many logos!

Water Containers

Just last year a Kajulu student died from Cholera because he bathed in the same river from which most of our partner schools fetch their water. Emerging Humanity is trying to find ways that these schools can provide clean water to the students, but we also know that it's very hard to ensure safe water in these circumstances. Thanks to our continued friendship with water and sanitation researchers working in Kisumu, we know that any system we introduce will always be dependent upon the diligence

of the people using it. Even rainwater harvesting systems are still subject to recontamination. With this in mind we decided that the best way to make safe water immediately available for these children was for the schools to use large containers (with push-button taps to prevent easy contamination), and to treat their water with a simple, locally-available water purification product.

To maintain the same model of community contribution that has worked so well with our other projects, we reached an agreement with the schools that needed the most help with this problem. Each was required to purchase a replacement tap and enough of the treatment solution to provide two liters of safe water for each of their students for six months. This forced them to discover where they could find these things in their communities, as they would need them in the future to maintain the system. In exchange, Emerge provided them with 50 liter containers and cast-iron stands. This is yet another simple intervention that has an immediate effect, and if they are well maintained, these systems can last for many years.

Another locally-based organization has agreed to make follow-up visits to the schools, and to provide sanitation and hygiene training to the students and to the teachers. Emerge was able to provide these simple, effective safe water systems to seven schools in Kajulu, some of which have over 200 students. We will conduct a follow-up assessment of this approach when we return this coming January.



Pete and Ty painting on the porch.

Blackboards

When we first thought of this idea, none of us realized how wonderful it would turn out. This is a great example of how a simple and cheap project can have a huge impact on the lives of children in poverty. One of the biggest difficulties the teachers in Kajulu face is that they have almost no teaching materials whatsoever. Just imagine standing in front of a group of five year-olds for ten hours at a time, six days a week, without even a blackboard or paper. That does *not* sound fun! It's easy to understand why so many teachers feel overwhelmed, frustrated and under-appreciated.

So we went out and bought thirty pieces of plywood and a few buckets of blackboard paint. We assembled them on our front porch, where we nailed simple borders to them and slapped on some paint. And that's all it took! There was such obvious gratitude on the teachers' faces when we arrived unannounced at 17 different schools to deliver our homemade blackboards. As the summer went on, this project was eclipsed by our bigger interventions such as the latrines. But then we realized that most of the kids had never even written on blackboards before. They were SO excited that their teachers, and even parents, often thanked us for the blackboards before even mentioning the construction projects we had thought made the biggest difference!



Marcel delivering yet another blackboard.

Major Construction and Renovations

This summer we also built or renovated eight whole classrooms! These were major projects involving a lot of community participation. Based on our assessments and the applications we received, we began to make arrangements to determine the appropriate level of community contribution we could expect from each school. Many of the ECD schools in Kajulu were made from mud and so the children sat on dirt floors for long hours every day, exposing them to a wide range of parasites, infections and diseases. By pouring a cement foundation and plastering the walls of these schools, we have essentially transformed them into entirely new learning environments. The psychological impact alone has been huge, affecting not only the children but their parents and others in the community. Many feel a great sense of pride at these newly renovated buildings, which are now quite nicer than most of their homes.



A typical ECD school in Kajulu.



Incredibly, this was still in use.

At one school we even constructed a whole classroom building, from start to finish. Their former mud-and-stick structure had been condemned, but the children had no where else to go. It was a real mess, with huge holes in the ceiling that allowed rain to pour onto the mud floors. Big, dangerous cracks ran through the walls, threatening to drop chunks of hardened earth - or even the whole roof - onto the kids. The youngest of the students spent their days in a classroom that was missing an entire wall, and so they were completely exposed to the elements (*picture to the left*).

...but not anymore!

Thanks to Emerging Humanity, that school now has one of the nicest Early Childhood Development centers in Kajulu. It was our biggest project of the summer, and the result has left us very proud indeed. Even the local teenagers are jealous, because their primary and secondary school classrooms are not nearly as well ventilated and don't have cement floors.

When the school opened, the head teacher called all the parents together to show them their new building. It was an exciting process, as many of the parents had themselves contributed the bricks and mortar, or had hauled water up from the nearest water source.



Our biggest project of the year, near completion.

Not only do such projects improve the daily living conditions of the students and teachers who spend their days at these schools, the presence of such buildings in the community also makes a very public statement celebrating Early Childhood Development as an important component of personal growth.



This building used to look a little worse than the typical school above. Here it is on the day we finished with the renovation.



Kevin admires the new building we constructed to replace that sad structure at the top of the page. Something of an improvement, don't you think?



Local volunteers help paint the blackboards inside the new building.

Community Building Events



Tree Planting Festival

In July, Emerging Humanity volunteer Ryan Butler organized an environmental festival at our partner school in Kisumu's enormous slum area called Nyalenda.



Ryan enjoying the party.

It was an inspiring day full of soccer, sack-races and all sorts of field games. Such events may be fairly common elsewhere, but most students in Kenya have to sit in their desks for at least ten hours a day, and they *never* get to spend an entire day playing silly games with all their teachers and friends. The main tree planting event was a huge success. A crowd of parents, teachers and students worked together to plant over 400 thirsty trees in a major flood zone that is a constant threat to the school. These trees should help prevent a great deal of floodwater from entering the school buildings.



Parent Teacher Meetings

Obstacles to the improvement of ECD education in Kajulu are not limited only to the lack of infrastructure and resources. Most parents in the community don't understand the value of early childhood education. Most teachers rely solely on parent fees to pay their wages because the Kenyan government does not support Early Childhood Development. Parents who send their children to an ECD center are often reluctant to pay, and many more simply choose to keep their children at home until they are old enough for free primary education. Because of these circumstances the relationship between parents and teachers is tense and distant. Teachers are angry because the parents hardly ever pay school fees; and the parents avoid the teachers because they are always asking them for money.

To combat these problems we have launched an exciting new series of social gatherings aimed at breaking down these barriers, and at informing parents about the importance of ECD as a crucial period of their children's cognitive and emotional development. We've had five meetings since August, and altogether more than 1000 parents have attended. Many have said that they've never been to an event like this, where they're not asked for anything and are simply called together to have fun and share ideas. Word is spreading through Kajulu, and both parents and teachers have said that they feel a change in their communities since these meetings have begun. Positive relationships are forming where there were few before, and enrollment at ECD schools in Kajulu is already increasing!

top left: Children race with their trees to the field where they were planted.

top middle and right: The amazing Francisca Hawallah and the congenial Ishmail JaKajulu address separate audiences at our first few parent teacher meetings.



Lots of laughter as Kajulu's hilarious acting troupe performs at a great parent teacher meeting.



This year, thanks to all of our supporters, our projects reached more than 6,000 children and a community of over 20,000 people! We constructed eight school classrooms, built nine toilets, and delivered safe water systems or learning materials to more than 20 schools. Over the Christmas holidays we will be constructing desks and chairs for hundreds of children.

In January of 2010, we'll be working with the local government to officially open the Lifunga Girls High School. This school (built by Emerging Humanity) represents the first opportunity that the under-privileged young women in Lifunga have ever had to receive high school education. The students will start school in February, but before that we will need to build toilets and water facilities, and to purchase all of their books. To accomplish this we will need to raise more funds.

We hope this newsletter shows how far we've come; but it's also meant to convince you how much farther we can go. Over the holiday season please remember to visit our website and make a contribution to Emerging Humanity, so that next year we can continue to improve education for children in poverty.



On this day of Thanksgiving, we'd like to give special thanks to a few key people who helped to make this year such a success.



Julia Shu-Huah

The first shout-out goes to **Julia Shu-Huah**, a grad student at Columbia University. In August Julia came to Kisumu to conduct an independent evaluation of our projects. She spent three weeks tirelessly interviewing teachers, parents, and government officials so that she could write an impact analysis, which Emerge can now use as both a learning and a fundraising tool.



Chairs for Lifunga.

Thank you to all the United Kingdom folks involved with the **Mixed Veg Foundation** and the **Hart Foundation**, as well, for purchasing chairs for Lifunga Girls High School. Thank you so much for your support. We can't wait to show you the photos of young women sitting on those chairs, learning physics and Kiswahili!



Francisca and Ishmail

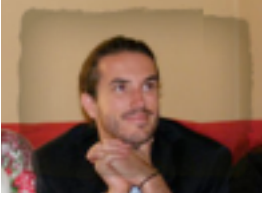
We also give thanks to the **Kenyan Ministry of Education**, and in particular to Francisca Hawallah and Ishmail Wuor Kajulu, for their commitment and perseverance. Little of the work we've done so far would have been possible without the cooperation and support we've received from the Ministry, and from these two civil servants.

Lastly, we would like to thank Judy Thorpe and everyone at **Hermans and Associates** for their accounting and tax services for the past several years. Everyone involved with Emerge owes them a debt of gratitude.

The Emerging Humanity Team

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Bart Abbott is president of Emerging Humanity and every year spends 3-6 months in Kenya volunteering on the projects. Whenever possible Bart returns to the states to raise funds for the cause. Right now he is in Sierra Leone, working as a monitoring and evaluation specialist for the United Nations. In January, he'll be back in Kenya to help Emerge complete the next round of projects. Bart is also working toward a Master's degree in Sustainable Development from University of London-SOAS.



When **Ty Hoegger** is not in Africa taking GPS coordinates or organizing the latest Emerge construction project, he can usually be found "shreddin' the gnar" somewhere in the Rocky Mountains. He is currently studying Geographic Information Systems and has just landed an impressive internship at a big GIS company in Colorado.



Marcel Ameda is a lifelong resident of Kisumu District. He studied marketing and sales in college, and then became a taxi driver for two decades. When we discovered Marcel's natural ability to work with people and his desire to learn more about our projects, Emerge recruited him as one of our project managers. Marcel is now a vital asset to our team.



Bill Hansen is our Vice President and Treasurer. As one of the founders of Emerging Humanity, Bill is devoted to the organization and to creating compassionate changes in the world. He graduated from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay, Wisconsin with a Marketing Associate Degree in 2007. Bill has since relocated to Fort Myers, Florida to pursue a full-time career opportunity. In his free time he enjoys hiking and backpacking.



Kevin Riordan is also co-founder of Emerge. Among his other contributions, he has spent countless hours creating and editing documents for us over the years. Last summer he finally made it to Kenya, and now he's back in Olympia where he is currently staying up all night to finish this newsletter in time for Thanksgiving. He will travel back to Kenya this January to make a documentary video exploring some of the issues surrounding our work in Kajulu. Kevin hopes to one day be a fiction writer, or at least a mediocre poet.



The savvy **Alex Ingram** is from the UK, where he runs an event DJ business that he founded at the tender age of 15. Since then he has continued to pursue his dual passions for acting and business. While in Kisumu Alex was not only helping Emerge, but also overseeing a wide range of other development projects. He is currently back at home in England where he plans to study acting as a means for therapy and social change.



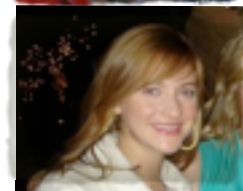
Ryan Butler is a student of environmental science at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. After he met Kevin and was inspired by all the stories about Emerge, he decided to join us in Kisumu for the summer. He was a big help, and now Ryan is back in Olympia where he plans to finish his B.S. and go on to become a wildlife biologist.



Roxi Caires was born in France and moved to Honolulu when she was very young. This year she brought her 'make it work' attitude to Kenya where she designed many different components of our ECD program in Kajulu. Somehow she survived living in a tiny house with five of us boys. Today she's in San Francisco where she's working toward a degree in Child Psychology at UC-Berkely. Roxi plans to return to Kenya sometime in the next year.



Marcelo Blanco studies psychology in his home country of Brazil. He heard about Emerging Humanity through a friend who worked for our partner organization, Peace Child International. Marcelo spent several months in Kenya helping us with our projects. In particular, he was key to the great success of our teacher workshop series. Marcelo is now back in Brazil.



Lauren Haugh has been a loyal Emerge supporter since before we even had a name. She has a degree in technical writing from the University of Wisconsin system and over five years in professional web development experience. Lauren has helped us establish our online donation system and she's working with Kevin on a new website that will be much more interactive. Lauren has yet to come to Kenya, but we all want her to come so, so badly!