

SCAW NEWSLETTER



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A charitable registered Canadian organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden April (1), 2005

KENYA: March 14 - 20, 2005: 3,000 Bedkits

**BY KEN GRAHAM
HILLSBURGH, ONTARIO**

Was this, my 13th distribution, different from all the others? Yes!

First of all our travelling team of Duncan Macgregor (3rd distribution), Judy Snobelen (2nd trip), Jeff McDougall (2nd trip), Gail Gowanlock (1st trip), and I had never worked together before. It is absolutely amazing how five people can come together, virtually as strangers, and work so well in such a short time. I believe it is because we all have the same desire to achieve the SCAW objective of helping needy children have a chance to develop and grow. Getting good nights' sleep and by knowing that someone cares about their plight and is willing to help, gives them an incentive to aim towards a better way of life than is found in the slums of a city like Nairobi, Kenya.

Secondly, this was difficult because it was the first time for a SCAW distribution in Kenya, therefore we were working with a club which had no previous experience in organizing a distribution. This of course caused some confusion, delays and anxious moments — When will the bedkits arrive? We have been at the site for over an hour and still no bedkits! However the end result was that all 3,000 children did receive their bedkits which were so generously donated by you.

Thirdly, this trip was very different as it was my first trip to Africa, and their customs were not what I might have anticipated. The



Kenyan children are very black-skinned being from that part of Africa known as "Black Africa".

Fourthly, I personally had many emotions on this distribution which I can't adequately describe. Approximately 250 children received bedkits in memory of my wife, Ann, who passed on to glory this past January 19th. Ann had requested that donations be made to SCAW in lieu of flowers. As I took pictures or handed the bedkits to badly handicapped, orphaned or just plain very needy children, I felt the love and compassion Ann had for children being delivered with each and every bedkit. What a privilege it was for me to give these children hope on behalf of a wonderful and caring woman!

Kenya Bedkit

Mattress
Bed sheet
Pillow and cover
Blanket
Mosquito net
Shorts
T shirt
Flip flops
Towel
School bag

Travelling volunteers do more than just distribute bedkits on behalf of you, the donors. We also have the privilege of telling the story of Sleeping Children Around the World to groups here at home. Children to whom we speak learn about geography, other cultures, the joy of helping others and hearing about situations in which others find themselves. We also get to meet many caring people here in churches, and service clubs, or ordinary individuals who want to do their part in creating a better world. And, we have a good time while we are in the participating countries with our (SCAW) partner groups.

On this trip all our team members chose to take a three day safari following the distribution, and we went to the huge Masai Mara wild game reserve and saw many animals in their natural habitat. They included lions, elephants, leopards, zebras, hyenas, hippopotami, giraffes, water buffalos, and many more. Of course, these opportunities take second place to giving the bedkits to the children. Without love and caring by people like you, I don't believe Sleeping Children Around the World could have the impact on children's lives that it has. Perhaps some of the poems that were recited to us by children at distribution sites say more about their situation than I can. Here are three of them:

INNOCENT ORPHANS

By teacher Ezekiel Otworu

Innocent orphans we have become
through a harsh reality of life
we have accepted
because we can't avoid it.
Sorrow, pain and bitterness
we have gone through.
Hopeless, empty and bleak
we thought will be our future.
Diversity, our best teacher
has taught us and showed us
the two sides of life.
Happiness and bitterness,
The true meaning of life.
Kind friends, we are very grateful
that you chose to help us
in this challenging journey
towards our distant destiny.

AFTER

By teacher Mary Muthini,
Stara Rescue Centre

After AIDS killed our parents,
Relatives took and sold our
properties.

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MURRAY'S DREAM 1,000,000 BEDKITS - TO DATE 761,850!

(Kenya by Ken Graham, Hillsburgh, Ontario,
continued from page 1)

They physically abused us,
And denied us our rights.
Finally we started roaming aimlessly
Far and near the neighbourhood,
Looking for food, because
Hunger was our big problem.
Later it became unbearable,
And now on the crossroads,
We remember our dear parents,
With their kind and lovely care.
Luckily you have come to rescue us
and we are very grateful.
May God Bless you always.

**A poem from
hearing impaired children**

I am a child of God
God created me special
I can see,
I can smell,
I can walk,
I can think and feel,
But I cannot hear,
That is why I am God's special child.
Thank you.

Thank you, donors, for caring about those
less fortunate.

**BY JEFF MCDOUGALL
KETTLEBY, ONTARIO**

I stooped down to pick up a small,
dangerous-looking piece of metal as the
camera was being set up, but stopped myself.
As I looked around I realized that this part
of the slums, and the area where we were
taking pictures and distributing bedkits,
stood on top of a garbage dump. To pick up
all of the things dangerous to the children
here would have been an impossible task. I
shrugged my shoulders – this was yet
another aspect of Kenya I had discovered.
Kenya straddles the equator, has diverse
geography dominated by the volcanic
action of the Great Rift Valley, and with a
population of 31 million people, is a land of
stark contrasts. Kenya is both the economic
engine of central-eastern Africa and the
home, in Nairobi the capital, of the largest
slums in all Africa – Kibera.

Nairobi is a very modern and cosmopolitan
city, established scarcely more than 100
years ago. On the other hand, Kenya is



home to several
smaller nomadic
tribes such as the
Masai people, who
try to live their
traditional lives despite the modern activity
constantly in view. Kenya is known world-
wide for its fantastic wildlife, and the wide
open spaces of the national parks are an
amazing sight to see. These parks are only
a few hours' drive from the crowded and
dusty slums of Nairobi, which house about
a million people. Looking around the streets
of Nairobi, the people seem a perfect picture
of robust health, but the HIV/AIDS crisis is
overwhelming, and the topic came up in
almost every conversation that we had with
the teachers and workers we met at the
various distribution sites.

Finally, although Kenya is gaining a
reputation for its soaring crime rate, the
incredible compassion we saw time and again
of Kenyans giving of their time and meager
resources was heart-breaking. So I didn't
pick up the piece of metal, and I didn't clean
up the garbage dump, but I did play a part in
delivering 3,000 bedkits to some of the world's
'most needy' children that I had ever seen.
No, this is not a solution to all of Kenya's
problems, but for 3,000 children, it was a
great start.

**BY JUDY SNOBELEN
RIPLEY, ONTARIO**

Our team have just finished SCAW's very
first distribution to Kenya. 3,000 bedkits
went to children in the slums of Nairobi. This
distribution was both successful and
challenging.

Having travelled previously with SCAW, it
amazes me to see the "Children of the World".
Regardless of whether they are in Canada or
India or Africa, they all love to sing, dance,
laugh and smile, whenever they are being
greeted by friendly faces, and these children
are no different. However, these Kenyan
children are truly desperate. Many of them
spend their nights sleeping on cardboard.
Their homes are shanties made of tin, sticks,
mud, and plastic.

We gave out 351 bedkits at Stara Children's
Rescue and School. The children sang a
song telling us that they have a choice to be
happy or bitter about the difficult lives they

are living. It was a privilege to embrace them
on behalf of you, the donors, as I gave out
their bedkits, knowing that they would be
sleeping on a mattress for the first time – I
couldn't help but think of my grandchildren,
Brooke, Annie, Kate and Cole, who sleep in
comfy beds every night. This school is
grateful for a lady from the Netherlands who
pays their teachers' salaries of \$50 each
month, and the World Food Program, which
regularly donates beans and maize to feed
them lunch and supper.

There are 1,000+ students at Toi Primary
School in the Kibera slums of Nairobi. We
gave out 535 bedkits to their younger
students. I talked to a beautiful, bright 11-
year-old girl, Sharon Aninyi Duma, who was
in grade five. She wore the green and white
gingham school uniform and her hair was
pulled back in tiny braids close to her head.
Her dark eyes sparkled as she told me that
her mother is a tailor who does beautiful
sewing. She has two brothers, Anoid, 15
and Joch, 22 and a sister Lorraine, 17. There
is no father in her family. She munched on
her lunch of maize and beans and smiled
shyly when I asked her about her future
plans. She wants to attend secondary school
and then become a doctor. It was a pleasure
to talk to her, and hopefully, with some help,
she will fulfill her dreams. She left for a
minute and then came back to proudly
introduce me to her brother Anoid. I took
their picture, gave them a hug and shed some
tears. What is their future?

We saw a rusty sign that said "Good
Samaritan Home", but there was hardly a
street for our van to turn into. Instead, it is



Sharon Aninyi Duma

a garbage trail – ghetto conditions. We walked in through narrow iron gates that were locked behind us. We were greeted by 57 very excited, bright-eyed children who live and go to school there. A teacher and I went to help dress the children in a crowded classroom. I unpacked new clothes – yellow, orange, green and blue. Everyone was squealing and screaming with delight and grabbing for their clothes. Kids' hands were everywhere, and we passed out the clothes as fast as we could. They dressed quickly, and in their new outfits they became a rainbow, topped off with smiling faces radiating pure joy. These kids are all abandoned, abused or AIDS orphans.

I carried a tiny girl who is HIV positive and was receiving medication. I wondered how long she would live.

We had brought Christmas to these children, and we left them very, very happy.

This has been another tremendous adventure, and it has been a privilege to work overseas on behalf of SCAW.

BY GAIL GOWANLOCK WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

What a remarkable experience! First, to see the vision of Margaret and Murray Dryden in action, then, to participate with volunteers from Canada and Kenya in putting into practice that dream of giving hope to children. The need in Kenya is overwhelming, as the slums areas crowd in close to modern Nairobi.

So many impressions pass through a person's mind – the devastating effect of AIDS on children who are often left parentless and homeless, or the abject poverty which leaves some children without food, shelter and education. You, the sponsor may wonder what a bedkit can do for these children. Well, it gives hope and comfort and shows that someone cares. You provide the bedkits but the children also give, as they present their photograph in return.

It was amazing to see the teachers provide such love and dedication as they seek to educate these impoverished children.

There is a great contrast between the type and quality of education experienced by these children, compared with that known to most of us. Though their lot in life is so difficult, they play together, listen to their teachers and make a life with what their parent or parents provide. But, with the prevalence of AIDS, their safety with family may disappear very quickly.

My report at this time is a somewhat surface response for it will only be later, after thoroughly pondering this unbelievable experience, that deeper impressions will emerge. This first trip with SCAW has enabled me to see the effect this program has on children, their parents and their teachers. This opportunity is especially significant because my mother was raised in the same Manitoban community as Murray Dryden. In fact, she taught him as a young boy at a country school house. My parents supported Sleeping Children in the early years and I know they would be most pleased with my involvement.

Thank you to Ken, our esteemed leader, and the team of Duncan, Jeff and Judy for an unforgettable experience.

BY DUNCAN MACGREGOR ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

Prior to being a SCAW travelling volunteer, I never imagined that I would ever visit Africa. When the opportunity came to help distribute bedkits in Kenya on behalf of SCAW donors, I jumped at it (after getting the OK from my wife, Susan, of course)! Having experienced two previous distributions in India (Mumbai and Kolkata), I wondered how the trip to Kenya would differ. 3,000 bedkits and a multitude of memories later, here is one person's view of Kenya.

Kenya is a country of contrasts: rich but poor; lush but dirty; churches everywhere but crime prevalent; men without jobs but women overworked; an educated workforce but a lack of jobs for the educated; everything can be purchased in Kenya but few have enough money to buy anything; children go to school in uniforms but most of the uniforms are tattered; the majority of the people in Nairobi live in the slums but come out of the slums

Happiness is ... the joy of happy children!



daily to work; and Nairobi is a modern city with high rise buildings, but it also has a slums area that extends right through the centre of the city for seven kilometres. I could go on and on about the contrasts in this beautiful country, but one thing is for certain – there is no doubt that the need for bedkits in Kenya is huge!

During our distributions in and around Nairobi, it became very evident to our team that we were rubbing shoulders with some very exceptional women who were devoting their lives to children. There was Mama Mercy who had set up the Good Samaritan Home, where she was taking in babies left abandoned on the streets (another Mother Theresa). She not only took them in, but slept with them every night in her slums orphanage. She even had some land connected to the orphanage (and right in the slums) where they raised pigs, goats, and cattle to help them be self-sufficient. Then there was a woman who gave birth to a mentally-challenged child and ended up setting up a centre for mentally and physically handicapped children in the Karabanghi Catholic Church located in the slums area.

About 30 mothers danced the team into the centre where the children were waiting for us – how could they display so much joy and happiness in their singing and dancing when they were burdened with so much? And, then there was the Stara Rescue Centre which was a project begun by three women with their own funds. The centre started as a school and refuge area for children who had lost one or both parents due to AIDS. The group of three expanded to eight, but AIDS took three out of the picture. Now they are again down to three who try to provide education and some nourishment

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