

## Dear Friend

Welcome to the first 'Habari ya Nyumbani'. Keeping you updated with news from Nyumbani.

Jambo,

My name is Victor Kwana and I am 12 years old. When I was just 2 years old I did not see my father. I kept asking for him and some days later my mother told me that he had died. After some time, my mom also became sick. Monday and Tuesday passed and my mom was dead. It was Wednesday when they buried her. It was the saddest day of my life.

My uncle could not keep me with him and so he brought me to Nyumbani where I was tested and they said I was HIV<sup>+</sup> I was given medicine and told why I was to take. They gave education at the home. I started at preschool and our teacher was Margaret. Then I went to hekima school where they taught me nicely.

When I grow up I want to be a pilot because I want to see countries like England and Australia. I want to see the culture there and know about history and see the beauty.

I am very lucky to be here at Nyumbani.

I have good friends. I miss my mom alot but the staff are very nice to I know that many people in the UK help to find the money to help care for me and my friends. We are all very pleased and grateful for that and every Sunday we say a prayer of thanks to you all

Kwakeri for now and with love,

Victor



# Nyumbani update

**Protus Lumiti, our hard working General Manager at the orphanage, writes to 'Habari ya Nyumbani'.**



Probably the biggest development in the past few months has been the children's acceptance into state schools following a suit brought against the ministry of education, on behalf of the children of Nyumbani. Although this means more homework and having to polish their shoes everyday, the children are delighted about the change. Georgina, age eight, one of the first to gain admittance to a new school, says she likes her new school because, "I have lots of new friends, I like my uniform, and the work is good."

Sadly the beginning of our year was marred by the death of Joseph Njuguna, our first loss in nearly two years. Joseph was a street boy who came to us three years ago from the Don Bosco Boys Town and is memorialised in the award-winning television documentary "Left Behind" where, in the finale of the film, he sheds a silent tear as he stares into the camera.

On a happier note, our singing group, 'Watoto wa Mungu', is going from strength to strength. They have had a number of successes since forming a year ago. Their song, "Shauri Yakou" (It's your problem) received considerable radio airplay and reached number one in the Kenyan Top 10 music chart last October. We should give a special thanks to local volunteer Don Rawzi who writes, arranges and produces the children's music. Don came to us with his skills

as a performing artist and creative designer, telling us our HIV infected kids are no different from any other children. We know that, but through his energy, we're getting the message across! The group's CD is being sold to raise funds for Nyumbani. A second CD is currently in production and sees the children collaborating with some of the leading names on the Kenyan popular music scene.

April was a school holiday for the children so they all enjoyed the break as well as the eagerly awaited bi-annual visit from British Airways crew members. The arrangements that they made for the children were, as always, a blast!



The Nyumbani band pictured with Don



# Lea Toto update

**Sr. Tresa Mathai SABS runs the fast expanding Lea Toto programmes which are principally centred in the Kingemi and Kibera slums. The project in Kibera has no major donor and Sr. Tresa is desperate for new funds to help with this crucial work.**

Our most recent initiative in the expanding project in the Kibera slum is the opening of our day-care centre, from which we have already reached out to over 500 children who live in abject poverty in this area. And the numbers who need our help is growing all the time.

A review of the early Lea Toto experiences showed that support to children affected by AIDS must focus not only on medical and nursing care, but also on other important needs including psychosocial and where possible, some economic support. This approach is particularly important within the increasing number of households we find that are headed by the eldest surviving child.

Of course, our work begins with medical care. Once the children have been identified, clinical diagnosis and treatment of illness can be offered. We have an urgent need for more registered Nurses but at this time, our funds are limited. To help us through this, our Nurses have trained several voluntary Community Health Workers who assist in providing basic care and treatment of minor ailments.

Counselling the children and those who care for them on crucial topics affecting the lives of those infected with HIV is critical and given particular importance is advice on the prevention of spreading infection, as well the maintenance of proper hygiene and nutrition for the children.

Counselling addresses other issues too, and most importantly we offer emotional and trauma advice, conducted in both individual and group sessions. Regrettably, we have only one qualified Social Worker based in Kibera and she is particularly stretched. Given the importance of the counselling role, there is an urgent need for Lea Toto to fund two more Social Workers as soon as possible.

We have been able to offer some limited social support to those families that need help with food and with costs related to education such as school uniforms. As our funds are few, we have given priority to families headed by the eldest-surviving sibling and the UK board of Nyumbani has been particularly supportive of this effort by providing funds for a food parcel scheme.



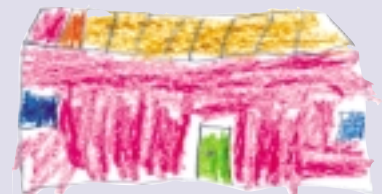
# Nyumbani UK update

To sustain the work at Nyumbani, a charity bearing its name was registered in the United Kingdom in 1998. Initially the initiative of British Airways crew members who were frequent visitors to the home, the current board of Trustees, who are all volunteers, includes persons who have experience of working at Nyumbani as well as others with a strong Kenyan background. It is important to add that donations are not reduced by administrative costs save of course for audit fees.

In a major effort made over the last several months, Nyumbani UK distributed an appeal brochure to over two thousand households in Britain, many with a Kenya connection. "We sought the help of groups in the UK such as the Kenya Regiment, the Kenya Kongonis cricket club, and the old school societies," said Sheilaugh Vaughan-Davies, administrator and secretary to the board of Trustees. "They kindly distributed the appeal for us. Our strategy is to build up our existing band of supporters that we term Friends of Nyumbani and through this campaign, we have attracted over one hundred new Friends whose support is greatly appreciated". The board now plan, through a bi-annual newsletter, to keep all Friends updated with developments at Nyumbani.

The Nyumbani annual golf day was again held at Frilford Heath in Oxfordshire with Coca-Cola Africa kindly sponsoring the event for a second year. The day raised almost £7,000 and was a great success. For those who play the great game, the Nyumbani golf day next year is April 28th 2005, so why not contact us to find out more?

The support of our Friends allows Nyumbani UK to contribute regularly to the recurring expenses of running the orphanage and the Lea Toto programmes. Additionally, Nyumbani UK has been able to raise sufficient funds to purchase two acres of land adjacent to the present home, which was unexpectedly offered for sale. Visiting the UK recently, Father D'Agastino spoke of his gratitude for the funds raised in Great Britain that allowed this purchase to be made. "The facilities at the orphanage are rather constrained and do not really allow us to expand", he said. "As many of our children are now moving into their teens, we felt that it was important to give them more space, away from the younger ones. Hopefully, our hard working UK board will raise more funds within a reasonable period that will allow us to develop the infrastructure on the new site, and a new dormitory for the teenagers is the priority. We would like to see them have small study bedrooms of their own as well as a communal area where they can gather and socialise".



**Please pass this newsletter on to a friend and invite them to become a Friend of Nyumbani too**

## A letter from Nairobi

Dear Friend,

I am delighted to be asked to contribute to the first 'Habari ya Nyumbani' designed to keep our friends in the United Kingdom abreast of news and developments in Nairobi.

As this is the first publication, I thought that I might overview for you the work that we carry out at Nyumbani. You will probably already know that Nyumbani opened its doors in 1992, with just three small babies. Of course, we rapidly outgrew that early facility and moved to our present premises in 1995. With the help of well wishers in the United States, we were able to purchase a two acre site in a leafy suburb of Nairobi known as Karen, an area made famous by the writing of Karen Blixen whose book 'Out of Africa' was made into such a marvellous film. In those early days, we lost two or three children to AIDS each and every month. It was heartbreaking for our small but determined band that looked

after the children, many of whom were volunteers. But thanks to the advent of antiretroviral medication in 2000, I can say that a death at the home is now a much rarer event.

Of course we soon recognized that the work we carried on touched but a few. It was obvious that our residential program was insignificant in the face of the 10,000 HIV infected orphans in Nairobi alone, so we embarked upon a community-based program targeting the dire

slums of the city. Today we have two major community programs, one of which is funded by the US government, the other by the efforts of our terrific fund-raisers in America and in the UK - Friends of Nyumbani, just like you. Together the two programs provide care for over 900 HIV infected children.

Unless you have witnessed it for yourself, it is difficult to explain the hardship that these children and their carers endure in their daily lives. The poverty to be found in the city slums is unimaginable and within the communities who live there, the HIV infected children are arguably the most vulnerable individuals. We have set ourselves the task of identifying as many of these unfortunate children as we can, for they are likely to have specific physical, medical, and psychosocial needs.

HIV-infected children also run greater risk of being malnourished. AIDS diminishes the household's capacity to buy food even if both parents are alive. These children invariably consume less food and lack essential nutrients. As a result, HIV-infected children are more prone to infection.

Shelter is another acute problem. A growing number of HIV-infected children are homeless. Parents who may be unwell from HIV themselves are often unable to manage and maintain their homes. And for those children who eventually become orphaned, shelter becomes a serious issue. The lucky ones may be taken in by extended family; however, most have nowhere to turn. With increasing poverty throughout Africa, the old tribal traditions of caring for homeless or ill relatives have broken down. Supporting a distant relative creates obvious problems for the new carer. Most often, therefore, orphaned children are left to fend for themselves, with the elder child taking responsibility as best he or she can.

That is where we come in. Our dedicated team of social workers and community nurses work endless hours to help improve the lives of so many young people.

Friends, it is a fact that the major obstacle we

face is to ensure our own survival. We have to take steps to sustain our work into the future. We have no major donor and we are reliant therefore on the support of people of compassion, people like you. Our principal fundraising takes place in the USA and in the UK, where well wishers have formed and registered charities. These charities have their own Boards of elected Trustees, all volunteers who have been touched by the works we do and who are focused on supporting us.

Our UK charity was the initiative of a group of British Airways cabin crew and flight deck personnel who made frequent trips to the orphanage in the early days, bringing clothes, shoes, school supplies and medicines. To ensure that they were properly managed, they elected as their first chairman a noted European businessman, Marquis Ludovico Rangoni Machiavelli, who served brilliantly during his term of office. Mike Johnson, a pilot and part time magistrate, deserves special mention as the long term UK treasurer. Today, the board is led by a Kenyan, Stuart Eastwood, whose business experience and knowledge of the African continent is invaluable to us. Stuart and his wife Jann, who worked tirelessly in our early years as our nursing advisor at the home in Nairobi, maintain an office for us in Windsor. They would be delighted to hear from you. To them and all our Trustees in UK, thank you so much for all that you do. I know that our affairs in UK are in good and reliable hands.

I cannot close without also saying a special thank you to you, a valued Friend of Nyumbani, a friend to nearly one thousand children who so desperately need your help. You, and all those who show compassion and support just as you do, are constantly in my thoughts and prayers.

Until next time, my best wishes,

D'Ag

[Father Angelo D'Agostino is the founder and medical director of Nyumbani]

## Education Victory

**...The successful conclusion of this matter is a resounding victory for life, liberty and justice, over prejudice, stigma and fear. A victory for the Kenyan child...**

This is how the Chambers of Justice Chief Counsel, Ababu Namwamba described the landmark court ruling that threw school doors wide open to children living with HIV.

The triumphant smiles on the faces of the children from Nyumbani Children's Home, Kenya's first and largest AIDS orphanage, expressed their joy at the resounding victory. The children had sued the government over discriminatory practices displayed by some public schools, which adamantly and unreasonably refused to admit children living with HIV. The home's 93 children sought legal redress after being constantly rejected by public schools.

### Landmark suit a big victory for the Kenyan child!

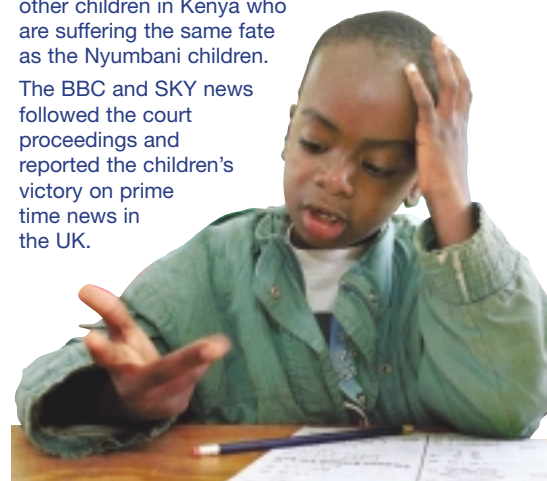
On January 7th, the Lady Justice, in a pragmatic gesture, allowed over 30 of the children to enter into her chambers for the hearing of the case. The Chambers was filled to capacity. The court heard that five schools in the Karen suburbs of Nairobi, where the home is located, had refused to admit children from Nyumbani who had attained primary school-going age.

The children's lawyers told the court that head teachers of public schools around Nyumbani, the Ministry of Education and the City Council's Education Department, had consistently shown open discrimination against children from the home and refused to admit them on account of their health status.

After a lengthy battle the high court ordered the Director for City Education in Nairobi to immediately commence the process of placing the 72 Nyumbani children of school going age

in public schools within the city. This suit will also benefit many other children in Kenya who are suffering the same fate as the Nyumbani children.

The BBC and SKY news followed the court proceedings and reported the children's victory on prime time news in the UK.



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# Mary's Story



Jane discovered she was HIV infected when she was in her early thirties. As her health began to deteriorate, she decided she would kill her daughter Mary. Just four years old, Mary was born with HIV. Jane had contracted the disease from her husband who was repeatedly unfaithful to her. Soon after Jane left her husband in 1996, she lost her seven year old son to AIDS, something she struggled to come to terms with. Now, with her own health worsening, she realised she would not live to take care of her daughter, and what troubled her most was that she did not have close family members that could take Mary in as their own.

Jane settled on strangulation as the means to end Mary's life. She reasoned that to strangle Mary to death and then kill herself would be best for them both. At least that way Mary would not become one of the hundreds of thousand scavengers, or chokoras as they are locally known, that wander Nairobi's streets.

"Infanticide is a practice that is not uncommon," said Roseline Nthenge, a social

worker with Lea Toto in Kibera. "Mothers would rather kill themselves and their children then let them live and suffer."

Fortunately, Jane was told of the Lea Toto program before she carried out her plan. Timidly entering the Nyumbani sponsored outreach facility, she was warmly received and finally told her sad story to Roseline. "We told her that she had to remain strong." Roseline said.

After talking Jane out of her plan, they sent her home and hoped that she would not change her mind. She didn't. She continued to take advantage of the services Leo Toto offered and supplemented her own income by selling clothes that Leo Toto received from well wishers and donated to her. Soon, however, Jane's health began to deteriorate further. Roseline did not know who would take care of Jane. Help came from an unexpected place, Mary herself. The four year old assumed full responsibility for her mother, by warming her meals, guiding her to market, bathing her, and taking her to health centre. Eventually Jane became completely bedridden, "Mary continued to cater for her mother's every need, as well as for washing and dressing herself - all this at the age of just four years old." Roseline said.

Jane's plight was made worse when the owner of the simple shelter that was her home discovered that she was dying of AIDS and evicted her and Mary. Sadly, in Kangemi, the slum where they lived, there is much ignorance about the disease with many believing that it can be spread through the air or by casual contact. Mary and her mother had nowhere to go. Roseline by this time had tracked down a distant relative who grudgingly took Jane in but would not agree to give a home to Mary. "He was prepared to allow Jane to spend her last few weeks in his home but was not agreeable to accepting the longer term responsibility for Mary", observed Roseline. "It was another mouth to feed and he was already struggling to keep his own family".

Fortunately, there was an opening at the Nyumbani home itself and Roseline made speedy arrangements for Mary to be sent there. Mary initially found it hard to

settle. She missed her mother terribly. And when the news came that Jane had died, Mary was devastated.

Ted Neill is a volunteer at Nyumbani. He has given up a period of his young life to help the staff at the home and support the children. "I see a lot of Mary but getting to know her is hard as she speaks little English. She is impeccably behaved, and although she is still very quiet, she is beginning to laugh and smile along with the rest of the children".

Ted recently spent a day with Roseline in the slums. He was taken past the shelter that Jane and Mary had once called home. It was empty. Ted was shocked when he saw how basic this home had been. Just a few corrugated steel sheets, no window, a door of sorts. Roseline noticed the sadness etched upon Ted's face. She spoke quietly to remind him that Mary was now at Nyumbani, a new home, a place where she will be cared for, a place where she will be safe.

Ted has spent much time in the slums of Nairobi with the Lea Toto staff. He has seen how stretched they are, the long hours that they work. Lea Toto are desperate to recruit two more social workers and two more registered nurses but do not have the funds to do so. "There are so many Mary's out there", said Ted. "Children who are left to fend for themselves as they watch a parent die. And others who are abandoned after their parent's death. We have to find a way to help them. Nyumbani need more trained staff working within the Lea Toto programme. We have to fund this. Surely someone, somewhere, can help us".



***A social worker or registered nurse in Nairobi is paid £300 per month. Can you help?***

