

THE GLOBAL INTERFAITH PARTNERSHIP

Indianapolis, Indiana & Chulaimbo, Kenya



Committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable children in western Kenya

July 2010

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Partnering with over 25 congregations in the Chulaimbo region of western Kenya from diverse traditions, including:

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Voice of Salvation



Rev. Teri Thomas, senior pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, and her husband Jack Wineman recently spent a few days in Chulaimbo visiting Umoja Project schools, students and guardian groups. For the last two years, Northminster has supported Umoja's school lunch program through its participation in the [Interfaith Hunger Initiative](#). Below are Teri's observations of the Project, as published in the June 5, 2010, [Indianapolis Star](#).

Making a difference in young Kenyans' lives

Rev. Teri Thomas

In front of us sit 144 elementary school children, almost half of the total student body. Their uniforms are slightly dirty and tattered; only about half have shoes of any kind. They are smiling and attentive and curious about the "mazungu" (white people) sitting before them. They also are orphans.

We are visiting Chulaimbo Primary School near Kisumu, Kenya. As part of my sabbatical journey, I wanted to see the school lunch program funded through the Indianapolis Hunger Initiative in partnership with the Umoja Project. What we are seeing is incredible, shocking and challenging.

These orphans have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Some live with grandparents or other relatives. Many live in child-headed households. Most of them will eat only one meal a day, and it will be a plate of corn and beans provided by the Indianapolis congregations that make up the hunger initiative. When school is out, they do not eat.

This year, the hunger initiative will provide 526,500 meals to children in 15 schools surrounding Kisumu. That will feed 2,700 children at a cost of \$0.087 per meal. For only \$17 a year, a child will be fed, encouraged to stay in school and have a healthier future. But the issues go far deeper than food.

The school buildings around us were built in 1972, and some have been officially condemned. They are still in use because there are no other options. The government requires one toilet hole for every 25 students. In this school of 400, there are only four usable holes. The school desperately needs a new water tank (or better yet, a well) so students don't have to drink from the contaminated stream and risk cholera. That would cost \$300 it does not have.

Umoja provides kerosene so children can study at home after dark. It provides food assistance for the child-headed households, school uniforms and an occasional blanket. If students do well enough on national exams at the end of eighth grade, Umoja will pay \$325 per year for secondary school tuition and expenses. Negotiations are just beginning with Comtiah College to provide post-secondary education and job training.

Indianapolis Hunger Initiative, Umoja and Heifer International have been working together to develop income-generating projects for the schools so some of these other needs can be met and so the lunch program can be self-supporting. The partnership of faithful folks in Indianapolis and Kenya working together is making a difference in the lives of these children, their teachers and guardians, the communities and these mazungu, who simply watch and pray and learn and hope.

Meet the 2010 Umoja Scholars

On a hot afternoon in late May, the 101 Umoja Scholars -- students in Form I through Form IV receiving tuition assistance through the Umoja Project -- gathered at Chulaimbo Secondary School. Through the formal presentations everyone sat quietly, but things livened up when the students broke into small groups to chat with the visiting Americans. For close to an hour the Kenyan teens exchanged questions and answers with four Duke Divinity School student interns and Revs. Teri Thomas and Jack Wineman. Politics, lifestyle differences, the World Cup, favorite movies and books -- all topics were fair game in this impromptu cultural exchange. A fun afternoon which focused not so much on students' needs but on what everyone had in common, regardless of who we were or where we lived, ended sooner than all would have wished.



Thus far, 6 Umoja Scholars have completed their secondary schooling. In November 2010 twelve more students are scheduled to finish Form IV classes and sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exam. These students spend all year preparing for the exam, studying 7 days a week and often as much as 12 hours a day. We wish them well as they get ready to pass this important milestone!

School kitchens get new high-efficiency stoves

Through funds provided by Second Presbyterian Women, each primary school enrolled in the school lunch program had two new fuel-efficient stoves installed this spring. The new stoves require only 1/4 of the fuel of a traditional cooking fire, a significant savings for the guardians who provide the firewood.



Heifer International designed and oversaw installation of the 30 stoves. In the process, one of Umoja's 2009 secondary school graduates and some guardians were trained on the installation techniques, and now can start their own small business. The Umoja Project hopes to use their services when smaller versions of the stoves will be installed in the homes of child-headed households later this year.

Thank you for supporting the Umoja Project!

Americans are often surprised to realize how much impact donations of any size can make. \$5 will purchase sanitary towels for an adolescent girl for a year, allowing her to attend school regularly. \$25 will buy a child-headed household food relief for a month. \$325 will pay tuition and all related school expenses for a secondary school student. The Umoja Project is grateful for all of your donations, including these recent contributions:

- Christ Church Cathedral Women -- primary uniforms
- Second Presbyterian Women -- Class 8 exams and secondary school peer support groups
- Trinity Episcopal Church -- basic health and household needs for child-headed households
- Interfaith Hunger Initiative -- food support for child-headed households
- St. Richard's School
- St. Joan of Arc Catholic School
- St. Luke's United Methodist Sunrise Book Club -- sanitary towels

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