

Akamba Children's Education Fund Newsletter - January 2019

Akamba Children's Education Fund (ACEF) has had an incredible 2018 and we wanted to share the difference that has been made, with your help, to the lives of many vulnerable children at Brainhouse Academy in Nairobi.

Many years ago, an inspirational boss said an important aspect of progress is to stop, look back and understand the journey. For ACEF, this has been eight incredible years of working in partnership with the senior leadership team at Brainhouse Academy and, with your involvement we are changing the lives of students who live there, not just for tomorrow but for the rest of their lives.

For those of you who do not know a great deal about Brainhouse Academy, it is a remarkable school situated in the slums of Nairobi. It provides a home, a place of security, personal welfare and a brilliant education to around 900 students, a quarter of whom are orphans. Before joining Brainhouse, many of our students spent their days digging through waste heaps for anything slightly edible, prostituting or committing crime to 'earn' a few coins to buy much needed food or water. These children have been given an education and a place they could call home by Aggrey, the principal of Brainhouse and his wife Mary.



Eight years ago, ACEF joined Aggrey and Mary on a journey, funding food for the students. Since then so much has been achieved together from providing infrastructure enhancements, leadership development, education training to health management. This has only been possible thanks to the amazing generosity of our volunteers and supporters in England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

2018 was our most ambitious year. We wanted to provide dignity, health improvements and opportunities for the future. We set out with three dreams:

- to provide 'green', environmentally friendly toilets;
- to improve the menstrual health management of the girls
- to develop vocational skills

Below are the stories of how we made these happen!

And how can you continue to help for 2019?

There are many ways you can assist us:

- Raise funds for us through sponsored events, events at your school, your office – every £5 donated enables us to feed a child for a month.
- Get involved as a volunteer and bring your expertise to the table.
- Raise awareness about our small but effective charity



Through your support and help we are demonstrating to these 900 plus children that we do care, that they can dare to dream of a different future and that we will be there to help them on their way. We would love to hear from you – send an email to me on Elizabethjane07@gmail.com or make a financial contribution through www.justgiving.com/acef/donate.

Liz Formby MBE

PTO

Akamba Children's Education Fund Newsletter - January 2019

Our adventure into creating energy from human waste!

Aggrey, held a dream to reduce the cost and the environmental damage of using wood and charcoal for cooking and of building healthy toilets for the school and so the dream of 'green' toilets to produce biogas was born. In 2017 Dr James Cooper came to our rescue with his passion for creating energy out of waste!



James spent 2017 developing prototypes, designing structures and helping to raise the money required. Construction work began in January 2018, and in February the 2-storey, steel structure began to be erected.

In Spring, a team of volunteers from ACEF travelled to Kenya to assist with the construction work and to install the biodigesters, to treat the toilet waste and convert it into biogas. The toilet cubicles

were painted by talented volunteers Kate, Emily, Jack, Sarah, Helen and David, with art work from each of the cubicle sponsors, and the entire structure was decorated with a tree of life painting.

The trip culminated with a wonderful opening ceremony for the Green Toilets to celebrate the completion of the project where Aggrey danced for joy!! Replacing the previous 'long drop' facilities, the school now has 23 cubicles providing sanitary conditions which will save lives.

James returned to Kenya in December 2018 to finish the innovative biogas digester system and was delighted to report biogas being produced in usable quantities, with a gas burner being lit for over 4 hours on one of the days. The biogas produced by the Green Toilets will now be used instead of wood and charcoal for cooking, saving the school money and providing many environmental and health benefits.



The Headteacher praised ACEF and its supporters, and thanked all of the volunteers for their hard work and commitment, exclaiming that "the school now had the best toilets in all of Kenya". For James and all the volunteers this has been a journey of learning, passion and determination, overcoming challenges to deliver Aggrey's dream of utilising the waste to deliver useable energy for the school. Ground breaking for all involved!

The next phase is to enhance the facilities in the girls' toilets to support menstrual care and we need more companies and benefactors to sponsor cubicles. Would you like to see your charity contribution celebrated in this way?

Could your school, Science club or scout group do a 'Poo Power' project to raise funds? Please do come to talk to us.

Akamba Children's Education Fund Newsletter - January 2019

Latest menstrual technology becomes the go to solution for our parents and teenage girls

We believe every girl should have the means to manage their menstrual cycle, without needing to miss school. Rochelle Yeo, one of our trustees, took the time to understand the cultural and practical issues facing the young girls who attend Brainhouse, seeking new options to unsanitary rags. This led to the concept of using a menstrual cup.



This was introduced to the female teachers at Brainhouse Academy in July 2017, with much trepidation as we knew that menstruation, and potentially the use of menstrual cups, is a culturally sensitive topic in Kenya. However, through Rochelle's sensitive explanation, she gained the trust of the senior female leaders of the school and they agreed to try the cups themselves, before we approached the girls. We were then over the moon when Rochelle got the go ahead from the school

to offer the cups to all the older girls, as they could really understand the freedom and dignity that the cups afford young women.

Thanks to innovative fundraising with the "Dine for Dignity" campaign, in April 2018 we were able to commission menstrual health and hygiene training, along with providing either a set of reusable pads (which can last up to 1 year) or a menstrual cup (which can last over 10 years), to over 350 girls at Brainhouse.



The ambition was realised - to tackle "period poverty" within the school, whilst at the same time improving the health and self-confidence of the girls.

In addition, we also provided the menstruation materials to over 30 of the girls' mothers. Not only does this help more women in the community, but having the mothers' support for this project will help their daughter's confidence to use the cups. The more people who engage in discussing menstruation, the more the taboos can be quashed.

ACEF is committed to eradicating period poverty at the school and we need to raise ongoing funds to continue providing each new year group of girls with menstruation materials and training, plus we want to enhance the washing facilities in the new toilet block.

If you want to host a Dine for Dignity event, or help support this project in other ways, please get in touch.

To empower one woman is to empower a whole community!

Akamba Children's Education Fund Newsletter - January 2019

Bringing vocational skills to our girls through upcycling

A friend of ACEF introduced to us the concept of creating dresses out of 'pillowcases' and immediately volunteers, Julie Wooldridge and Janice Addison, realised the potential of this approach to both provide a very personal dress for our girls at Brainhouse and potentially a way to offer vocational training possibilities for these young people. Can you imagine the joy for the girls at Brainhouse – to pull that dress over their head that has been made especially for them!

Janice and Julie collected a huge amount of material, bedding sheets, curtains and tablecloths as well as ribbons and beads, and began making dresses, later joined by more volunteers - Cheryl, Lyn and Mags.

To extend the idea even further, a number of dress kits were assembled as well as finished dresses and shorts so that pupils at Brainhouse could be taught to sew to the simple patterns.



So in April 2018 we were delighted to send to the orphans at Brainhouse, a total of 80 dresses, and 30 kits for the children to make up themselves. The boys were very disappointed that we only managed 7 pairs of shorts, but this will be rectified by the time of the next outgoing team of volunteers. We received in return some pictures of beautiful models who were very pleased to be wearing the dresses. The recipients seemed delighted.



Our focus for 2019 is on making bags. The Kenyan Government has banned the use of plastic bags so children could use their sewing skills to make simple bags. We are prototyping bags and backpacks of varied designs, which they will be able to use immediately, or sell to buy more fabric in Nairobi. If you can donate braid it will help with these endeavours.

If you have other ideas or skills that you can offer to support the vocational and practical skill development of the children at Brainhouse, then we would be pleased to discuss your ideas – come along and join our volunteer group.