

To our dear friends and supporters,

We wish you and your families a very happy New Year!

I am writing on a warm and sunny Christmas Day in Nairobi, a welcome respite from the nightly downpours that persistently flood much of our compound! Unfortunately, the forces of nature, the surrounding development and gravity continue to conspire against us. Serious trenching and more fill could provide a solution but getting our landlord and the neighbouring landlords to agree on a plan (that could benefit all of them but cost them some money) has so far proven difficult. Life in a slum!!

On a brighter note—Ted and I left the Project yesterday afternoon with the Hostel mother, Alice and Mercy (our two University girls) in charge for the next few days as the rest of our staff travels up country for a much deserved rest. Alice is also responsible of the holiday program to ensure that the kids are constructively engaged but also having fun. Thanks to the generosity of the **Hardie family** in Dubai, there was extra money in the kitty for the 35 hostel kids to enjoy a special Christmas breakfast of eggs and sausages (Alice was keen to show off her new culinary skills - part of her Hotel Management training) and a hearty lunch/dinner of kuku/chicken, meat and chapatis (when asked to choose between chapatis (a type of flat bread) and ice-cream, chapatis won by a huge margin)!

Before leaving, Teacher Isaiah was able to install a few computers in our office for supervised use, so the remaining kids have access and can carry on practicing their skills. They love their computers! The library, partly under water, will also remain open. Sports equipment and games will also be available.

Last Saturday we held our Christmas lunch & closing ceremony, with loads of food, including 17 chickens, 12kg meat and the much-loved chapatis. Thanks again to the **Hardie family** who have been making luxuries like these possible for the last 4 years with their extra donation.



Picture: HHFL kids present ‘the 12 days of Christmas’

This year we decided to simply celebrate improvement. We are happy to report that our 60+ primary students are performing beyond expectations, with 80% of them in the top tier of their classes (B students). This stellar performance proves that our decision to switch to private primary schools is paying off in spades. Presently only 6 remain in the Ngong Forest Primary (Government). We are hoping to be able to switch them over to St. Nicholas Private Day School or Mt. Carmel Private Boarding as soon as we find full sponsorships for them.

For 2012 we decided to focus exclusively on the achievements of our Primary Students and of those who achieved self-reliance.

WITH PRIDE, I PRESENT THE MOST IMPROVED AND BIGGEST ACHIEVERS OF OUR PRIMARY STUDENT BODY FOR 2012:

Anthony Githingi - grade 2, St. Nicholas School - His mother is deaf and mute. Anthony could not read nor speak clearly at the beginning of the year. The switch to St. Nick and the extra attention given to him by HHFL's daily extra-curricular program has done wonders for this kid. He is getting close

to reaching his level. His hard work is paying off and he is determined to achieve his level by the end of 2013. Go for it, you can do it!

Janet Letoto (Hostel) - grade 3, St. Nicholas School - Came to us from Samburu land (Northern Kenya) 2 years ago. She had no English knowledge at all and her Swahili was not much better. Her mother tongue is Ma. She is a slow learner, but determined and hard working. After 2 years of intense struggle, she is close to reaching grade 3 level and passed the year with a D+. We are extremely proud of her.

Jane Wangui - grade 3, St. Nicholas School - She was switched over to St. Nick in 2011. This move brought immediate change and benefits. Her self-esteem and social skills improved as did her academic performance. She finished grade 3 with a C+. Congratulations, keep it up!

Diana Mutheu (hostel)- grade 5, St. Nicholas School - Diana and her little brother Kevin were abandoned by their mother. They became HHFL wards in 2010. As expected, the disappearance of the mother impacted these kids very negatively, especially Diana. 2012, has been a wonderful year for this intelligent girl as she diligently worked at overcoming her sadness. She is a very active and involved kid. Her overall improvement is commendable and we are sure that 2013 will put her in the top tier of her class, where she belongs. You can do it, Diana, we are proud of you!

Muli Muasya (hostel) - grade 3, St. Nicholas School - surprised us all by becoming the class prefect for 2012! Well done Muli, you are a star. Muli came to us in 2010 after the death of his parents as a shy, introverted and frightened little boy without language skills or solid schooling. Today he is a happy-go-lucky and sometimes naughty and boisterous boy, who is loved by all. His academics have improved by leaps and bounds as well. Good stuff, Muli! keep it up!

Samuel Muigai (hostel) - grade 8, Ngong Forest School - Like Muli, Samuel came to us as a frightened and much traumatized little boy. He was rescued by HHFL from a refugee camp after the political upheaval in early 2008. His homestead had been burned to the ground and his loving grandmother (the only parent he ever knew) had died trying to escape. His first two years at HHFL were very difficult for him, but then, mercifully, the

calm after the storm took hold and today we have a winner in the making. He is not only in the top tier of his class, but was bestowed with the honor of becoming the Head Boy of the entire school (student body of 1000) for 2012. Pride doesn't express what we feel for this boy. You are an example to all! He is hoping to get invited to enroll in one of the top high schools of Kenya in February when the final results for grade 8th and Form 4th are released by the government. Go for your dreams, you can achieve them!

OUR 2012 SELF-RELIANCE ACHIEVERS:

These are the kids (I should say adults) who flew the coop this year:

Lydia and Prisca successfully completed their Beautician course and are both gainfully employed and paying their own rent since November 2012. Both graduated with honors and commendation. We are truly proud of their achievements!

Bonafice finished his welding course with honors and has been gainfully employed since October. Acquiring this skill and being able to help his single mother to support their family was his dream. Well done! You are an achiever, and I believe you will go far. We wish you success!

Grison, our little boy turned adult, who together with Kilonzi and Pastor Margaret we helped rescue from terrible abuse in 2006, has become self-reliant! He also graduated from welding and is presently doing his attachment. He already has an offer to continue as a full time employee once he graduates in April. You are a star, who has succeeded against all odds. We are proud of you!

Benson Muigai - rescued by HHFL after the political clashes of 2008 is getting ready to fly the coop. This terrified and traumatized boy struggled greatly to overcome his fears and was confused and saddened when he realized he would not go on to high school due to his age and lack of academic foundation. After much soul searching he enrolled in welding and the rest is history, as the saying goes. He found his calling and has exceeded expectations. He is presently doing his attachment and loving it. He graduates at the end of April and until then will remain in the hostel, but is

already looking forward to and dreaming about setting up his own digs. You are a winner!

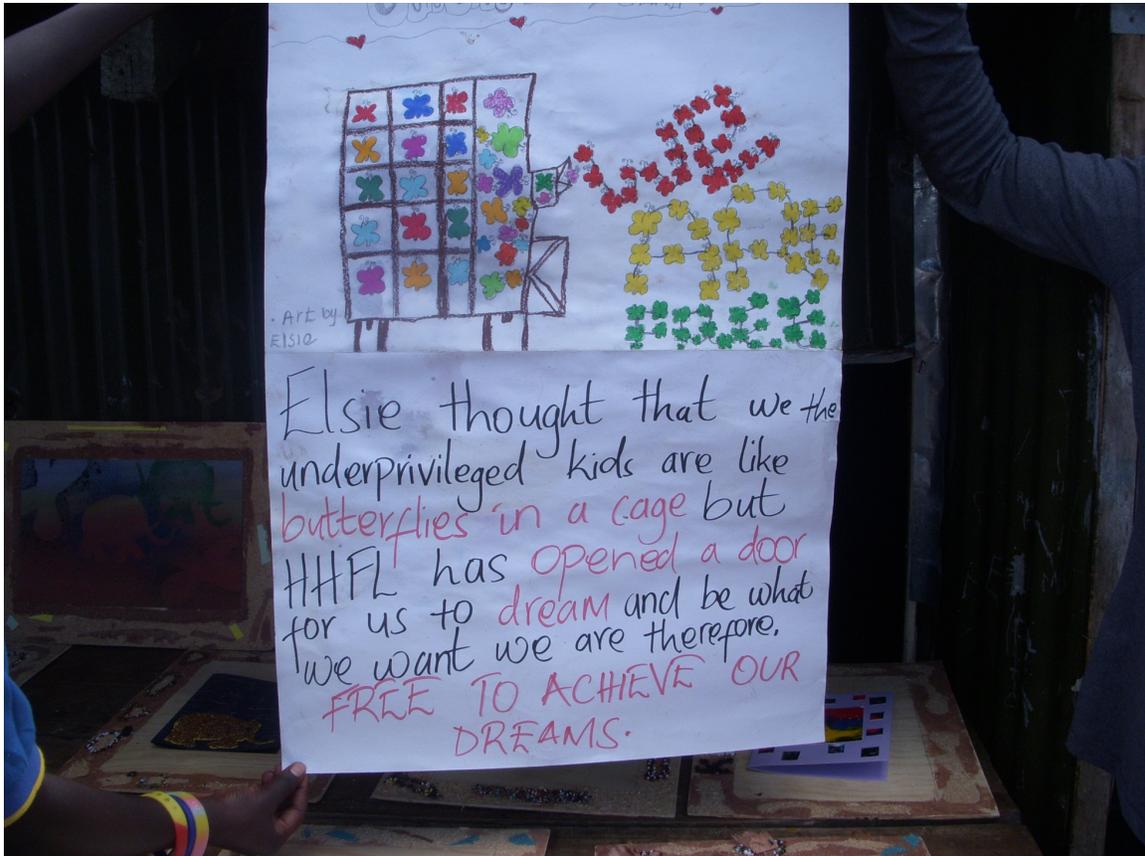
Erick Opiyo graduated with a diploma in car mechanics and is presently working in Kisumu (Western Kenya). He has a 1year contract - half job/half apprentice. He was chosen from 24 candidates. If all goes well, he will get a firm offer after October with a really good pay cheque, which will allow him to start his adult life in seriousness. He is an extremely applied and focused chap who also came to us after the political clashes of 2008. He was already approaching 20 at that time and without formal education. This young man has shown us all what determination and focus can do. Our trust in you paid huge dividends! You are an example to all of HHFL's adults in the making!

There is one more honourable mention - one that I came upon by chance and am longing to share with you. I was having tea (after a yoga class) at the home of my dear friend and great supporter, **Moyra Earnshaw** who leads the most amazing art class for the HHFL kids. She took me into her studio (she is a wonderful artist) and showed me the work some of our kids had produced during my absence. I was blown away. I knew we had talented kids, but definitely not of the high caliber I was seeing!



Picture: Muli at the Moyra's art studio

As I was going through them, I came upon a drawing from Elsie Anyango (F2), which caught my attention. As far as pure artistic talent goes, this was not one of the best; but as far as ideas and thought process, this was an extraordinary rendition. Moyra, had given all class members a “word”- like “motivation, justice, achievement, environment” etc. etc. for them to express through a painting. Elsie's word was “Justice” and here is how she interpreted this word in painted form:



Description: A big cage full of beautiful and colorful captive butterflies without much hope of escape. On one side she painted a tiny door, difficult to see, difficult to find that opened and allowed a few lucky butterflies to escape. The escaping butterflies in their flight wrote: WE ARE FREE!

This is how Elsie explained her vision and painting:

The huge cage is the slum, the tiny door is HHFL (depiction of Justice for her), and the butterfly escapees are HHFL kids! They attain freedom through the gift of education provided by HHFL. The remaining caged butterflies

represent all the slum kids who aren't lucky enough to find an open door, as these doors are always tiny, difficult to find, identify and extremely scarce!

I wanted to share this thought with you as I found it not only inspirational but also extremely powerful. Food for further thought and encouragement to carry on, as I must confess that some days I get close to giving up! 2012 has been a very challenging year!

Elsie's rendition of "Justice" proved to me, and I hope it does to you, that these kids are worth our efforts and sacrifices. Even if they cannot express their thoughts and feelings in either written or verbal form (which Ted and I find extremely confusing and frustrating), Elsie has been able to demonstrate through her art that they actually possess a profound grasp and clear vision of what their lives and our participation in it means to them!

You, our dear supporters, are a big part of this tiny door as without your ongoing support this door would be even smaller or, possibly closed all together by now. You have contributed to the freedom of these 140 lucky butterflies and for that you deserve recognition, big time!

All the HHFL butterflies join me in wishing you all the best for 2013. We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and look forward to welcoming some of you here in Nairobi in 2013. But, before we close, all of us, but especially the HHFL kids want to send much love and wishes for a full recovery to our dear friend and supporter, **Dave McKearnan** who is bravely battling cancer. Our thoughts and prayers are with the friends and family of two other dear HHFL friends, **Marie Sherwin** and the **Eddie Florijn** who sadly passed on this year. We love you and want you to know that you will live forever in the HHFL kids memories.

And last but not least, a big thank you to all our 2012 volunteers who have given, and continue to selflessly give their time, thought and energy to help make a difference in the lives of the HHFL children. You know who you are and we couldn't be more thankful to you.

HHFL WISHES YOU ALL THE BEST FOR 2013!



Picture: HHFL staff

Warm wishes to all,

Hanne