

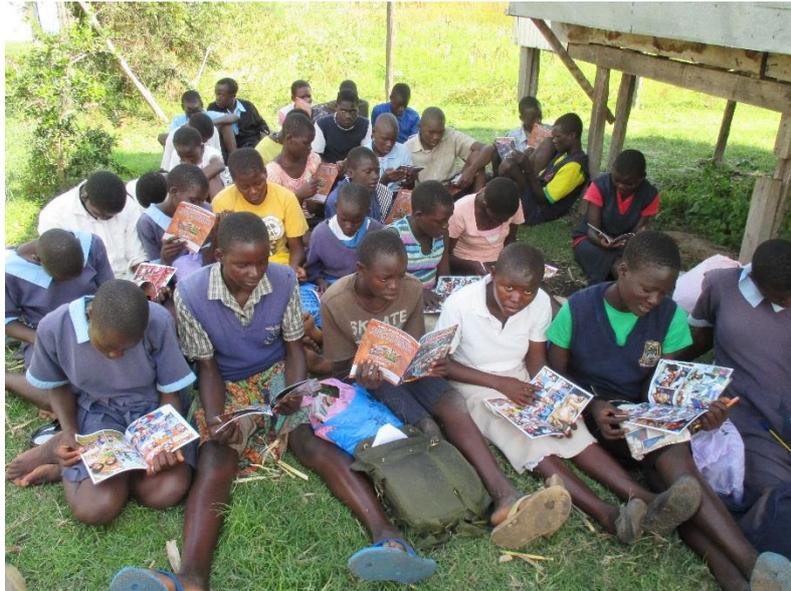
Kenya 2014-Kenyan Orphan Project

In August I went to Kisumu in Kenya as part of the Kenyan Orphan Project (KOP). I went for two weeks in a group to a feeding centre in an area that suffers from high levels of HIV and Aids. This centre was built by KOP funding and KOP students in 2007. KOP funds a daily feeding programme for children and provides a fresh water bore hole and a water management system on the site for the whole community.

Before going on the trip I fundraised for children in the feeding centre and raised £800. The purpose of the trip was to then go and see how the money I fundraised was used to help the children. It gave me an opportunity to see first-hand the help that KOP charity provides for the children. It also allowed me to observe the working of the centre. We worked with staff to assist with the maintenance of the centre and understand the centre's role within the community. We went to the feeding centre every day and helped staff with daily activities such as cooking, preparing meals, cleaning, washing up, milking the cows and gardening.



We also provided some teaching sessions for the children. We taught the children about conditions including malaria and HIV. These conditions are prevalent within the community so it was beneficial to educate the children about how these diseases are transmitted, how you can prevent transmission and treat them. We gave the children lessons on hand washing and also on significant issues within the community such as gender inequality. The lessons were delivered to younger children of age 5 to 11 as well as to older children from 12 to 18 years old. We found that language was a particular barrier with the younger children who did not speak much English and so used pictures and plays to engage and teach these children. The older children had a much better understanding of English, thus debates and discussions were employed to teach them. Donated Medikidz comic books were also used to help teach all the children. Medikidz is a global initiative set up by doctors to explain medical information to children. The Medikidz superheroes in the comic books are used to explain medical conditions to children in a simple fun way that they can understand.



On arriving at the centre I was surprised by how many staff were present. Other than the manager there were only two cooks and three gardeners for a centre that feeds over 70 children. I was truly inspired by the hard work these people had put into the feeding centre. As such a small team they provided so much help and made such a big impact on the community. We found on visiting the houses of some of the children that there were often many children in one family and the feeding centre worked so that it could try and take at least one child from each family. This helped to put less strain on the families and on the work they had to do as a whole. By helping one child they helped each family significantly. I really appreciated the work and help this feeding centre was providing for the community.

I learnt so much from the children. They inspired me by their motivation, determination and strength. Before going on this trip I thought I would not be able to communicate well with the children and would struggle. However, I found that these children were so friendly and inviting. I was shocked by the children's optimism. They always had a smile on their faces. They all had amazing ambitions and goals, such as being a lawyer to being a teacher or doctor. It was inspiring to see them ask questions about the courses we study and try to attain further insight into different careers.



I will never forget when we visited one girl's house. This girl was very well known in the feeding centre for her singing. Every day we would stand in a circle with the children and sing songs. This girl would often lead the singing and I had always perceived her as a friendly, fun and carefree individual. On visiting her house, I found that she had a one year old daughter. The manager of the feeding centre told me that the girl was unsure of whom the father was. She also told me that sleeping with a man in order to obtain a tampon was not unheard of and was quite common in this community. Hearing this astonished me. These problems that these girls were going through had not even crossed my mind. It was then that I realised that this feeding centre does more than simply provide food for the children. It is also a place where children can meet other children, play with them and forget their worries for a few hours. It gives a chance for children to act and live as children, which is every child's right.

I learnt so much from this trip. It really helped me grow as an individual as I was challenged in a completely different environment. I met so many great people, from the other university students in the group to the workers and children in the centre. It was an amazing experience that I will never forget.

