

In This Issue

15th Anniversary of WFWP
Service Learning Project
Reflections from Kenya
Supporting Africa
Letters from Kenya

Peace Quote:



"We plant seeds that will flower as results in our lives, so best to remove the weeds of anger, avarice, envy and doubt, that peace and abundance may manifest for all."

Dorothy Day



Fifteenth Anniversary of Women's Federation for World Peace

By Joy Garratt, WFWP Southern California Chapter

On Sunday, October 21st, the Women's Federation for World Peace, USA, celebrated its fifteenth

anniversary and also held a silent auction to benefit the Schools of Africa. The New Otani Hotel and Garden in the heart of downtown Los Angeles was the venue. Friends new and old reminisced and enjoyed each other's company as they listened to inspirational music and shared lunch. All the while, funds were raised through the silent auction for the seven schools of Africa supported by WFWP, USA.

[Read on...](#)

Service Learning Project in Kenya August 1-14, 2007

By Joan Mwamlima, Project Coordinator



I am very grateful for the privilege of leading this service project in Kenya. It was moving to see the five young women on our team, one of whom was my daughter, become loving, expressive, amazing ambassadors for peace. They were positive role models for the Kenyan students, and they helped change some negative concepts about Americans. They were worthy representatives of Women's Federation for World Peace, USA.

[Read on...](#)



Reflections from the African Schools Service Project in Kenya

August 2007

By the participants

Excerpt:

"I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to work in Kenya, meet the people, and get immersed in a project that was much greater than me. ... I believe that the Kenyan people were very happy that we Americans were there to help them. I realized it wasn't our physical labor itself that moved them, but rather the heart that we put into our work and our attitude toward the community -- that was the real reason for the gratitude and love they showed us."

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One member's experience supporting the work of WFWP in Africa

By Cynthia Myers, WFWP Massachusetts Chapter



TrueBlue(berries) for the Schools of Africa

Our family originally came to Cape Cod in the 1800s and farmed the land. By the early 1900s, they were involved in growing cultivated blueberries. I grew up spending summers working for the three-generational family business. My 85-year-old father is the last of the family who developed the business, which ended in the 1960s for a variety of reasons. My brother, Bruce, inherited the last nursery of blueberry bushes, including about 300 bushes, and has worked on it for a number of years as a pastime and project.

[Read on...](#)



Letters from Kenya

Students at the Han Dow Secondary School

Three young Kenyan students from the Han Dow Secondary School in Kenya

wrote letters of appreciation for the support they have received in getting a good education, in order to achieve their dreams.

Please take a moment to read these simple, heartfelt letters.

[Read on...](#)

Coming in Next Issue

A Report on the 8th WFWPI International Leaders Workshop and Trip to North Korea

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Fifteenth Anniversary of Women's Federation for World Peace Celebrated in Los Angeles

By Joy Garratt, WFWP Southern California Chapter



Joy Garratt

On Sunday, October 21st, the Women's Federation for World Peace, USA, celebrated its fifteenth anniversary and also held a silent auction to benefit the Schools of Africa. The New Otani Hotel and Garden in the heart of downtown Los Angeles was the venue. Friends new and old reminisced and enjoyed each other's company as they listened to inspirational music and shared lunch. All the while, funds were raised through the silent auction for the seven schools of Africa supported by WFWP, USA.

On Sunday, October 21st, the Women's Federation for World Peace, USA, celebrated its fifteenth anniversary and also held a silent auction to benefit the Schools of Africa. The New Otani Hotel and Garden in the heart of downtown Los Angeles was the venue. Friends new and old reminisced and enjoyed each other's company as they listened to inspirational music and shared lunch. All the while, funds were raised through the silent auction for the seven schools of Africa supported by WFWP, USA.



Silent Auction

More than 250 people were in attendance, and they made bids on items ranging from exquisite jewelry to international folk art to an irresistible array of gift baskets. Mistress of ceremonies and national board member Sheri Rueter opened the program by introducing special guests. These included local diplomats, the Honorable Mary Nyambura Kamau, consul general of Kenya, and the Honorable Jeanette Ndhlovu, consul general of South Africa; the Rev. Dr. Cecil "Chip" Murray, pastor emeritus at First A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles; Rev. Leonard Jackson; actress Cheryl Landon; award honorees; WFWP, USA national president Alexa Fish Ward; and executive vice president Yasue Erikawa.



Congresswoman Diane E. Watson, a member of the event's honorary committee, sent a letter of congratulations as well as her regrets that an important congressional vote prevented her attendance. A special proclamation from Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was read by Rev. Leonard Jackson.



L to R: Sheri Rueter, Claudelina Smith, Rev. Leonard Jackson holding Mayor's Proclamation, Alexa Ward

Then a short video was shown of the WFWP, USA, Japanese-American International Friendship Conference in Los Angeles in 1995, featuring Coretta Scott King's speech. Dozens of women present at the luncheon were seen in the video crossing the Bridge of Peace with their Japanese "sisters." Afterward, they were asked to stand in acknowledgement of their participation in those historic Friendship Conferences.

Minister Reiko Jenkins, representing *Women in Ministry* of the American Clergy Leadership Conference, gave the luncheon invocation. Over plates of delicious chicken and wild rice, participants attempted to name countries represented by the African flags placed on each table's Kente cloth-covered centerpiece.

Singer-songwriter Miyuki Harley captured the hearts and attention of all with a moving rendition of her own composition, "Can You Hear Me?". Twenty-one-year-old California State Fullerton student Jena Eisenberg accompanied Miyuki on the piano for a second song, "Image of You," written by Jena herself. Miyuki and Jena then led the audience in "Happy Birthday" to Ms. Marsha Hunt, WFWP, USA honoree and well-known actress who

celebrated her 90th birthday on October 17th.



L to R: Norma Foster, Yasue Erikawa, Marsha Hunt, Alexa Ward

Keynote speaker, Alexa Fish Ward, president of WFWP, USA, gave an overview of the 15 years of WFWP. She shared the history, goals, and major program areas, with beautiful photos that included highlights of the recent service learning trip to the Han Dow Secondary School in Kenya. Alexa inspired attendees to return to the silent auction so their generous contributions could finance the expansion and maintenance of the schools in Africa. For “homework,” she provided small pink piggy banks for women to take with them for collecting money with their families on a monthly basis.

WFWP, USA, seeks to recognize and network with other like-minded individuals and organizations. Therefore, in honor of the 15th anniversary, awards were presented to two individuals and two nonprofit service organizations for their contributions and activism. The “Woman of Peace Award” honored performer, writer and producer Sheryl Lee Ralph. The star that created the original role of Deena Jones on Broadway in *Dreamgirls*, Sheryl Lee has combined a long career in film and television with activism and education efforts on behalf of HIV/AIDS, particularly as to how it affects women of color and children.



L to R: Kimiyo Anceney, Norma Foster, Yasue Erikawa, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Alexa Ward

Longtime actress, activist and author Marsha Hunt, for whom everybody sang Happy 90th Birthday, was appointed an Ambassador for Peace, in honor of decades of activism on behalf of the United Nations and other organizations. A popular actress during the 1930s and 40s, she turned to activism in 1955 after observing extreme poverty while on a trip around the world with her husband, Robert Presnell, Jr.

Partnership for Peace Awards went to Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Los Angeles Chapter, and the United Nations Association, Pacific-Los Angeles Chapter. Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., is a national philanthropic and community service organization headquartered in Houston, Texas, with over 200 chapters in the United States and Jamaica. The United Nations Association (UNA), Pacific-Los Angeles Chapter initiated the annual International Day of Peace in Los Angeles with the Governor of California, the Mayor's Office and the City Council and maintains ongoing efforts to promote harmony and peace among all people and to educate youth.



L to R: Kimiyo Anceney, Claudelina Smith, Susan Thibodeaux, Ethel Lover, Eleanor Montano, Cheryl Landon, Roberta Brown, Adele Bloom, Nina Alexander, Pamela Stein, Sheri Rueter

Wrapping up the awards portion of the program, Alexa gave a special presentation to Norma Foster for serving as a national advisor to WFWP, USA for the past five years. Then eight women were recognized for working side-by-side with the WFWP, USA, Southern California Chapter since its beginning. Those women are: Nina Alexander, Adele Bloom, Roberta Brown, Myriam Cascella, Cheryl Landon, Ethel Lover, Eleanor Montano, and Susan Thibodeaux.

Finally, the traditional WFWP closing song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth," was led by the beautiful voice of Sheryl Lee Ralph, our Woman of Peace. Guests lingered as they picked up their auction items and made plans to meet together over the future months at upcoming WFWP events.



Women singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

Special thanks are extended to the honorary committee, the celebration committee, all the performers (including high school senior Victoria Calix and her eighth grade brother, Jacob Calix, who graced the event with background music on the piano and cello), the Tribute Book designers Robin Cox and Robert Brown, and all the many, many volunteers who poured out their energy and hearts to make this a successful event. In addition to the money raised by sponsorships and national ads for the national WFWP, USA office, around \$10,000 was raised for the schools of Africa. Ten percent of the total net raised will be used as seed money for next year's benefit.

###

WFWP 15th Anniversary

Honorary Committee

Hon. Mary Nyambura Kamau

Consul General of Kenya

Hon. Jeanette Ndhlovu

Consul General of South Africa

Hon. Diane E. Watson

US Congresswoman

Ms. Eleanor Montano

Commissioner, LA County

Commission on Human Relations

Dr. Geraldine R. Washington

President, NAACP Los Angeles Branch

Ms. Marsha Hunt

Actress, Author, Humanitarian and Activist

Ms. Bobby Ann Howe

Director of Public Affairs, KTYM Radio

Ms. Norma Foster

President, UNA-USA Pacific-Los Angeles Chapter; National Advisor, WFWP USA

Ms. Alexa Fish Ward

President, WFWP USA

Ms. Lynn R. Walsh

Director, UPF Women for Peace

Ms. Reiko Jenkins

Director, ACLC Women in Ministry

Celebration Committee:

Ms. Nina Alexander

RScP & Event Planner

Ms. Adele Bloom

Educational & Business Consultant

Ms. Roberta Brown

President, A.C.A.U.S.E.

Ms. Norma Guillotte
President, Top Ladies of Distinction, Los Angeles Chapter

Ms. Susan Lee
President, Association of Families of Korean Independence Movement USA

Ms. Sheri Rueter
Senior Advisor, WFWP USA

Ms. Claudelina Smith
Chairwoman, WFWP Southern California

Ms. Kimiyo Anceney
District Coordinator, WFWP District 12

One member's experience supporting the work of WFWP in Africa

By Cynthia Myers, WFWP Massachusetts Chapter

Cynthia Myers owns a business called Wrap around the World. She and her husband, Michael, live in East Sandwich, Massachusetts.

TrueBlue(berries) for the Schools of Africa

Our family originally came to Cape Cod in the 1800s and farmed the land. By the early 1900s, they were involved in growing cultivated blueberries. I grew up spending summers working for the three-generational family business. My 85-year-old father is the last of the family who developed the business, which ended in the 1960s for a variety of reasons. My brother, Bruce, inherited the last nursery of blueberry bushes, including about 300 bushes, and has worked on it for a number of years as a pastime and project.

My brother and his wife Helen have always been very generous with family and friends, both giving away many quarts of berries, as well as inviting friends and neighbors to pick them. For several years, I have picked the berries and sold them for various causes: a local museum and a community children's project. This year, I was inspired to raise funds for the Schools of Africa.



Some of the TrueBlue pickers

For several years, I have been blessed with the help of the family of Andrea Higashibaba, another local WFWP member. She and her daughters Yojin, Kijin, and Anja, as well as their cousin MeiLi, helped pick the berries. I invite them for several weeks of “Blueberry Camp” and we call them the TrueBlue pickers. Last year, there were no blueberries due to bad weather and pollination, so we spent three weeks of Blueberry Camp not picking berries, but still having summer fun.

This year, however, the crop was plentiful and with the hard work of the TrueBlue pickers, we were able to reach, and pass, our goal of \$2,000. The girls worked hard to keep the stand supplied. It was such a joy to be in the nursery listening to their laughter and beautiful singing (in three-part harmony, no less!).



Blueberry stand

At the end of Blueberry Camp, there was much celebrating with family and friends at the Blueberry Banquet. We enjoyed a wonderful barbeque, blueberry crisp and entertainment after dinner with singing and poetry, including one “Ode to the Blueberry”.

We were all so grateful for the success of the fundraising project that raised over \$2,100! Each berry was picked representing a child in Africa, sending our love and support for their lives.

Madagascar

From September 1-18, this year, I had the opportunity to travel to Madagascar to lend support to various projects. When I arrived in the capital city of Antananarivo, also called ‘Tana’, I was greeted by Michelle and Mamy, two women who organize the WFWP projects in Madagascar. My arrival was very timely, since they were working on developing the final details of a project to bathe the children! This included many financial details, such as paying for the soap, washcloths, and snacks, as well as bus fares for the dozen or more women and young girls who wanted to serve in this project.

Before I had left home, my very dear, generous neighbor, had tucked a check for \$250 into my hand! She told me that I would know what to do with the money once I was in Madagascar...and I did! In Tana, we bought lots of bars of soap, many boxes of cookies, and rented a minibus to carry us, our bedding and our luggage to the village, which was four hours away.

We arrived in the country and walked all our luggage and provisions in from the main road to the housing, about one mile away, which was generously provided for by our friends.

We began a long uphill trek to the site of the baths, through the red-gold dust of Madagascar, wending around rice fields and up into the hills. A large metal cauldron had already been brought to the schoolhouse and water was being heated over a fire. All that water, plus additional water was carried up in buckets from a spring halfway down the steep hill!

Michelle and Mamy spoke to the gathered group of women and children of all ages about washing and the importance of physical and spiritual cleanliness. Basins were set out for every five or six children, slivers of soap and toweling were handed out, warm water was dispensed and the scrub fest began with great enthusiasm.



Hygiene class in Madagascar

The people of Madagascar, although poor, seem to always have wonderful smiles on their faces and such a gentle and friendly demeanor despite issues of hunger, illness from polluted water and the effort to make a living. These faces that were already shining and beautiful seemed to glow from being scrubbed! They diligently worked on their hands and arms, legs and feet...the water turned dark and was replenished, the scraps of cloth got really black as they scrubbed and rinsed

with giggles and fervor! We had originally expected about 60 children but were warned that many more were coming, so we had enough supplies for the 170 children who arrived for a bath! For some, this was their first experience of bathing with warm water. There is little electricity or running water in the houses. Most of the cooking is done outside over a fire...and wood and water are precious.

After the bathing was finished, they lined up to receive three cookies and a small bar of soap....they were so excited and grateful. Michelle asked them to sing a song, which they did. As I stood on that high hill, overlooking the beauty of the country in the late afternoon, looking at the beautiful faces of the children and their mothers, listening to the sweet harmony of their singing, I felt that I was in the midst of the rich heart of peace.



Cynthia Myers with children in Madagascar

That feeling was often with me as I traveled for several more weeks in Madagascar. I would find myself asking, "Who is 'rich' and who is 'poor'?" These precious people have in them a joy and light, yet they are so 'poor'. There are many people in the world that have so many material blessings and are rich...but are so burdened by life...who is rich and who is poor?

Now I am back in America selling colorful raffia placemats from Madagascar, with 'WFWP' embroidered in the branches of a baobab tree as a logo and raising funds for the next project of bathing the children!

###

Letters from Kenya

Students at the Han Dow Secondary School

I am taking this opportunity to thank you deeply with great concern for your kind support. Your kind heart has made my dreams come true. I am now able as an orphan to achieve my noble goals (to be)... a medical doctor. I promise to work extra hard to my level best and become an outstanding role model in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Humphrey Matekwa

Dear Sir/Madam,

Receive greetings from me. I am one student in Han Dow Secondary School. I am an orphan struggling to get educated in our school.

... I will be happy to receive your financial support towards my education. I am sure to complete my education well... I have an ambition (and) great desire to become a teacher so that I will be helping students...

I am sure of working extremely hard....

Yours faithfully,
Dorothy Alusa

I appreciate and thank you for the support you have granted to me as an orphan to ensure that I achieve my future ambition of being a doctor. Actually I could not have made it, but through your support I do promise to work hard and achieve good grades. Otherwise, thank you and may God bless you.

Yours faithfully,
Fred Olwangu

Reflections from the African Schools Service Project in Kenya August 2007



Aurora Kamins

Aurora is an 18-year-old senior at Justin Siena Catholic High School, and lives in Napa, California.

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to work in Kenya, meet the people, and get immersed in a project that was much greater than me. ... I believe that the Kenyan people were very happy that we Americans were there to help them. I realized it wasn't our physical labor itself that moved them, but rather the heart that we put into our work and our attitude toward the community -- that was the real reason for the gratitude and love they showed us.

I personally always wanted to go to Africa because my parents did missionary work there. I now believe that I can better understand my parents. ... It really was the most amazing thing I have ever done and I hope that in the future more people will be able to have a chance like this.



Athia Shibuya

Athia is a 16-year-old junior at Irvington High School, and lives in Tarrytown, New York.

After I was able to see and experience the living conditions of the Kenyan people, I realized how much I had to be grateful for. ... I was able to see how very serious the students were in their studies and how grateful they were to receive an education. It made me realize that I have taken my education for granted and that I should really work harder in school. I also saw that the school had very meager resources. The library had few books, the floors in the classroom were uneven and rocky, and there was no plumbing. I never thought before how lucky I was to have all these things.

This trip has also given me a stronger desire to help those less fortunate than myself. I was very moved when we went to visit the orphanage, where they have done so much to try to give a better life to children with HIV/AIDS. ...

One thing we didn't like was that the service project was too short. I think that if we were given more time, we could have accomplished so much more. Because of this experience, I hope to do more service projects in the future.



Kayo Derflinger

Kayo is a 23-year-old junior in Nursing at Ohio University. She lives in Ohio with her husband, Hiro Masuda. She is also the chairwoman for the WFWP Ohio chapter.

The Han Dow Secondary School was not what I expected. It was better. I could see how hard the school board, the parent committees and the staff worked together to ensure the success of the school. ... The board and the students were so appreciative and grateful that we were there. I really enjoyed putting our words into action. ... It was indeed hard work and at times I thought I was about to die, but I can say that I really enjoyed it.

I knew that there were poor people in the world, but to see it with my own eyes was something unbelievably unbearable and heartbreaking. I suddenly became so grateful for everything that I have and had taken for granted. ...

I am happy that I was able to learn about the history of WFWP in Kenya and the wonderful service of the ... Japanese WFWP volunteers who have risked their lives to help the African people.

This service project was more than just painting the walls of a schoolhouse or pouring a cement floor. It was an expression of love. It was God working through us to show the Han Dow School and the community how much He loves and cares for them. We must continue to help and give everything to these people. ...



Kay Peemoeller

Kay is a 24-year-old Japanese teacher at Kellam High School in Virginia Beach, VA, and lives in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Being able to see how these people struggled to survive, and yet at the same time to see how happy they were and how eager they were to share what little they had with complete strangers almost brought me to tears.

If there was one thing that I could change about this trip, it would be to make the time that we spent at Han Dow School longer. Though we were able to finish our original goal, there was still so much left undone. ... Although we only helped with certain aspects of the flooring, I know we were able to make their work a lot easier. I only wish that we could have laid floors for all eight classrooms instead of leaving half of them undone.

... I feel that my work here is not done but in fact has just begun. The principal of the school asked me to send him some things from America, because he felt that I, as a teacher, was his colleague. ... I will be on the lookout for a camera, an economics book and fifteen soccer uniforms. By sending these items, I can continue to help the school.

...

I would like to express how very much I appreciate being given this opportunity. I have always been interested in service work and this trip reinforced my passion to continue doing it. It allowed me to re-evaluate my life and realize how much I have taken for granted. This project needs to be continued, for I am sure that it can affect others as much as it has affected me.

###

Service Learning Project in Kenya August 1-August 14, 2007

By Joan Mwamlima, Project Coordinator

Joan Mwamlima runs a nonprofit organization, together with her husband who is originally from Zambia, which is called Banana Leaf Art. They sell banana leaf art made by schoolchildren in Zambia, to raise money for the children to pay their school fees. They are also raising money to build a school in Zambia. As a couple, they feel a calling to serve Africa. They live in Norfolk, Virginia, with their three children: Josh (18), Sara (16), and Imani (11).



Joan Mwamlima

I am very grateful for the privilege of leading this service project in Kenya. It was moving to see the five young women on our team, one of whom was my daughter, become loving, expressive, amazing ambassadors for peace. They were positive role models for the Kenyan students, and they helped change some negative concepts about Americans. They were worthy representatives of Women's Federation for World Peace, USA.

I am absolutely convinced that now is the time for American women to work in Africa, just as WFWP Japanese members did back in the 1990s. We have a responsibility not only to send money to alleviate poverty but also to invest our human resources. When we ourselves go to serve in Africa, it benefits the African people and, by doing so, we come closer to the Heart of God, a priceless reward.

PART 1

On Wednesday, **August 1**, 2007, five young American women and I set off for two weeks in Kenya on WFWP, USA's first Service Learning Project. We traveled in various ways for almost four days to get to the Han Dow Secondary School in Marakusi, in the Lugari district of Kenya. This district is northeast of Nairobi and fairly near the Ugandan border. Han Dow, meaning "One Way," is one of seven schools which WFWP, USA sponsors as part of the "Schools of Africa Project". The young women were Kayo Derflinger from Ohio; Aurora Kamins from California; Athia Shibuya from New York; Kay Peemoeller and Sara Mwamlima, my daughter, from Virginia. They had all worked hard to raise funds and prepare for their first trip to Africa.



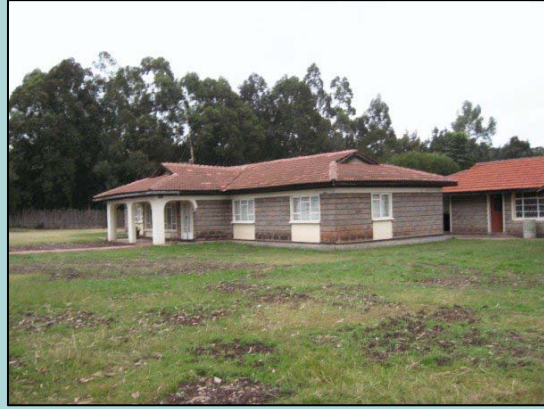
At the airport

Everyone was both excited and tired after 20 plus hours of air travel on Emirates Airlines through scenic Dubai. We arrived in Nairobi on **August 2nd** at 8 p.m. We were greeted by WFWP

representatives and taken straight to Sasamoto Farm, a workshop center, where we stayed the night. Sachiko Lee was there, one of the original WFPW volunteers. She has devoted herself to Kenya since 1994, and she made sure everyone had what they needed. After greetings and dinner, we went gratefully to sleep.



Kenyan countryside



Sasamoto Farm

Friday, **August 3rd**. Our first full day in Kenya began with an orientation, including a presentation about Women's Federation for World Peace, our purpose and goals and also the Schools of Africa Project. Then Margaret, a Kenyan WFPW member, taught us about Kenyan culture and customs. Everyone's favorite presentation was the Swahili language lesson. In the days to come, we had many opportunities to use the phrases we learned. We also invited Ivy Kalama, a young Kenyan woman there, to join us for the service project. She became like a sister to everyone and helped us with our Swahili.

After lunch, our minivan arrived to carry us on to the Han Dow Marakusi Secondary School. Our driver was Joe Mago who, over the next ten days, became our friend, protector and fellow construction worker. He was a gift from God.

We began our journey on the infamous, dusty, pot-holed roads of Kenya which, like other sub-Saharan African countries, does not allocate adequate funds for services such as road repairs and, as we would see later, for education. I couldn't help but wonder about this and I asked various people, "With all the safari vans and rich tourists driving through, why is there not enough tax revenue to allow the government to resurface even one road leading out of Nairobi?". I never got an answer.



Scenes along the way to the Han Dow school

We drove over rough roads for five hours to reach Nakuru, Kenya's third largest city, just before dark. That night we stayed at the Merica Hotel, enjoyed a scrumptious buffet, plenty of local Kenyan tea, slept well and prepared for the next day's drive to Marakusi.

Saturday, **August 4th**. After leaving Nakuru at 7 a.m. and crossing the equator, we arrived around 1 p.m. at the Han Dow Marakusi Secondary School. Finally, after two days on airplanes and two days in a minivan, we arrived at our destination. This journey was not for the weak or fainthearted.

We began with lunch and an Opening Ceremony, one of several ceremonies we were to experience at Han Dow School. Speeches were given by representatives of the different district and education offices, the headmaster of the school, the president of the PTA, and the WFWP Kenyan president, followed by recitations by students. After the speeches, we presented gifts of sports equipment and school supplies, as well as baby blankets for the families made by the WFWP, Virginia chapter.



Giving gifts to the Han Dow school

Kay, Aurora, Kayo, Athia and Sara all picked names from a small group of Kenyan students who were staying on in order to work with us. These Kenyan girls became their partners for the duration of the service project.

After this meeting, the American girls quickly escaped to go sing and dance with their new Kenyan friends while the adults held budget and planning meetings. The supplies were there for the project, and the workmen had already started. Although we were scheduled to begin the service work that day, nothing was organized for us. We socialized and then left the school at 6 p.m. for the one-hour drive to the nearest town, Eldoret, where our hotel was located.

The Hotel Sirikwa was to be our home for the next five days. The fee we had paid included a buffet breakfast of pancakes, eggs, potatoes, beans, cereals and fruits. Dinner, on the other hand, was not included and was very expensive. As it turned out, each day at the school we were fed so much at high tea (4 p.m.) that many of us did not want any dinner.

On Sunday **August 5th**, we drove from Eldoret back to the school. Mrs. Helen Rotich, the WFWP Kenya president, gave a short reading and spoke about the importance of family values and sexual morality.



Helen Rotich, President, WFWP Kenya



Sara and Aurora holding ducklings at Mrs. Ananda's farm

After lunch, we spent the rest of the afternoon visiting homes in the community. First, we visited the farm of Mrs. Violet Ananda, the WFWP chairwoman for the Lugari district, which includes Marakusi. Her home was a working farm with maize, sugar cane fields and many animals: chickens, pigs, turkeys, pigeons, and more. There were so many children around we didn't know which were hers and which belonged to the neighbors. Our WFWP, USA group had a good time playing with the children and animals and chopping down banana trees. We were served tea and chapatti and then left for the Mbosi's house.



Sara cutting down a banana tree



Athia and Mr. Mbosi

Mr. Mbosi is president of the Han Dow School Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). His home was smaller and more humble, yet it housed his mother and many other relatives. We walked around his farm and then visited with his family in their living room. We ate more food and drank more tea, so no one wanted dinner that night.



At Mr. Mbosi's house



A picture with the children

As we drove back to Eldoret on the dirt road through Marakusi, I noticed how different the road was from the first time I had visited Kenya, in the dry season of the year. This time, rain had made the road very muddy and narrow, as the sides were washed away into the gullies and deep ruts were formed in some areas. Just as I feared, we soon got stuck in the mud--while it was getting dark--out in the middle of nowhere. Everyone piled out of the van, including our driver, and we were ankle deep in mud as we tried to free the van by pushing. We were useless. Then, out of nowhere, children began to appear. They gathered and giggled amongst themselves as they watched us.



Getting stuck in the mud



Trying to free the van

After the children came adults, either from huts in the distance or just passing by on their way home. The men passing by rushed to help us, and the tension I was feeling over our vulnerable situation soon turned to laughter. Aurora, Sara, Kay, Kayo and Athia, freed from pushing the car, quickly switched over to talking, teasing and taking photos with the children. It took some time to get unstuck, but we ended up having great fun there! What could have been a difficult situation turned into a community event. This was one of several experiences of getting stuck in the mud, and each event turned into a small miracle.



Kayo giving gifts to children



Kayo and Sara taking a photo with the children

PART TWO

Monday, **August 6th**, was our first full day of service work. Both the WFWP leader and the headmaster were elsewhere, so the role of organizing fell somewhere between the construction supervisor, myself and the schedule itself. We worked 3 two-hour shifts with breaks in between. It was an easy day of painting.



Preparing the paints



Sara painting a classroom

We stopped at 4 p.m. for tea, and then we visited a local clinic built by the Religious Youth Service (RYS). It has been named the Marakusi Clinic and is partially run by the government. The doctor there was very gracious as he showed us around. The structure itself was very sound, but the rooms were sadly bare of equipment or supplies. Almost no medicine was left in the cabinets, and the two women at the front desk were cutting gauze from long strips to make bandages. We were shocked at the lack of things we take for granted in American clinics.

I asked the WFWP girls if there was something we could do, like maybe using the money from our dinner budget to give to the clinic for medicine. Everyone agreed enthusiastically, so we presented the doctor with a donation and sent him to town on a motorbike to buy medicine.

Kayo also wanted to ride on a motorbike, so we ordered motorbikes for all five girls to ride on. The drive from Han Dow School back to Eldoret consists of 30 minutes on a dirt road and then

30 minutes on paved road. The plan was to ride the motorbikes (which came with drivers) until we reached the paved road, where we would ride in the van. I ordered an extra motorbike for the headmaster and he enthusiastically joined in. As we were leaving, he quietly said to me, "Since you are in the front of the group, I will stay in the rear to make sure everyone stays on track." In that moment, I realized how serious he was about the District Commissioner's direction for him to take care of our security.



Riding on motorbikes from the Han Dow school back to Eldoret

Tuesday, **August 7th**, the second full day of work, was much harder. We began preparation for mixing concrete for the floors. This meant lifting heavy bags of cement and then pushing them in wheelbarrows from the storage place to the classroom area. It also meant carrying large 5-gallon buckets of water many, many times across the long field from the water pump to the classrooms. It was exhausting. But the girls were very positive about the whole experience. Kayo finally organized everyone into a line, passing buckets from one to the other, up and down the line. The first and second concrete floors were poured and all the painting finished.



Carrying buckets of water



Moving the cement to the classroom

Everyone was tired. We stopped at 4 p.m. for tea. I had asked if we could visit one of the neighbors. So far, the houses we had visited were relatively nice, but I wanted the girls to see how most people lived in the rural areas. The cook's helper took us to his home just behind the school. He lived there with his grandmother and 14 of her grandchildren who had been orphaned by AIDS. What little income he received was all this home had.



Mixing the cement



Kayo and Aurora helping mix the red concrete finish

The house was small and dark, the conditions beyond humble. The children wore torn clothing but were laughing and playing and so curious about the white people and their cameras. Once again, Kay, Kayo, Athia, Sara and Aurora looked like Princess Dianas, embracing and talking to all the children. This moved the grandmother very much.

Wednesday, **August 8th**. At first, we sat around talking, playing games and waiting for something to do, but we also helped the supervisor and his workers pour the third and fourth concrete floors. Finally, they put the red concrete finish on. Sara, Ivy and Aurora were sick that morning. They slept and recovered a bit in the afternoon. We finished the work around 4 p.m. and had a brief soccer game with the students.



Before



After

As dark clouds gathered, we met in the library for our closing meeting. Unfortunately, the rain began to pour, and the pounding noise on the corrugated tin roof was so loud we could barely hear each other. Helen Rotich, the headmaster, and several other people gave speeches. Then Kay, Aurora, Kayo, Athia and Sara each gave gifts to their Kenyan sisters and received beautiful Kenyan necklaces in return.



Giving gifts to Kenyan sisters



Closing meeting

It was hard to say goodbye. We dashed across the soccer field to our van, waving enthusiastically to the students. The headmaster and several men jumped in the van with us to push us out of the mud if we got stuck. Sure enough, we got stuck. We had to walk in the rain and mud for about a quarter of a mile while they pushed the van through the mud. Once again, our driver, Joe, was able to steer us onward.

We left the Han Dow school with great joy for all our experiences and all that we were able to accomplish, but also with sadness to leave our new friends.

There is so much need at the school: a need for money to finish the new administrative block that sits idly waiting for funds; money to upgrade the school buildings, especially the crowded, dark and unfinished dorms for the boys and girls. The impact of poverty was everywhere, from the clinic with no medicine to the pit latrines with mosquitoes swarming out of them; from half-clothed to grandmothers with 14 grandchildren orphaned by AIDS. These images keep returning to me, and with them the question, "What can we as WFP really do to make a difference?"



Girls' dormitory



Unfinished administrative block, due to lack of funds



Latrines



Two of the cooks

PART THREE

August 9th. We left early for the long, nine-hour drive from Han Dow to the Masai Mara Reserve. The countryside was beautiful, from individual farms to large tea plantations. We stopped for a quick tour through one of the tea processing plants. During the whole drive, I was trying to digest our experience at Han Dow.

Life is very hard in Kenya and other African countries, and it is painful to observe. People have to work so hard for so little. Men and women get up early and work on their farms all day just to eat. They have no money for the simplest things, like another set of clothes, or sugar, or even transportation. Boys with bicycles, motorbikes, minivans, or any sort of transportation try to offer rides. Everyone tries to sell something, tries to make some money.

Many people sit along the roadside and around the stores. There are so many unemployed men. One teacher said unemployment in Kenya is between 50-70%. I remembered what Jan Egeland, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, once said to partially explain the violence in Darfur: "Too many unemployed men with too many guns." And then I understood why there were all the police checkpoints we went through - even out in the rural areas.



On the safari van

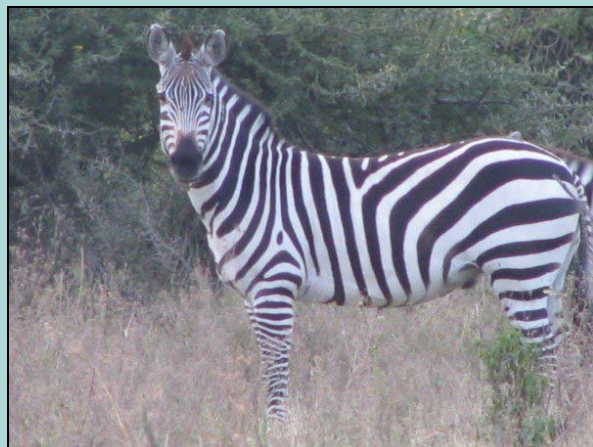


A giraffe

As we approached Masai Mara Reserve, the Kenyan terrain became drier and dustier. Zebras began appearing in the distance, as horses might along a road in the American countryside. By the time we reached our camp, we were well into the Reserve and had seen zebra, giraffe, elephants, and other animals. The camp we booked, Savuka Camp, was located in the southeastern corner of the Reserve. It is inexpensive (\$45) and thus it was full of European backpackers and families on a budget. Dinner consisted of simple beans, meat and chapatti. The rooms were a bit dusty and cramped, but the girls, undaunted, huddled under the mosquito nets and chatted until late.



A wildebeest



A zebra

Friday, **August 10th**. Safari. We left early with a packed lunch for the southwest part of Masai Mara where the hippo pools are located. After popping up the roof of our van, everyone got out their cameras and prepared for the ride. The scenery was gorgeous. Along the way we saw zebras, buffalo, gazelle, giraffe, cheetahs, elephants, and more than enough lions.



A cheetah



Lions attacking a giraffe

The real drama came when six lions took down a giraffe. All the safari vans in the area swarmed to the sight, connected by radio and by some ancient bloodlust. I had never seen anything like this and was fascinated and repulsed at the same time. After many photographs and “ughs” we drove on to the hippo pools. Relaxing along the way, we stopped for a picnic inside the van. When we reached the hippo pools, Joe said it was safe to get out and take pictures, but to stay away from the water’s edge: there were big crocodiles in the pools.



Hippo Pool



Elephants

Saturday, **August 11th**. We left early for the long ride back to Nairobi. On our way out of the Reserve, we stopped at a Masai village. I think you have to be in the right mood for this experience. Young Masai warriors dance, and one or two of the men who can speak English lead tours through the village. This village is their home, not some fake tourist village like we have in the U.S.



Masai women



Masai jumping in the air

I had been asking our driver for days questions like, “How do the Masai really feel about these safari vans driving through their property?” or “How do the Masai feel about the rich tourists with all this money while they live in such poverty?” Joe would look at me, deciding how diplomatic he should be, and usually answer with something like, “Life is hard for them.”



Kayo, Sara and Kay with Masai children



Masai village

When we reached Sasamoto Farm, it was time to say goodbye to Joe. It was difficult. He had become part of the family. We promised to see him next time. There was a huge wedding party going on at the farm. Tom Rangala, the caretaker of Sasamoto Farm, and his fiancé were having their civil wedding. We went to join them and meet the family. I was so tired but the girls stayed and danced till late.



The wedding of Tom Rangala, the caretaker of Sasamoto Farm

Sunday, **August 12th**. After Sunday Service at a local church, lunch and meetings, we went to the market to shop with several WFWP Japanese members. This was a curio market set up on Sundays in a parking lot in downtown Nairobi. We had such a good time. Helen and the Japanese members helped us to sharpen our bargaining skills, a very important talent.

We went back early (5 p.m.) to Sasamoto Farm because a good-bye barbecue had been organized. We relaxed, socialized and ate a lot.



Goodbye barbecue

Monday, **August 13th**. Our last day in Kenya. We began by visiting the Nyumbani Home, a residence and school for HIV positive children who have been orphaned or abandoned by their family.



Children at Nyumbani Home



Baby

Over 100 children are housed and trained at this home started by the Catholic priest Father Angelo D'Agostino. It was a relatively large and well-funded organization compared to what we had seen in Kenya so far. An American nun gave us a tour, several brochures and an invitation to come back and do volunteer work. We met with the director and presented the rest of the blankets made by WFWP, Virginia chapter.



Graves of HIV positive children who passed away



Giving blankets made by the WFWP, Virginia chapter



Two children with their blankets

After that we drove to the home of Helen Rotich's daughter for lunch. Her house was humble and it was full of many small children, hers and her neighbors', yet she made a beautiful lunch for us.

Then we returned to Sasamoto Farm to pack, write reflections and prepare to go to the airport. During dinner, everyone gave their testimonies about what they had learned in Kenya. We were happy, grateful, and spoke of different experiences. One thing we all shared was a desire to have spent more time at Han Dow School. I told the young women how proud I was of them because, in spite of the external difficulties, they were always giving love and embracing the students and neighborhood children. They were truly ambassadors for peace and made a positive impression wherever they went.

We flew out of the Nairobi airport at 11:30 p.m., but we all agreed that Kenya would stay with us forever.



Sara Mwamlima, Kay Peemoeller, Kayo Derflinger, Aurora Kamins, Athia Shibuya

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