



Alumni News

Greetings from: Mombasa in Kenya



Name :
Dianne Butler

Class of :
1976 (Yr10)



To:

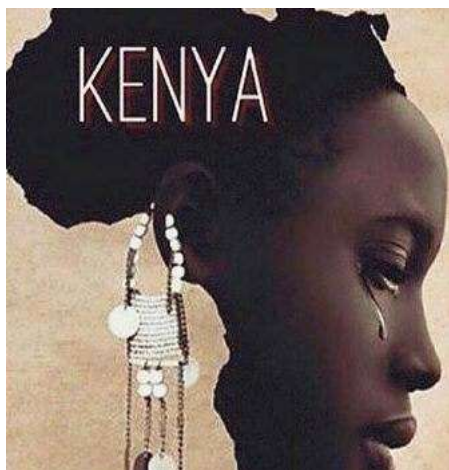
Diane Psaila
Alumni President
Mercy College
760 Sydney Road, Coburg North VIC 3058
Australia



Greetings Diane! From my home, far, far away in Mombasa, Kenya!

It's been so long since we left secondary college!

Sometimes life takes you on unexpected adventures full of challenges that involve great courage and separation from all that you know!



After College I went on to work for the Government for too many years but finally when I was turning 50 I travelled to Africa and discovered my passion for working with the beautiful people of my local community here in Mombasa.

My life and work here is completely different to home. Working and living in a third world country truly gives you a different perspective on what's important in life. I manage a small project which involves running health education sessions for girls in school, and do some teaching and community work including working with street children.

I enjoy what I am doing here in Mombasa as no two days are ever the same and every day brings new adventures and new challenges...

The people here are extremely warm and welcoming despite the daily struggles they experience just to feed and educate their families.

Apart from my volunteer work I love living close to beautiful beaches and having access to National Parks with incredible wildlife. An African safari should be on everyone's bucket list!

My life here in Mombasa is where I need and want to be, but also love spending time with family and friends in Australia so I travel home as often as I can. It's been awhile and it's a long and expensive trip but I hope to be back to celebrate my mum's birthday in October....





Alumni News

The photographs are of people who deserve to live a good life. They live through hardships, but look at them! They are smiling!



I have attached a report which I actually wrote last year but it explains a little bit about the main projects that I raise funds for and is still relevant and the priorities haven't really changed. If the Mercy students would like to send a card or something they made to the children here, it would be great! They love receiving little things like that and knowing that people from across the world are thinking about them makes it so special 😊

Dianne Butler
Mombasa Community Project
P O Box 95943 – 80106
Mikomani, Mombasa
Kenya

*Well, I better sign off now
It is so good to reconnect with all my old
school friends.*

*The words of encouragement and support
mean so much to me and the people who
need our help.*

*Cheers
Dianne*



MombasaCommunity

First and foremost I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who so generously supports my projects here in Mombasa. None of this would be possible without that support which comes in many forms not only financially. I am extremely grateful and humbled by your generosity and good will and your faith in what I do.

Early last year I started a GoFundMe campaign (Cornerstone Kids) to support the food program for **Cornerstone**, a school run by my friend Grace Wambete. At various times throughout the year the focus of my fundraising has also been on **Nyota Ing'Arayo Primary School** and the **Days for Girls Mombasa** project so I recently decided to combine all 3 projects under the one GoFundMe campaign which has now been renamed **MombasaCommunity**.

Here is a little bit of background information on each of the projects, an update on what's been happening and some details on how donation money is used for each project.

Nyota Ing'Araya www.NyotaIngarayo.com



Background

Nyota is a registered primary school in Mombasa Kenya offering classes from KG1 to Standard 8 in the Kenyan Primary Curriculum. Nyota began in 2007 as a day care centre providing daily shelter to children in Shauriyako and the surrounding areas of Mombasa. This year Nyota has 254 students enrolled. The school provides students with a daily nutritious meal and a comfortable safe learning environment. Shauriyako is an extremely poor area of Mombasa.

Brian Mutunga is the school principal. Brian is open and honest and always willing to discuss ways to assist the school to provide a brighter future for the children during their primary school years and beyond. Brian works tirelessly for the whole Nyota school community – students, teachers, cooks and parents as well as former students who have gone on to high school education.

For several years Nyota was supported by volunteer organisation GVI, however due to security issues the GVI Mombasa project was closed down in 2014. Nyota continued to receive some funding through donations to the GVI Charitable Trust up until the end of 2016 however so far this year they have not received any funding.

The major financial challenges are the food program, rent and teachers wages which are all recurring monthly expenses and vital to the continuation of the school.

The main sources of funding for the school are –

School fees

Every attempt is made to work with the families and encourage them to pay school fees and therefore contribute to the improvement of the school and the education of their children.

However for many reasons school fees are not always paid or not paid on time. This makes budgeting and meeting all of the schools financial responsibilities especially regular monthly costs very difficult.

Tuk tuks

At the end of 2014 three tuk tuks were donated to the school to start a small income generating business. While they have generated income which has assisted in meeting the financial needs of the school this has not been to the extent that was first envisaged. Due to many unforeseen costs the income from the tuk tuks has been irregular and does not match the projected budget.

Donations

As mentioned, Nyota has not received any funding/donations through the GVI Charitable Trust so far this year and is therefore reliant on sourcing independent donations to supplement the income from school fees and the tuk tuk business. Donations received through MombasaCommunity help to cover the cost of the feeding program, rent and teachers wages. While these are the main expenses the school faces each month they are by no means the only ones.

Update

- Nyota is facing some challenges this year but as always the whole school community led by Brian Mutunga faces each day with a smile.
- MombasaCommunity has donated 94,000 kes this year to assist with running costs.
- 51 Nyota children have also received new uniforms thanks to some generous donations last year.
- Last year standard 4 and 5 took part in skype sessions with students from a school in Rockhampton Queensland in Australia. We did a lesson to learn about Australia beforehand and the children are now waiting for replies to the letters they wrote to their new friends in Australia. It was a great experience for children from both sides of the globe.
- I delivered a giant Snakes and Ladders game to Nyota from the school in Australia but a few weeks later was told “ Madam you delivered the game but you didn’t play with us.” At that moment I knew it was time to stop running in and out of school for quick meetings about school business with Brian and to make time to actually do some activities with the kids. As a result, with the assistance of some awesome visitors we have been doing a lot of different activities and games in recent weeks.
- On Saturday 11th March we took 24 children from Nyota to a free Medical Camp organised by all the Rotary Clubs from the coast. Rotary Club of Nyali assisted us with transport costs and hopefully will continue to support us as we follow up with children who have been given referrals for further tests and/or treatment.
- Mombasa Eye Hospital has also kindly agreed to visit Nyota and Cornerstone and conduct free eye tests for all of the children. This will be organised in the coming weeks.
- MombasaCommunity will continue to support Nyota with donations for running costs.



Cornerstone

Background

Cornerstone is a beautiful little school in Shauriyako village that is run by my dear friend Grace Wambete. The school has about 80 children from baby/kinder class up to standard 4. The children come from very poor homes and the families pay minimum school fees if and when they can. Grace is very involved in the community and basically no one is ever turned away from Cornerstone. Earlier



last year Grace and I spoke about her concern that many of the children were coming to school without breakfast and although they were supposed to go home for lunch most children would just stay at school as there would be no one at home and usually no food for them if they did go home. Not having breakfast and/or lunch has a very noticeable negative impact on the ability of the children to concentrate on their school work throughout the day.

I decided to start a GoFundMe page in the hope of raising enough money to perhaps provide the kids with a cup of porridge a couple of days a week. However the Cornerstone kids touched a lot of hearts and we were able to start off with providing porridge 5 days a week and before long we were able to add a lunchtime meal 3 days per week.

We purchased all of the items needed to prepare, cook and transport the food as well as plates and spoons. The introduction of food to Cornerstone has added an additional workload to Grace's already busy day as she gets up super early to prepare the food in her house before she goes to school herself but it really is a labour of love for her.

The food program has made a noticeable difference to the students and teachers at Cornerstone. As well as being greeted by smiling faces every time I visit I know that the parents are also extremely grateful that their children are being provided with something that they struggle to provide and which we take for granted – a simple meal. The cost of providing the porridge and food is approximately 6000sh per week (\$88)

Update

- About 80 kids are attending classes from KG1 to Standard 4 this year.
- MombasaCommunity donations pay for the food program which provides porridge 5 days a week and lunch 3 days a week for children and teachers.
- In addition to the food and related costs we also paid for the school licence fee of 25,000sh (\$330) last year
- Donation money has also been used to repair/upgrade toilet facilities used by the children.
- 45 children started the year with a new school uniform thanks to some generous donations last year.
- 14 Cornerstone children attended the free Rotary Medical Camp on March 11 and we will follow up with any necessary referrals. We will also organise for free eye tests for all of the children thanks to a generous offer from Mombasa Eye Hospital.



Days for Girls Mombasa

Background

www.daysforgirls.org

[Days for Girls Mombasa - facebook](#)

Days for Girls Mombasa operates as an enterprise registered with Days for Girls International.

We help girls and women gain access to quality sustainable feminine hygiene, vital health knowledge and income generating opportunities. Feminine hygiene kits are made by women in local sewing groups and are distributed free of charge to girls in school. An education program including subjects such as gender based violence, reproductive health and sex education is also part of the distribution process.

A standard kit contains 2 moisture resistance shields and 8 washable sanitary pads, 2 pairs of underwear, soap and a facewasher, all contained in a bright cotton drawstring bag for privacy. The shields and liners are reusable/washable and will last for 2 to 3 years.



Production of the kits provides a community based activity and a source of income for the local sewing groups involved, including a group of women with disabilities (Tunaweza PWD) and a group of hiv+ women, and the kits enable the girls who receive them to continue their education with dignity and confidence. Girls who cannot afford to purchase sanitary pads often miss days of school each month and are at risk of infection from using items such as dried goat skin, newspaper or mattress stuffing. They are also at great risk of exploitation – being offered sanitary products in exchange for sex by men who prey on their vulnerability. Not having access to sanitary products is not something that most of us think about but it is a real problem for a lot of girls and women here in Mombasa.

The health education program includes discussions on a range of topics including puberty, reproductive health and gender based violence. Girls are encouraged to ask questions or raise any issues, (privately if they wish) and appropriate professional counselling is arranged if necessary. Girls are also encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions on ways to improve the kits and the education program.

The kits are purchased from the sewing groups at a cost of 750ksh each (approx. \$10) and the sewing ladies then reinvest part of the money to buy more material. All kit items apart from the plastic snaps for the shields are sourced locally in Mombasa.

Update

- Tunaweza ladies have been busy turning donated material into Days for Girls bags, shields and liners and in the next few weeks we will begin distribution of feminine hygiene kits to

girls with disabilities in Mombasa. We will also be running our health education program for the girls.

- We recently had a wonderful day with the girls and staff from the Shanzu Transitional Workshop. At the workshop girls with disabilities undergo tailoring training. We did some training for the girls and at the end of the day they had all made their very own Days for Girls kit. We will be visiting them again soon to do some health education for the girls. All the material used for the training was purchased with MombasaCommunity donation money.
- The Tunaweza ladies are now also making colourful padded laptop bags and my favourite - backpacks and bags made from recycled plastic supermarket bags. These are a fabulous use of plastic supermarket bags which they cut into strips and crochet into bags of different sizes, shapes and designs. I'm now working on some marketing strategies and we are very excited about an opportunity to promote and sell the bags and our Days for Girls kits at the Easter market here in Mombasa.
- Another one of the Days for Girls Mombasa sewing groups, The Ambitious Group has also completed kits ready for distribution and donation money will be used to buy the kits from the ladies.
- This year donation money has been used to buy additional material and items to complete the kits, to pay the ladies for their work and to buy the material used for the training session at the Shanzu Transitional Workshop.

If you would like read more about Days for Girls Mombasa and Tunaweza PWD here's a link to a great article written by a friend who spent time with the group while visiting Mombasa last year.

[Days for Girls - Tunaweza PWD](#)



Donations

I hope you've enjoyed reading about the **MombasaCommunity** projects.

I've struggled to condense everything into a few pages as there is always so much going on. No two days are ever the same and every day brings new challenges but also huge rewards. Everyday I'm grateful for this amazing opportunity I have and for the support of so many people. Every time I receive a donation I talk to the people who will benefit - children, teachers, sewing groups etc about the person behind the donation. I tell them where that wonderful person is from and what my connection to that person is. They are always amazed that someone from so far away cares enough to want to help. And of course, if it's someone they know it's even more special.

- Donations can be made via this link to the MombasaCommunity GoFundMe page.

[MombasaCommunity - GoFundMe](#)

- If you are donating from Australia I can provide bank account details to avoid GoFundMe fees.
- If you would like to make a donation for a specific purpose or a specific project, please just let me know. Otherwise I juggle funds as best as I can and use donations where the need is greatest at any particular time.
- Please be assured that all donations are used exclusively for these projects. I pay for all of my own expenses - personal and project related.
- If you would like more information about any of the projects or how donation money is used please let me know.

Even better come and see for yourself.

- If you should feel the urge to do some fundraising I would be more than happy to provide info/photos/videos that might help.

Dianne Butler

(aka Madam Diana)

dianne.butler@yahoo.com.au

dianne@daysforgirls.org

+254 713949651 - Kenya

+61 42580112 - Australia