



jitegemee

\jee-teh-geh-may\ v [Kiswahili:sustain yourself]: empowering street children through education.

Letter from Jitegemee *by Michael Kimeu*

Hard economic times have hit Machakos this year, but Jitegemee has remained firm in its commitment to help vulnerable street children and youth grow in mind, body and spirit. Our region in Kenya has experienced a serious drought, combined with a financial crisis that hit Kenya like so many countries. As a result, the price of food has increased considerably. A bag of maize that used to cost about \$17 (1,300 Ksh) now costs about \$40, making it even more difficult for poor parents to feed their families. Jitegemee has witnessed many kids flocking to the streets to fend for themselves.

But we are proud that our children did not

drop out of school, even with these many problems. We attribute this success to our lunch program where more than 75 students come to eat daily. We worked hard to ensure that children have food, clothes, medical and support.

Our strategy remained participatory and collaborative. We have an



outreach program to meet with street kids, observe them to understand their potential,

and act as a catalyst for change and holistic development. This year, we recruited 30 new students from the streets to our vocational program, which is proving to be one of our most successful.

After 6 months of rehabilitation classes, youth who despaired in life start to build their ambition. We then place these youth in hands-on apprenticeships with skilled tradesmen. About 80 percent of our graduates are earning money from their trade through commissions, employment or self-employment.

I am also pleased to report progress among
(Continued on page 2)

Building Project Update *by Keanne Henry*

Since our last newsletter, Jitegemee has pushed forward with plans to build a new center, where we can build classrooms big enough for our expanding program, dorms for homeless youth, a permanent kitchen for our feeding program and a library. Jitegemee has entered into a contract to buy a one acre plot of land in Machakos on which our new center will be built. We plan to complete the sale in 2009 and begin construction in 2010.

Jitegemee has partnered with the Washington, DC chapter of Architecture for Humanity to design our new building in Machakos. AFH-DC is a group of designers that promotes design solutions to global, social and humanitarian problems. In August, two volunteer architects will visit Kenya with Jitegemee board members to begin the design process. They will conduct a five-day workshop that will introduce our teachers, parents and students to environmen-

tally-sustainable designs, such as roofs that collect rainwater, latrines that compost waste, and classrooms that stay cool due to natural ventilation.

In order to make the dream of a new center a reality, Jitegemee will need to raise \$150,000. A generous donor has pledged to match donations for the building fund, so your contributions will go twice as far. We have already raised \$25,000—which means that we

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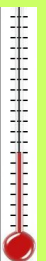
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Building Fund

Our Goal

\$150,000



have pledges for \$50,000 or a third of our total goal. But we need your help to secure the remaining amount. Contributions may be made online at

jitegemee.org/donate.php

our students in formal education. Our students did very well in their exams last fall, and this year we enrolled six children in prestigious secondary schools, including two in Machakos Boys High School, the best in the district, where they are now scoring A's in mathematics and science. Another joined Makueni Boys, another leading district school. Three others also performed very well and joined Kaumoni, Kathiani, and Mumbuni Girls High School, three respected provincial schools.

Jitegemee improves academic excellence and motivation by introducing empowerment sessions during month-long school vacations. During the April holiday, all the secondary school scholars were enrolled in tutoring classes to help them improve their skills. "I believe the tutoring I attended during the holiday has given me a new perspective about organizing my time in school," Mbithe Mutinda, a high school

senior said.

We also invite motivational speakers, counselors, teachers and parents to talk with the children to encourage them. Children who joined Jitegemee have been able to see that teachers, parents and others in the community care for them. They have been able to translate this into care for themselves and a commitment to their own lives. In this way, former street kids have developed aspirations and ambitions for their future.

Last summer, Jitegemee launched a microloan program with a pilot group of 14 kids with the aim of bringing loans into process with former street youth. The aim was to create opportunities for the kids to start or improve their business by issuing loans of about \$50 to graduates of our vocational program who submitted promising business plans. We faced a number of challenges, as some youth involved in the program took jobs outside Machakos, making repayment a challenge. About 60% of the funds were repaid. This year, Jitegemee

staff revised the program to increase parental involvement, institute closer monitoring and require that youth who participate save a certain amount with Jitegemee before receiving a loan. This spring, we issued another round of microloans, and so far the program is working smoothly. Jitegemee also acquired its own tools, which youth borrow for their businesses. For example, two vocational graduates who learned tailoring borrowed Jitegemee's sewing machines to make school uniforms to sell.

As you know, Jitegemee has had a long-term goal of acquiring our own office, vocational class, and library and computer lab. Now, our dream is almost coming true. We are in the process of purchasing an acre of land, and will begin the process of designing our new building this fall, with input from parents, staff, kids, and experts. Your donation will go a long way towards making this plan a reality and serving more street youth to become self-sustaining and productive members of society. **d**

My Life Experience

by *Mwania Musyoka*

From when I was born up to when I joined Jitegemee, my life experience was very bad. Before I joined Jitegemee, I was in the streets just sniffing glue and also drinking alcohol. I could be arrested and taken to a police station at any time. There was no one who came to see me in the police station, so I sometimes stayed there for months.

When I was about seven years old, I went to the city of Nairobi. I used to take other people's property and run away. One day luck was not on my side. I stole a woman's bag but when I was running away, I was caught and beaten by a mob.

At nine or ten years old, I came to Machakos. I had nowhere to live. I had spoiled my respect with my friends, so I didn't have friends. One day I met some children who talked about a program for street children. At first, I was afraid to go there,

but then a man came to me when I was standing outside the supermarket. I was so afraid and I kept a distance from him but he told me that he was a teacher from the children's program. I was happy because I had already heard of the place.

He told me there will always be Hgitheri (corn and beans) and porridge and that there will no longer be child harassment. When I got to the place I found children and one of the teachers. The teachers were so happy and were treating us like their own children. I was in this place for about one year and here my behavior really changed a lot and I became a responsible person.

After some months, we had a camping trip to Mombasa. Every one of us was happy about it. From Mombasa, my life changed so much from worse to good. My parents were happy about the change. Even in the village, I was again respected.



Mwania Musyoka

I am now fully at home. I cooperate with my parents and teachers and I think that's why today I am like this. So thanks to all those who help Jitegemee and those who have that willing heart to support children. It is from that support that I have come all this way to this far.

Now, I am doing panel beating [auto body—learning to repair damaged vehicles]. I am doing very well and I am expecting to start my own business after the learning process. I want also to teach other [street children] about my trade and my skills. Thanks. **d**

Jitegemee's Impact by Kerstin Ahlgren

In early 2009, four students from Columbia University's International Affairs program visited Jitegemee to conduct an independent professional assessment of our vocational program. The complete report, including all data and recommendations are available on the Jitegemee website at www.jitegemee.org/updates.php

This January I travelled with Emma San Segundo Riesco from New York City to Machakos, Kenya. Emma and I had been working on our Masters in International Affairs and fervently studying everything about development and Kenya we thought might help us on this trip. Our first day in Machakos, teacher Elizabeth Nzivo brought us around town, where we met with seamstresses, carpenters, and mechanics who told us their everyday problems, talked about paying for their siblings' school, and spoke confidently about what they had gained from Jitegemee in terms of courage and friends. Our job was to take these stories and somehow reconcile them with our Columbia "book knowledge" - to conduct an impact assessment of Jitegemee's Vocational Training Program.

Every night when we returned to our hotel room, Emma and I typed pages of notes into our computers, looking for key words and phrases, trends in students' answers, and recording our observations of the town and people. The next day we would go out again, this time meeting with parents to ask them what they hoped their children would gain from Jitegemee, or how they had seen their son or daughter change during the program. I won't say our book knowledge became irrelevant on the ground— it didn't. But what did happen was a slow realization that to assess the Jitegemee program we needed to use criteria that the Jitegemee staff, parents, students and mentors deemed valuable. To impose our personal, or Columbia's, academic criteria, would not do justice to the hopes, desires and values of Jitegemee's students.

Upon our return to New York and with the help of our other two team members, Greg Nichols and JeongMin Cha, we used the information we'd gathered to come up with indicators for success as defined by the Jitegemee community. They are:

1. Satisfying social relationships
2. Ability to live life based on good values
3. Ability to live a healthy life, for my age
4. Ability to financially support myself
5. Ability to engage in leisure activities
6. Satisfaction with achievements in the workplace
7. Ability to find meaningful work
8. Feeling of physical safety
9. Ability to feel spiritually fulfilled
10. Suitability of vocational training
11. Extent training met expectations
12. Ability to freely associate with the community
13. Feeling of confidence
14. Level of excitement about learning

With surveys, interviews and other activities based on these



Min Cha with Jitegemee students

indicators ready, Min and Greg returned to Machakos in March to gather data. They talked to many people and even were convinced to buy a suit and dress respectively from a particularly good Jitegemee saleswoman!

After analyzing their extensive quantitative and qualitative data, our team found that Jitegemee has had a huge positive effect on almost every indicator. The greatest positive effects were seen through Jitegemee students and graduates' success in the following areas: communica-

tion, education, spirituality, good behavior, safety from police, confidence, stress-level, and desire to work. The rehabilitation class is having a large impact on students' social abilities and behavior, and students are benefiting from greater income and professional ability. 82% of students who were interviewed were employed. 62% of vocational graduates reported being the primary breadwinners in their home, while none of the students who were just starting the program reported being the breadwinner. Students were also much more confident after the rehabilitation program—one student said that "In Jitegemee, I learned about myself and that I am a good person."

I remember Emma and me thinking after the January trip—"How are we going to help this organization improve? It's already amazing!" While our data analysis corroborated this initial observation, it did reveal some areas in which Jitegemee can expand or improve its impact.

First, we found that boys are typically earning lower profits than girls. Second, Jitegemee students had experienced a huge decrease in their contact with police, but were still in some danger at home and/or in their communities. Third, we found that Jitegemee students and mentors with higher educational levels were more successful both in the rehabilitation program and in their careers. Lastly, because mentors themselves worked on a commission basis and had varying levels of training themselves, some students were less prepared for their trade than others.

Based on these findings, my team made several recommendations to Jitegemee to improve its program and expand its impact. We would like to profusely thank Mike, Elizabeth, Mwelu, Alex and all the students, graduates, and mentors for their hospitality and for making this analysis possible. This is a fantastic organization and we are excited to see it continue its great work in Machakos. **d**

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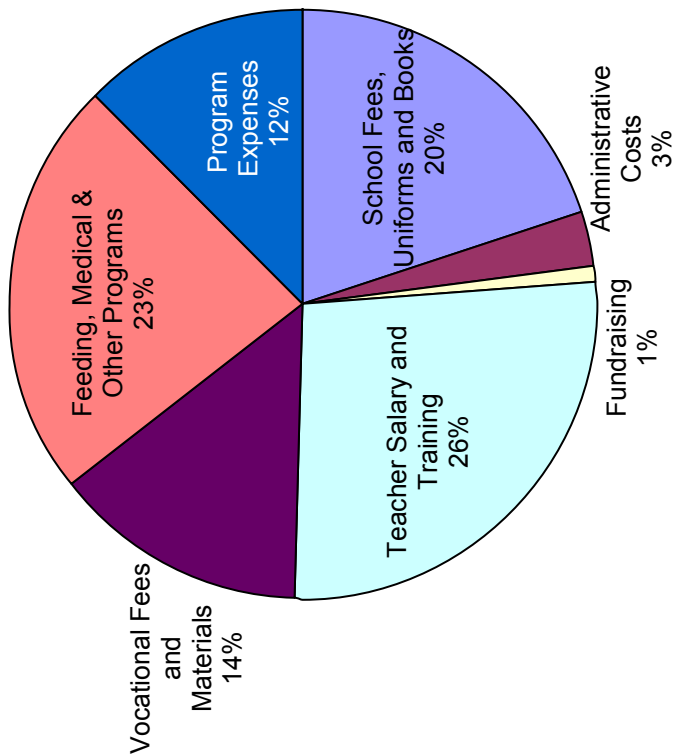


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Jitegemee Program Expenses 2008



Expenses 2008: \$63,966

Budget 2009: \$75,139

Thanks to your generosity, our fundraising efforts are on track to meet the needs of our expanding program.

Jitegemee At A Glance:

- Total number of children served: 163
- Number of children sponsored to elementary school: 46
- Number of children sponsored to high school: 12
- Number of children sponsored to vocational training: 87
- Number of youth sponsored to college or technical training: 6
- Number of participants in microfinance program: 12

Our Goals for Next Year:

To build our own center, including dorms for homeless youth, a library, computer room and permanent kitchen for our feeding program.