

Donata Obara

Chief Literacy Officer, ACTIONAID



ACTIONAID works with communities where literacy - the numbers of people who can read and write - is between 20 per cent and 30 per cent. In Kariobangi literacy is at this level, while Kenya's overall literacy is 50 per cent. Men tend to be better educated than women, as girls often drop out of school because of the cost of fees, or because they have to look after younger children.

Our education programme is relevant to the lives of people in Kariobangi. To do this we fit lessons into other work on health, sanitation, income generation and savings schemes.

Literacy is important as people need to be able to write their name to set up a savings scheme. It stops them being cheated at the market. We've also found if a member of savings groups cannot read or write they are often 'bulldozed' into wrong decisions by better educated members.

We hope that over a period of ten years the numbers of people who can read and write in Kariobangi will increase from 20 per cent to over 70 per cent.

Pius Kilonzo

Pius lives with his wife, grandmother and six children in a two roomed house in Kariobangi.



When I get construction work I can get Ks 30 a day. After you do three days you have to stop and let another lot of workers come in. With the construction of some more school classrooms I'm hopeful that there will be more job opportunities.

When I get paid I buy food in bulk, then we ration the family so it will last when there is

no work.

I spend the money on maize which we have to grind. I cannot buy the packed ground maize meal because its too expensive.

A two kilo pack of maize costs Ks 8, the ground maize is Ks 12. If we have eight kilos, it would last four days. We use it for porridge for breakfast and lunch and the same for supper.

We buy vegetables to go with it. There's no way we can ever eat meat or fish - we have to economise on everything.

John Mwangi

Scout Leader, Tegemeo Youth Centre Scout Unit 106th N.E.



I've 40 scouts in this unit, and 20 of them live here permanently. Many young boys drop out of school, either because they fail exams or because the fees are too much. Job opportunities are limited and boys resort to scavenging from the rubbish tip or carrying loads, at Ks 3 a trip, for market stall holders.

We teach the boys to be disciplined, so they

can contribute to the community. Now they help with a health and sanitation education programme. Linked to this is the construction of toilet blocks in the scout compound. There are very few toilets in Kariobangi and this creates health problems.

ACTIONAID provided the materials and the scouts are contributing the labour to construct two toilet blocks. We'll charge people Ks 1 to use the toilets and this money will be used to maintain them. Any spare money left over will go to the scouts.

As most of the boys were born in the city they don't know about farming. We've two acres of land and each boy has a plot on which they can grow food. The government sends an agricultural worker who teaches the scouts how to grow cassava, tomatoes, bananas, sweet potatoes, peppers and fruit.

Peter Wamburi

Market stall holder and Vice Chair, Key Information Panel: Nyayo village Kariobangi



I sell tomatoes, carrots and spices, which I buy from suppliers from the countryside. I sell carrots by the bunch, and after selling a sack I've made Ks 40. I can make a living, but if I could hire a vehicle and go to the countryside it would be better for me. I'd be able to buy cheap vegetables and increase my profits. ACTIONAID's offering loans and I'd like to borrow Ks 2000, which is the cost of hiring a vehicle.

I'm also the Vice Chair of the Key Information Panel in Nyayo village. Each village in Kariobangi has a KIP and their job is to identify the local development needs and work with ACTIONAID to plan schemes to overcome these problems.

In Nyayo village the market attracts many extra people. With no toilets there are health problems, and diseases such as cholera and typhoid are common. We identified the provision of toilets as a priority for ACTIONAID to tackle. They provided the materials and the local scouts are building the blocks.

Margaret Aluoch

Pupil, Ngunyumu primary school



Life's very busy at the moment, as I'm doing my exams. I wake up at 6.00 a.m. and before I go to school I revise my notes. After washing my face, I take my tea and then leave for school. School starts at 7.00 a.m. and finishes at 3.45 p.m.

After school I'll revise again and then relax. At home I help my mother collect water. The water pipe is two kilometres away and we

have to carry the water all the way. Water's a problem in Kariobangi as there are only 200 taps for over 60 000 people.

After supper I'll relax again, maybe tell some jokes to my brother and I'm in bed by 9.30 p.m.

I'd like to be a lecturer in commerce or accounts, but secondary school fees are too expensive and my family couldn't afford them.

During the holidays to try and to the money I buy a sack of *Sukumawiki* (greens) for Ks 60.

I sell it in bunches and make Ks 20 profit on a sack. I keep this money for my school fees but it's never enough.

Joyce Wanjiru

Secretary, Mwinyiha Women's Group



Our group's name means 'from the chairlady to the last member we're all equal'.

We're business women, running kiosks or working as tailors. Our businesses don't make much profit and our families live on about Ks 50 a day.

We've not enough spare money to make large purchases, so we started a savings and

credit scheme. Each month we all save Ks 20, and once a month a member can take a loan of Ks 200. We pay interest, but it's cheaper than elsewhere. The loans are used for household goods, such as *sufurias* (cooking pans) costing Ks 60.

As well as our loan scheme, we also run literacy training. Mrs Kenya, from ACTIONAID, trained us in accounts. Now she's teaching us about 'fire-less cookers'.

The fire-less cookers are made from insulated boxes or baskets. Once the *sufuria* is boiling you take it off the *jiko* (stove) cover it with a plastic sheet and place it in the cooker. The food's left for 30 minutes, and after that it's cooked. I've found the money I spend on fuel has dropped from Ks 49 to Ks 21 a week.

The cooker's also useful as I can leave food in it to keep warm while I'm working in my kiosk. Then my children can come home to find their food ready, without me worrying that they're going to burn themselves.

Meshack Acheru

Korochocho soil block making group



We produce soil blocks which are used to construct school classrooms and toilet blocks. Our group was established with the help of ACTIONAID, although we're now independent. We were given training in producing the blocks and now we can be hired if anybody needs construction materials.

The blocks are made by mixing one

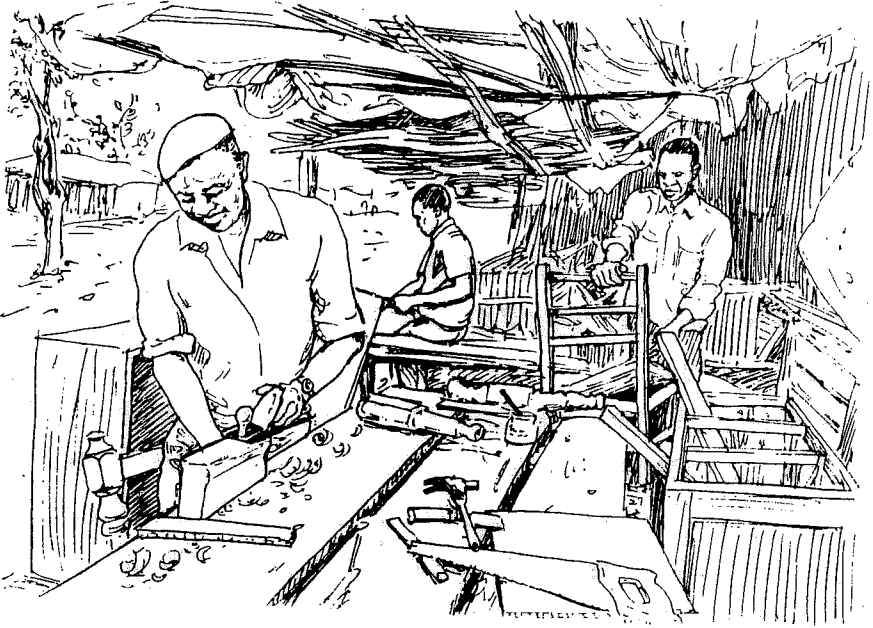
wheelbarrow of cement with ten wheelbarrows of *marrum*, a special type of soil, and a little water. This mixture is then compressed in the special press. Out of this mixture we can make about 140 blocks. The blocks are then left to dry for a week before they can be used.

The blocks we make will last over twenty years, so they should make a real improvement to the buildings in Kariobangi.

This work gives us an opportunity to earn a living. This is a great help in Kariobangi as the job situation is very difficult.

Martin Ondiek

Carpenter, Kariobangi



I was educated up to standard six in my home area of Siaya, in the countryside. Then my parents died and I had to fend for myself, so I joined a village polytechnic and trained as a carpenter.

When I moved to Kariobangi, I found it difficult to get a job. There's a need for furniture in Kariobangi so I decided to set up a carpentry workshop.

I was lucky because ACTIONAID was building a school and they gave me an order for 35 desks. They gave me a cash advance so I could buy new equipment, extra materials and employ some men. Without the advance I couldn't have met the order, as I only make a small profit.

I've three men working for me and we make chairs, dining-tables, sofas, sideboards and wardrobes.

In front of my workshop is an uncovered road and an open sewer. When it rains the road becomes knee deep in mud and the sewer overflows. There's also no electricity in Kariobangi, so if I wanted to get any modern machinery I'd have to buy a generator which I can't afford.

My wife, Pamela, and our three children have stayed in our home area, where she makes money selling fish. When we've enough spare money they come and visit me during the school holidays.