



LWR study tour: The Africa tourists don't see

Story and Photos by the Rev. Paul F. Heykes

When people hear that I recently spent two weeks in Africa, visiting Lutheran World Relief supported projects in the slums of Nairobi and impoverished rural districts of Kenya and Tanzania, many of them say something like, “After your trip you must really appreciate what we have here compared to how little they have over there.”

If I'm pressed for time I often say, “Yes,” and it's the truth. We live in a nation with abundant resources and all of us *should* appreciate everything we have.

But, if I have time to speak in depth about what I saw and learned in Africa, they may end up hearing more that they bargained for.

For what I really appreciate after

visiting people on their farms and in their homes and communities, is the privilege of entering into their world and getting to know them and learning about the struggles and the joys of their lives.

When you take time to really get to know some of our neighbors living half way around the world, it quickly becomes obvious that an abundance of luxuries and technology is not necessary for a healthy, happy, productive life.

Simple things make a big difference. Ponds full of fish reduce hunger and malnutrition. Orphanages provide food, shelter, education and love to AIDs orphans rescued from the streets of Nairobi. Basic septic systems produce an unlimited supply of fuel for cooking and lighting. A farmers' cooperative ensures a fair price for their coffee.

These solutions may be simple, but they require a lot of hard work, a lot of prayers, and the cooperation of many people in order to happen.

In a significant way, through our prayers, our offerings to the World Hunger Appeal and our support of Lutheran World Relief, we are partners in the fight against poverty, hunger, disease and injustice in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Few of us will be able to see first hand the fruits of our partnership. But through the photos and stories in this issue of *The Lutheran* you can learn about several projects made possible, in part, through your generous support.

To learn more, contact the Rev. Paul F. Heykes at 920-846-3453 or revpheykes@msn.com to schedule a slide presentation on the work of LWR in Kenya and Tanzania.

ELCT says, “Fuga samaki”—raise fish

In 1984 fish farming was introduced to the Arusha region of Tanzania. By 1991 the Arusha Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) officially launched a project (supported by Lutheran World Relief) with the goal of improving the standard of living for 1500 local families by establishing fish farms on their homesteads. Today over 3000 families are reaping the benefits of farming fish.

Most homesteads in the Arusha area cover less than three acres. A typical extended family of eight to twelve must raise everything they need to survive on their small parcel of land.

One area resident, a former officer in the Tanzanian army, purchased a home and two acres of land near Arusha several years before his retirement. He sent his wife to begin developing their farm. She planted corn, bananas, mangos, rice, pumpkins and sugar cane. She also acquired a couple of cows and goats (for milk), and some ducks and rabbits (for eggs and meat). When he came home from the military the farm was well established, but it was far from thriving and feeding the entire family was a struggle at best.

Eventually he met an ELCT fish farm motivator who convinced him of the benefits of raising fish. He learned that his entire family would



benefit from adding high protein fish to their diet. By diversifying production on their farm, his family would experience increased food security in times of drought, disease or crop failure. And he might even earn some extra cash selling surplus fish at the local market.

With the help of his sons and the guidance of the ELCT motivator, he dug his first pond in 1998 and added his second pond a year later. His two ponds now sustain 240 fish.

Since the fish are prolific breeders, he never had to buy fish to stock his ponds. Established fish farmers like to give their excess fingerlings to

neighbors who are getting started. Once a pond is up and running there are always plenty of fish for restocking.

The ELCT’s fish farming project has exceeded all the goals set when they originally applied for funds from LWR. They wanted to reach 1,500 families. Currently more than 3,000 are raising fish. They wanted to recruit and train 35 motivators, with at least 15 of them women. Today they have a gender balanced group of 469 motivators spreading the word about fish farming. All totaled, the 4,624 ponds established since the program began are now capable of producing a half million fish per season.



For some of the children living on the streets of Nairobi, life at home was so bad that fleeing for their lives seemed like the only escape from a never ending barrage of beatings, rapes and torture. For others it was the only option left after the death of their AIDs infected parents.

But for all the kids living on the street (and there are thousands of them in Nairobi), life is a daily struggle to survive. Some do odd jobs for a few shillings. Some beg. And some end up at the city's sewage treatment ponds where they fish around in the effluent with bare hands, looking for coins or other small items of value that may have been flushed down someone's toilet.

The number one goal for a child on the street is to live to tomorrow. Hope for the future is a meaningless concept when children have no idea where their next meal is coming from.

Fortunately there are a growing number of agencies dedicated to offering shelter, food, clothing, medical care and education for displaced and orphaned children in Nairobi. Several of them are supported with direct grants from LWR. Others receive funding through LWR partners such as the Kenyan Alliance for the Advancement of Children's Rights.

When the Rev. Lucy M. Njenga (center right) became aware that homeless children were scavenging for food at the sewage plant, she

resigned her parish ministry and established the Pehucci Academy and Orphan's Home. Today she provides a home for about 40 children (lower right). She also educates them and about 200 neighborhood children who attend the Pehucci Academy.

In the Nairobi suburb of Kayole, Faith Wanjiru, a devout Christian and successful business woman, used income from her prosperous boutique to establish the Imani Rehabilitation Agency. In addition to providing basic necessities for up to 350 children, she stresses self-reliance from an early age. Children at her centers learn skills such as cooking (lower center), dress-making and urban agriculture (gardening).

Another LWR partner is the King Baudouin Children's Home, sited on top of an industrial landfill in Nairobi. Several years ago LWR helped finance a new irrigation system for their gardens. Today they grow nearly all their own food. Here too the children learn self-reliance by working in the garden and preserving the harvest (top right).

Now, after being rescued from the streets, nourished, educated and loved, these children can begin to hope and dream about what the future may bring.



Hope for AIDs orphans and displaced children



Biogas—renewable energy for developing nations

With the help of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, in partnership with Lutheran World Relief, many low income rural families now have an unlimited source of free fuel for cooking and lighting.

Starting in the 1980's, the ELCT trained village artisans how to build biogas generators. Since then over 300 families in the Arusha region have installed biogas systems on their small farms. Biogas is an appropriate, affordable technology for low income rural areas. A basic system curtails deforestation and can be installed for about \$300.

Biogas systems function like a common American septic system (See insets from top, clockwise). Sewage from Wilson Kaaya's family latrine and manure from their farm animals is mixed with water and poured into an intake trough. From there it flows to a sealed digester tank. As the sewage decomposes, methane gas fills a pipeline leading to a lantern and stove in his house. When the system fills to capacity, effluent flows out of the digester to a small cesspool where it is collected and used as a nitrogen rich liquid fertilizer for the family's crops.

