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KiD - Kindergarten in Diani e.V. · Heidelberger Str. 20 · 28203 Bremen · Germany



Heidelberger Str. 20  
28203 Bremen  
Germany

fon +49 421-703583

fax +49 421-72240

eMail: [info@kid-kenia.de](mailto:info@kid-kenia.de)

Web: [www.kid-kenia.de](http://www.kid-kenia.de)

Bremen, November 2017

Jambo, Jambo!

Since 2003, it has been our custom to send you at least one update per year. That's exactly what we are doing now - maybe you have been waiting for it. We haven't sent it earlier because we wanted to give you the very latest information about the „KiD - Kindergarten in Diani“ and also about how our children have spent the past year. And that's why we have waited until we have returned home from our last journey to Kenya.

So the following report is up-to-the-minute, almost in the truest sense of the word. Since we had been unable to arrange an earlier visit, part of the Bremen KiD team went to Kenya in the second half of October. Once again, it was urgently necessary to clarify the local situation in person, meeting directly with the parents and teachers to gather their input.

We left behind a rainy autumn in Germany for springtime in Kenya. Although the temperature in Diani was much more comfortable in October than it was here, Kenyan springtime is the rainy season. While it often rains in October in Germany, in Kenya, it pours! Worse than the rainfall, however, were the riots that followed the repeated presidential election. On August 8, 2017, Uhuru Kenyatta, the incumbent president since 2013, was re-elected. However, his opponent claimed the election had been rigged, and the Supreme Court ordered a second election be held on October 26, 2017. During and after the first election, protesters rioted. And so it happened again after the re-election.

We as Europeans, usually cast our votes quietly, and merely shake our heads if we are dissatisfied with the results. We felt quite threatened under the chaotic post-election conditions in Nairobi and Mombasa: burning barricades in the streets, marauding groups, people injured and, unfortunately, also



*On the way to Mekaela School many roads have turned into muddy little rivers...*

killed. So we stayed in our hotel and - if needed - took a cab. Now, receiving this letter, you can be sure we've returned safe and sound from Kenya.

But our first impressions, above, were not all we brought home with our luggage. There are fires that destroy and there are fires that burn in the heart, burning for a good cause, for a vision of the future, and just for the joy of being alive. And we experienced that as well!

Taking into account the local circumstances, we thoroughly planned our activities and meetings, and we assigned priorities. The topmost priority, of course: our children. And what else can we say than: They are doing well, are in a good mood, and are thriving and prospering tremendously. What more could anyone want? Well, we want that this will continue. We also wanted to learn how the parents see their children's development, and to learn the children's wishes, too. At the moment, we are supporting 65 students in grades 1-8. Thirteen of them attend „Rainbow 4 Kids School“, the others Mekaela School.

So, since we also wanted to talk with the parents and guardians, we called a parent-teacher conference. The principal and 85% of all parents accepted our invitation - a response rate which would be a dream for some of our teachers in Germany. But in contrast to what teachers here experience much too often, in Diani we faced only thankfulness. We assured the parents that we will provide funds for



*In the name of all parents, Stephen Musembi's mother says thank you to us and all KiD donors for their support.*

their children's school education for - at least - another year. This includes medical supplies, meals, school uniforms, school supplies and so on. Up to this point it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop, for our difficulties with Edward and Joshua (we will come to this point later) had of course been noticed by the parents.

At the end of the parent-teacher conference, when we asked for further questions or comments, a woman stood up. We welcomed any parent feedback and were eager to learn what she wanted to tell us. But when we saw her facial expression, we could only think: Good gracious! What is going to come now? She looked very tense and, internally, we began to duck our heads. But the next moment was one of those which we would have loved to share with all of you: Suddenly a deep, deep, touching thankfulness burst out from her heart. It must have been very courageous for her to rise to speak in front of so many people, and we realized that her facial expression was simply because she had been trying to keep control over her own internal discomfort! It was a deeply moving moment.

We would have loved to go and see the children in their classrooms. However, the authorities had decreed holidays for all schools in Kenya until 1st January, in order to allow voters to travel to and from polling places, which are sometimes located far from rural villages. So, to everyone's surprise, the term 2017 came to a close at the end of October. Most children might have been happy about this - maybe others wouldn't have been because when school ends in Kenya, many kids have to help at home and on the fields. But Brittany, the best of our pupils over all the years, will certainly have done what she has always done - learn. Last year, she had been allowed to take home a laptop from KiD, and as her mother says, she guards it like gold. Woe to anybody who comes too close to her „treasure“ without her permission or while she is not present. Her mother says that in such situations you would absolutely not recognize her usually very quiet daughter.

In our part of the world many parents would wish their children were so eager to learn and would treat their belongings so cautiously and with such appreciation.

Earlier, we talked about the fire which burns for a certain cause, which is blazing, which is not consuming but, instead, igniting. Some of our students are so enthusiastic, so proud of what they have learned, that they share it with their parents - they teach them reading and writing! They spark in their parents an eagerness to learn and by giving them knowledge, raise their quality of living, self-confidence and self-esteem! Who had dared to hope for that?!



*... as time goes by...*

*On the left 2010 Brittany with her mother, leaving kindergarten.*

*On the right 2017, a student of grade 7, who is now almost as big as her mother.*

And now a few words about Edward and Joshua, whom we could not meet because they didn't even show any reaction to our invitations and summons. We have still left this part of the „Kindergarten in Diani story“ in the hands of the very good, internationally operating lawyer's office in Mombasa. Our intention remains that the arguments and differences can be settled calmly, in accordance to the Kenyan laws and that the land tenure can be clarified and secured once and for all. There have been many meetings with the lawyers. Many letters have been drafted, notarized and delivered. Once again we are very thankful that our lawyers adapted themselves to our tight time schedule. They have been very helpful and competent, and made optimal use the two weeks we stayed there to clarify all the necessary steps for our success. We will keep you well informed about all results.

Yes, there are always two sides of the same coin. Or, put another way, there is no light (and there's a lot of that in Kenya) without shadow. Of course we are annoyed about the aforementioned circumstances - they sometimes make us angry. But meanwhile, we have learned to use our energy for the things that are really important, and that remains: the children! For example, all children supported by KiD have become students. We will keep an eye on them. We will also accompany our little mates who just have started school, through all their schooldays. But at the moment, there is no kindergarten class, and we have decided that for the time being that we will not receive any new children. We want to make sure to have the necessary reserves to support „our“ children in the future. At the moment, the total care for one child is (depending on the exchange rate fluctuations of the Kenyan Shilling) between 33 and 36 Euros per month; this covers meals, school fees, transportation, medicine, school uniform, school supplies, excursions, and incidentals.



*Our oldest students from 7th and 8th form of Rainbow 4 Kids School*

This time, the journey was different, more eventful than usual. Once more we have appreciated our home country, but once again we were reminded of the variety of ways of life, and that our way of thinking and acting is not the measure of all things. Tared roads, especially in the rainy season, are worth a mint in a country where the red soil and the water turn to a mud-bath, where few people possess a car or have enough money to go for a ride on the Matutu - and nevertheless 85 % of all parents attended the parent-teacher conference. We could replace our shoes, which had been spoiled by the rainy season, very quickly with new ones - but in Kenya most people go barefoot. And yet - who has the fastest and most tenacious runner in the world, despite all this inconvenience? Kenya.

It is certainly the ability to make something from almost nothing, to accept life, to be thankful for small things, which we could copy. And the impressive power of the children's imagination, their curiosity and their trust in the future, and in their own little strength. We take our hats off to the little „teachers“ who also give new hope to their parents. These children form the next generation - they are the future of our common world!

Dear sponsor,  
 I would like to know if you are well. For me I am very healthy, alive and kicking. I am as eager as a bridegroom to see your photos. I hope you and your family are fine and healthy. Receive my hearty greetings, my mother and brother are also greeting you.  
 The main aim of writing this letter is to appreciate your never-ending support in sponsoring me. Though I come from a poor background you never despise me, you are an oasis in the desert for me. May the Lord in heaven shower you with his blessings. I would like to inform you that I learn Deutsch. Would you like to know my Deutsch? I hope you would, I am excited to write to you.  
 It is my wish and hope that you will continue sponsoring me. I would also like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I also wish I could be with you and build snowmen with you and decorate the Christmas tree with you too. Nevertheless, I would like to share the joy with you and also share it your family. Because that is what I believe is Christmas, sharing.  
 Yours Truly,  
 Brittany Wambua.

We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts that this development has been possible so far, that you - with your donations, your trust in the children and in us and our way of acting and deciding - have helped build all this - and will hopefully continue to shape the future together with us! It would be so wonderful if we could tell the parents again and again, until all 65 students have finished school: We will take care of them - for sure!

We wish you all a blessed and peaceful Christmas, a happy turn of the year and „dry footwear on paved ground“ all the long way through the coming year. When we turn our faces to the sun, the shadows will fall behind us!

On behalf of all KiD students in our project, Brittany wrote a letter to all of us...

Your KiD team

Stephan Lorenz  
 Marco Lindner  
 Heidi Finckel  
 Anne Kiedel  
 Heide Stoll  
 Manfred Lindner  
 Anke Windeler  
 Jule Althe