



GLOBAL CHILD  
CARE SERVICES

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## MEMO TO STAFF

Date: June 16, 2011  
To: All Staff  
From: Arlene Ross, Executive Director  
Re: **Upendo Nursery School Initiative – Fundraising & Cultural Exchange**  
cc: Board of Directors

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Greetings!

I am pleased to officially introduce you to an exciting development project impacting the education and wellbeing of young children in the village of Sabaki, Kenya, which is being led by the Elimu organization – the project is the construction of **Upendo Nursery School**.

The driving force on the ground of Elimu (which means “education” in Swahili) is a Canadian and part-time Ottawa resident named Nina Chung, who has a long-time connection to one of Global’s clients. I’ve had the pleasure of meeting with Nina to discuss the project, its history and hopes for the future in great detail.

Located on the coast of Kenya, Sabaki is a very poor community with highly motivated and committed community leaders, who are organized and determined to improve the lives of their residents and secure a brighter future for their children. Despite the clean appearance of the community, there is no electricity or running water, and many of the homes are mud huts.

Through the determination of the community leadership, the Upendo Nursery School (Upendo means “love” in Swahili), began its life several years ago in a mud hut, with three qualified teachers and 80 children ranging in age from 4 and up.

A nursery school in Kenya is the equivalent of a Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1 program in terms of the ages of the children served, and there is also a “baby class” for three year olds.



In 2011, the nursery school moved to a nearby rented cinder-block house, where the children now at least have solid walls and a roof to keep them dry in the rainy season. This is not a permanent solution, however, as much of the floor is a dirt floor, some walls are unplastered, the space is cramped and the rooms are dark. Remember, there is no electricity or running water and no toilets. The children sit on woven mats.



The children learn English and Swahili in school. Teaching tools are limited and improvised; supplies – to say the least – are scarce. In the photo below, you might notice that the paper they are using to print the letters of the alphabet is actually from cut-up milk boxes.



Despite the continuing challenges, there is cause for a great deal of hope. A plot of land on which to build a proper school facility has been purchased for the community. An architect has produced plans and the community members have committed their own labour associated with the hauling of water from the Sabaki River for the mixing of cement and for the digging of the foundation for the school.

In order to build the school, approximately \$25,000 (Cdn) is required for the labour and material costs. The first phase of the development – building the toilets – will cost \$4000. The school will not be a fancy one, or anything approaching the early learning environments our children and staff enjoy at Global Child Care Services. However, it will be solid, safe, clean and bright, and it will become more than just a place to educate children, it will become a community hub and an important fixture in the village for families, with the potential to offer other services (visiting doctors, for example).

In the past decade alone, Global employees have raised tens of thousands of dollars for charities and projects too numerous to mention, many local (e.g. Ottawa Food Bank; the United Way), some national (e.g. Canadian Cancer Society), and some international (e.g. Haiti Relief; the Kulilela School in Zambia).

I am confident in endorsing this initiative as a legitimate and meaningful one, worthy of our attention and powerful in its potential. Any efforts we make to raise funds, raise awareness and partner in a cultural exchange will have an incredible impact on young children in a village in Kenya thousands of miles from us.

Our Board of Directors and Management team are enthusiastic about the learning opportunities for our children that will be afforded through our partnership with the Upendo Nursery School project and excited to plan fundraising activities which will result in dollars spent to build a school for the beautiful children you see in these photos – and every dollar will go directly into that activity and not into expensive overhead costs.

As you are probably aware, even in advance of this memo, some of you have jumped enthusiastically on the bandwagon for Upendo and we have *already* raised \$745 for the project. Rosanne and Louise at Heritage decided to launch the project by coordinating a 50/50 draw at our Annual General Meeting; at Head Office we chose to raffle off concert tickets that were donated to us by our insurance broker, and Forest Valley held a pre-Canada Day BBQ for the children as a fundraiser. Do you realize that with relatively little effort over the past month, we are almost one quarter of the way to building toilets for the children? Will there be other partners or sponsors who might step up and raise funds for Upendo? I hope so. But can you imagine, if sometime in the not-too-distant future, we were able to say that WE built a school in Africa?

Fundraising efforts aside, connecting as a “sister-school” with Upendo presents endless learning opportunities for the children in our care. We can learn about Africa, about Kenya, about Sabaki and its people in a very direct way, connecting child to child and teacher to teacher. Through very simple human connections, we all become engaged in discussions of – and activities that support - social responsibility and international development.

Nina Chung is currently in Ottawa and when she returns to Kenya in late July, we will be sending her back with anything she can stuff in her suitcase - some teaching materials and simple items for the children, as a way to introduce ourselves and share a little of the incredible wealth of materials we enjoy here every day in our child care programs. We'll send pencils and paper materials and laminated letters of the alphabet and posters for their walls – and in doing so, offer hope, moral support and encouragement to the children, teachers, parents and the community.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be looking to you for your ideas and thoughts on how to provide rich learning opportunities for our children by connecting with this project, and creative ways we might raise funds. I'm not suggesting that we discontinue the fundraising we engage in for local and national charities, but that we expand our horizons and divert some of those efforts to this project.

Help me truly put the “global” in Global Child Care Services. Let's take small steps and see what we can accomplish for the children in Sabaki who are eager for an education and for a community working hard – despite obstacles we can't even comprehend - to improve their circumstances.

Additional information is attached to this memo, and I encourage you to visit Elimu's website ([www.elimu.ca](http://www.elimu.ca)); you'll notice they have included a link to our own website😊.

Going forward, more info will follow as we develop and nurture our connection with Upendo Nursery School. I am excited about the potential of what we might achieve together and what we will learn in the process.

In whatever manner you choose to participate in this project, whether it's by buying a raffle ticket or coordinating a pen-pal exchange between our children and theirs or coming up with a great idea on early learning materials we could send as a gift – I thank you.

