

Kenya 2014

A roof over their heads and finally a private bed

“Up until now, three of us have had to at times share one bed”, says Emily Akiryia, a student at St. Josephine Bakhita Girls Secondary School. With great amusement and a huge sigh of relief, she continues, “Thanks to your help, commitment, passion and love for us this will soon change”, adds the 17-year old Kenyan. She is one of among the 400 students currently studying at the 4 year old school which is located in Nyalienga, Homabay County.

The secondary school in Nyalienga provides shelter and food for the girls; it is their safe haven. With 40 percent of the pupils who are currently studying at the school lacking at least one parent or both, the school is the only place they can call HOME. As a result of HIV being prevalent in the region, the number of orphans, as a result of the disease, is high. The school protects the girls from sexual abuse, the risk of infection, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies.

»[Schule statt Strasse](#)« and Strathmore University’s Community Outreach Programme, partnered to offer relief, hope and love to the girls after being made aware of their tough living conditions. Schule statt Strasse is an initiative of members of the Catholic Prelature Opus Dei in Germany. In the summer of 2013, a team of industrious young people from Europe and Kenya constructed a [dining hall](#) (Link to last year’s article) for the school and a second dormitory for the girls, one year later, August 2014. In total 45 young volunteers; students from Germany, England, Kenya, the Netherlands, Austria and Portugal have participated in the two projects, with each project taking 3 weeks.

The social help provided in 2013 and 2014 was only possible because of generous donations. Over 35,000 Euros were collected for both projects. The money was used to buy the material needed for construction and for the salaries of local experts in carpentry and construction. Costs for flight, transfer and visa were covered by the individual participant.

Sunburns, exhaustion, heavy rain, a scorching sun and at times language barrier, could not deter the team of 25 young people from giving their best effort to the community. In a span of 3 weeks, the team managed to build a dormitory with a capacity for 200 girls and also complete plastering the interior of the dining hall. Led by experts in the construction field, the team was relentless at trying to ensure that the girls shall no longer have to compromise on comfort as they pursue their academic journey.

The project and stay in Nyalienga, was both a volunteer service and a youth exchange. For three weeks, the team worked together and had exchanges with people their age from different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds; as next to the young Christians - Catholics and Protestants - Muslim students participated in the project. No gap was existent because the entire team was jelled by one strong purpose: “Making hearts smile”.

Both projects were supported by the [Rhein-Donau-Stiftung](#) based in Cologne and Munich as well as the [Strathmore University](#) in Nairobi. Strathmore College was founded in 1961 upon an initiative of Saint Josemaria, founder of the Opus Dei. It was the first college in eastern Africa without separation of races and thereby accessible to anyone and everyone.

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