

## **MAMA JUSTINE ODUYA**

### **AN AFRICAN VOICE FROM NAKURU – ARAP MOI CHILDREN’S HOME**

My relationship with the current Nakurun Lapset ry started on a personal note in 1985 when I met the current trustee of Nakurun Lapset ry Mama Anna-Liisa Jarkko. It just started on a humble way like when a young boy meets and proposes to a young girl a hand in marriage though in our case it was two women meeting. Yes was the answer to our proposal and our marriage plans and arrangements started to grow to greater heights.

There are times when there are troubled waters in marriage and ours initially went through the same but I am happy to note that ours came to maturity and things have continued to tremendously improve day by day. The relationship has overgrown that and that is why we say that our relationship was founded on a solid ground. Mama Anna-Liisa who was on secondment by Finnish Government to Kenya Government to work on Finnida /Saw start Oy/Forest Industrial Training Centre Nakuru as a Project Secretary. Our relationship grew as a result of her visits and donations to Arap Moi Children’s Home where I was and still is the Home Administrator and Regional Co-ordinator of the Rift Valley Regional Co-ordinator of the Child Welfare Society of Kenya.

Mama Anna-Liisa Jarkko started organising sponsorship of orphans in Arap Moi Children’s Home through her friends and families in Finland from 1984 to 1996. In 1996 she started and became the chairlady of Nakurun Lapset (an NGO in Finland)/Children of Nakuru Society to help in securing sponsorship from the Finnish Government through the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs but continued sending trainees and voluntary workers to Nakuru Arap Moi Children’s Home from 1993 with her organising these activities.

The Nakurun Lapset ry got funding from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs from January 1998 to run the activities at Arap Moi Children’s Home for a five-year period (1998 – 2003).

This relationship has been able to make us get over twenty volunteer students from Finland one of whom was a doctor (Dr. Sanne Kiiveri); the former Vice-chairlady of Nakurun Lapset ry Mama Saara Jukka Haikonen. One of the volunteer students Kirsi Martonen who is currently the Chairlady of Nakurun Lapset ry, one of the first friends of Mama Anna-Liisa to be involved in the programme and is currently the Nakurun Lapset ry Sponsor Relations Manager (Mama Helja). Mama Helja started with Mama Anna-Liisa and still continue to be strong on the Board. She is a pillar at the Nakurun Lapset ry Board who has survived all weather.

It is through our co-operation that led to the sponsorship of Nakuru Christian Professional Team and Farming Systems of Kenya by Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Nakurun Lapset ry.

Through our co-operation we have been able to have a wider contact with the whole of Finland in terms of individual sponsors. We now have over 200 individual Finnish people from all our Finland sponsoring 207 children at the Home in terms of education, shelter, food and health.

Since 1991, we have had a group of sponsors, individuals, Government officials, local embassy officials and other coming to visit the Home to evaluate and give us encouragement to continue working for the sake of the children at the Home.

With the Finnish Ministry sponsorship, the Home has been able to:-

1. Renovate 4 classrooms to 2 dormitories for boys and girls.
2. Fencing of the compound using stone fence.
3. Equipping the dormitories
4. Building the Anna-Liisa Hall
5. Building the VIP latrines and bathrooms outside for both boys and girls.
6. Building Rubbish pit
7. Building the kitchen
8. Building the clinic
9. Providing food, medicine, clothing etc for children in the Home
10. Currently sponsors 200 children in the Home

11. Salaries for 12 Project staff members since the project started in 1998
12. Maintenance and improvement of the Home facilities.
13. Putting temporary structure at the Njoro farm and fencing of the 6 acre farm
14. Renovating a classroom into a Home Library
15. Buying library books etc

It is not possible to name all the positive activities carried in the Home since 1985 though Mama Anna-Liisa and her friends and through Nakurun Lapset ry that have sincerely imparted positively on the lives of destitute children we take care of at the Home.

The Nakurun Lapset ry is the main contributor to the Home activities and we hope sincerely that the sponsorship will continue for another period (2004- 2009). We are also happy the Njoro farm project is becoming a reality from 2004 January.

The project has been a great success as it has saved the lives of the 200 children currently being sponsored in terms of food, medicine, education, shelter etc. These children would either be dead or leading street life if it were not for the sponsorship and continued co-operation between Nakurun Lapset ry and Child Welfare Society of Kenya (Arap Moi Children's Home) Nakuru Branch.

All in all the project is progressing on quite well considering the genuine and tender way in which it started from an anthill till it is now a mountain.

One way that has greatly helped the growth of the project is the visits from Finland by the Nakurun Lapset ry Board members and ordinary members and also by the volunteer students, local embassy officials and Government representatives as for example in October 2003, we had a Finnish Local MP Kirsi Ojansuu visiting the Home in the company of other visitors from Finland.

Once again, our many thanks go to Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Nakurun Lapset ry Board members and Ordinary members, individual sponsors and very many others behind the scenes in the Nakurun Lapset ry project.

May God Bless you All.