

Bungoma – Programme Visit July-August 2011

In July 2011, I gained a real insight into the ACE Africa programmes across Kenya and Tanzania. It was incredible to see the impact ACE Africa is having in the 3 regions it works and left me with a humbling experience I will never forget.



My visit began to Bungoma, the original ACE project site, established in 2003. Here the projects are entering the final phase of ACE Africa's 10 year model and the extraordinary impacts the programmes are having on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWA), guardians and the wider community were very visible to see.

Having met all the dedicated ACE Africa staff in Bungoma and briefed on all the programme work being conducted across the sites, I was taken out into the field. My first stop was to the South End Academy where I witnessed the masterpieces being created by pupils at the school, and it was great to meet the art and crafts teacher being funded by the Rosie Dwyer fund.

Later that day I met an inspirational support group composed of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWA), mostly women, who are supporting OVC as well as PLWA within their community. This group of 80+ individuals is producing nutritious vegetables in community gardens to improve the health of OVC and PLWA, as well as providing shelter and care to many orphans. The support network this group offers each other is vital in living with HIV and AIDS and highlights the importance of de-stigmatizing the disease. The group are accessing anti-retroviral therapy, counseling services and growing nutritious vegetables through the support of ACE programmes.

The following day I was lucky to see a huge range of activities occurring under the ACE Africa's Community Livelihood Initiative and met a number of groups at various stages in the implementation of these programmes. Mary and her support group showed me their flourishing community garden, dairy goats, poultry and newly created fish ponds teeming with tilapia. This support group are expanding their income generating activities and in the process can provide support and care to more OVC and PLWA within the community.



My experience at the last household I visited in Bungoma was the most humbling of the week. It was overwhelming to see, a thirty year old lady living with HIV trying to support her five children. Her husband had died two years previously with AIDS and the lady was struggling to make ends meet. During the last rainy season the family house fell down. ACE Africa intervened after the case was referred by a community activator and through the support of ACE they now have a new house.

It was evident to see from my week in Bungoma the huge impact that ACE Africa are having in the region. Communities are providing a supportive and caring environment to OVC and PLWA in an area where HIV is rife.

Take a look at the Siaya News Page to read more about my programmes visit!