

## KF sponsors get a hands-on experience of the program

*KF sponsored students giving back to the Community as they teach a class 6year olds how to read and write under a tree and in front of Abram's home. Hotchkiss students observe the teaching*



### **By Samuel Nkowane**

In a small space behind a little house in a compound called Kilikiliki, a number of small children, some who haven't even begun school, are seated with nothing but a used bag of millie meal between them and a hard ground. The children are divided into two groups, both sitting facing each other with a double sided chalk board standing in between. In their laps they each hold a little exercise book and pencil, while they listen attentively to their teachers. Their teachers- Jeffrey Kanyama, Japhet Phiri, and Abram Chima: three grade ten students who share a common back ground of poverty, but who have been fortunate enough to obtain a secondary school education with the assistance of the Kucetekela Foundation. This small class is part of a program KF has designed for its students to learn how to give back to the community. Each student in grade ten must identify a service project that they can do in their community during their school breaks. These three young men decided to teach the children in their community who like them, do not have the financial means to go to schools with adequate resources.

On one side of the chalk board Jeffrey uses the vernacular to help explain some principles of mathematics to his pupils. English lessons will have to come another day. The bigger children ask him

questions which he answers easily. He then writes down some notes for the students to jot down.

On the other side of the board, Abram is going over the alphabet with the younger children. There is no segregation here at this temporary and informal class setting. All who wish to learn are welcome, even little infants who just want to be part of the group.

This is the sight that met 11 visitors from the Hotchkiss School in Lakeville Connecticut on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2009. The group arrived in Lusaka a few days earlier with the desire to see and understand how the Kucetekela Foundation is helping vulnerable children obtain an education of higher quality. Their eyes chase the surroundings, and although they acknowledge the level of poverty these children are exposed to, in their faces you can see amazement. They are impressed and touched by the scene that they have come to be a part of.



*Illustration 2: Hotchkiss Students playing with the children*

“I couldn't believe how calm and attentive the little kids were, how willing and desirous they were to be here,” said Diana Flema, one of the two chaperone's of the 9 Hotchkiss students. She later said about the three boys, “In my perspective this is exactly what should come from a scholarship.” The visitors proceeded to observe the class, and then conducted a few games including the hoki poki, which brought many smiles and giggles to the children.

The Hotchkiss School is a private institution based in Lakeville, where teenage scholars are prepared to attend a wide variety of universities in the world. Part of the schools mission is to engender in its students the love for learning in a rigorous learning environment. The pressures of education are obviously high, but the Hotchkiss School still manages to instill in its students the attribute of compassion. The school supports various NGO's around the world which contribute to the development of people in different cultures, particularly in developing nations. The Kucetekela Foundation is one such organization.

Commenting on the various NGO's the Hotchkiss school supports, Alan Babcock, also one of the chaperone's said, “The school makes choices of which programs to get involved in because there are so many.” The Kucetekela Foundation was one of those programs favored by the school. KF was founded in the year 2006 by Oliver Barry, an alumni of the Hotchkiss School. The program currently sponsors 26 students who come from vulnerable backgrounds. These students are taken from schools such as Ngwelele basic school, where 1500 students are taught in 15 classrooms- obviously a challenge in providing these children with a high quality education- and places them in private boarding schools where the attention they get, and the resources available to them are more effective in providing them with a higher quality of education.

One of these students is Marilyn Vallabh, now a grade 9 student at Chalo Trust boarding school. The Hotchkiss Students are her sponsors and are responsible for financing her education at Chalo Trust where she will attend until completing the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. They raise funds for Marilyn by organizing school dress up days, bake sales and any other activities by which money can be generated. On the school dress up day, students pay a certain sum of money in order to wear whatever they want on that day. Hotchkiss has a dress code that teenagers would love to get around, and the dress up day is the perfect opportunity to do so. Rahul, one of the 9 students explained that next year one of the fund raising ideas is to sell food at a Jam Fest which is a huge talent show that the school will host.

While in Lusaka, the group lodged at Chalo Trust Secondary School where they had the opportunity of living the kind of life that a KF student was being exposed to. For the first three days of their visit, the nine students were divided into three groups to attend the three secondary schools where KF enrolls its students. The three schools, Chalo Trust, Leopards Hill, and Ibex Hill, were very welcoming and allowed the visitors the opportunity to teach some of the classes.



*Illustration 3: Hotchkiss students teaching class at Ibex Hill School*

“We are both trying to teach the students how we learn, as well as have our students learn about Zambian culture,” said Diana Flema about the experience. The Hotchkiss students used part of their teaching time to discuss topics such as American culture and Zambian culture, the geography of the United States of America, and relationships both heterosexual and homosexual. At times the discussions became intense and exciting as the different cultures clashed on more sensitive topics, but generally it was an environment of sharing and understanding.

Elizabeth, one of the Hotchkiss students said about one such discussion with a grade 12 class at Leopards Hill, “Teaching the 12<sup>th</sup> grade was fun because they were really open.” She also said that it was interesting to find out that many of the students knew a lot more about American musicians than she did.

Alan Babcock said about his observations of Zambian education, “Its obvious to me that life skills are important. And I find it cool that there are certain skills that are taught here that are not taught in the States that I think are really important.”

Mr. Babcock also commented on the atmosphere that students in Zambia are exposed to in contrast to the atmosphere in American schools. He said that students in America are allowed to be a lot more expressive and independent in their thinking, which can at times be seen as disrespectful. As Mr. Babcock tried to create this kind of atmosphere in the classes he taught it was easy to determine the kind of culture that these students were exposed to most of the time. Some students rapped while others used names of famous American celebrities in a drama activity he conducted for them. These teenagers were undoubtedly very familiar with American culture. Mr. Babcock said that when kids are restricted in their expression, they will tell you what you want to hear. He said that they don't consider this to be

lying but pleasing.

During their trip to Lusaka, the group also visited Mother Theresa (a Catholic orphanage and care center), Fountain of Hope (a center dealing with street children), Grassroots (an NGO focused on educating the youth about HIV and AIDS), and the Mulungushi Conference Center (the home of the Zambian National Dance Troop).

The Hotchkiss School came, saw, and learned just how the KF program is opening doors for vulnerable children to realize their dreams. Their hands-on experience has brought them an understanding of how their money is affecting the lives of the Zambian youth. One of the beliefs the Kucetekela Foundation holds, is that vulnerable children who are given the opportunity to receive an education of high quality, will not forget their background, especially when poverty is still a part of their lives. They will fight for better conditions in their communities, and strive to bring about a greater balance in the spread of Zambia's wealth so that even little children in the compounds of Kilikiliki will one day attend schools of a higher caliber. Three young men giving free lessons to children in an obscure outdoor classroom, is but one example of a giant step in that direction.