



Spring Newsletter

*We learn, share and grow
together for healthy,
sustainable communities*



Highlights

- Penpals Program** Our package of letters has arrived at the village in Kenya
- Fundraising** Fundraising ideas and our brand new forum.
- Chicken coop** We have funded a new chicken coop to start a small poultry business.
- News**
- Permaculture prosper!
 - Volunteer in the village

Welcome Co-Creators

Jambo everyone and welcome to our very first Community Classrooms Collaborative Newsletter!

We have experienced so much learning and growth as our organisation has moved through the birth stages into early infancy. This grassroots unfolding is exciting but we have many more hurdles to leap as we become further established and improve our systems and processes. Our team has grown but we can always use some more help so let us know if you would like to be involved!

Projects on the ground in Nyangidi village, Kenya are progressing in many ways. We have invested in Permaculture Education, livestock, local 'green' infrastructure and sustainable business social enterprises such as sewing and basket making.



Grow, learn, and share: get involved!

Would you like to get involved but are not sure how? Read on for more information on the many ways you can support Community Classrooms and empower positive change in our Kenyan village. See Pages 3-4.

Rafiki Penpals Program

Empowerment and Cultural Exchange

Our Penpals in Kenya are excitedly awaiting their replies from Australian children (and some from grown-up penpals too!). The Rafiki Penpal Program connects children across cultures through the art of letter writing.



There are many benefits for Australian children including; an expanded awareness of the diverse world we live in,

increased compassion for other people living in different circumstances, the opportunity to fundraise and make a tangible difference in the lives of others, in addition to handwriting practice!

The Kenyan children also benefit from increasing awareness of children living in a Western culture and they get to practice English, their third language. They are provided with paper and stationary (so that they can write back) and other learning resources. Additional funds are invested into participatory community

projects that focus on sustainability through empowerment of the local people in Nyangidi village. If you do not yet have a penpal then be in touch about how you can join in for the next round.



The Future of the Penpals Program

Our number of Penpals has more than doubled in size from 40 in the first round to over 100 in this current exchange of letters (half are from Kenya and half are from Australia). We apologise for any delays so far and are looking at how to most efficiently and effectively improve the systems of exchange.

We also have a new online forum for Penpals to navigate and share their experiences of writing to a child in Africa or collaborate in fundraising.

Please let us know if you would like to be more involved or have any ideas on how we can improve the Penpal experience!



Check out our new forum:

www.community-classrooms.org/projects/rafiki-penpals/forum

Empowerment and Cultural Exchange



For children that were used to writing in the dirt, they are so excited to be using their very own coloured pencils.



The Rafiki (Friend) Penpals program connects children across cultures and empowers them to make a difference in the lives of others.

Meet Rio, a local 10 year old Sunshine Coast boy, who was so touched by his PenPal letter that he went out that weekend and busked for the first time in his life at the local markets. With a sign and a photo of his new friend from Kenya he played bongo drums for passers-by and raised over \$100 in a couple of hours. He was really proud when he came to tell us about it.

Other children have baked and had muffin drives in their neighborhood. Some held a 'movie night' and sold popcorn and other treats to their friends. There are so many ways that children can be involved in fundraising and it is a good opportunity for learning and empowerment.



Community Classrooms Projects and progress

- Membership
- Join Our Team
- Social Entrepreneurship:
 - Sewing
- VIVE Program
- Permaculture:
 - Chicken coop
- Basket weaving

Community Classrooms is now in its second year of operation and is growing inside and out.

Membership

We appreciate the support of our members and it is these funds that enable us to continue making progress as an organisation. \$10 annual membership helps us cover costs of registrations and all the other loopholes we have to jump through in our journey to becoming a registered charity with tax-deductible-status (we do not have this yet by the way but are working on it!) With these expenses covered through collective membership fees then all other funds can go directly to the projects they are being invested in.

So, if you are not already a member then consider joining. It is only \$10 a year and you will be invited to our meetings and special events. Forms can be filled out through the website.

Join our team

As the organisation grows we are in need of new people to fill specific roles. Currently we are seeking:

- Treasurer
- Chairperson
- Fundraising Coordinator
- Fundraising Volunteers
- Penpals Coordinator
- Penpals Volunteers
- I.T / Social Media Support
- Grants Officer
- Researcher
- Shop Support (promote/sell/post our products)

If you would like to apply for one of these positions or have other skills you would like to offer then please contact us via email, phone or through the website: www.community-classrooms.org

Social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship projects are growing as we have provided more funding for sewing machines and lessons. One village mother is making reusable sanitary pads and cloth nappies, essential items that are too expensive for locals to buy.



With the success of these initiatives, teenage girls and women will be able to continue schooling, work and daily tasks without embarrassment when their 'moon-time' comes.

Mothers can dress and wear their babies in comfort without a piece of plastic stuffed down some ill-fitting shorts to serve as a makeshift nappy.

We are also collecting donations of eco-friendly reusable sanitary pads, 'moon-cups' and cloth nappies to take to the village. Please be in touch if you would like to buy/make and donate some.

Village Immersion Volunteer Experience (VIVE)

Elders of Nyangidi have given permission to host village immersion experience trips for foreigners to visit and volunteer their skills while living in community and learning traditional drum, dance, songs, cooking, basket weaving, permaculture and more.



The benefits here are threefold. Firstly, the visitors from overseas can have a life changing experience and hopefully take some of that back to influence the positive, holistic growth of 'Western' societies. Secondly, participatory sustainable development projects receive a boost of resources – financial, time and energy – to reduce poverty and enhance quality of life in the area. Thirdly, the cultural validation that occurs

when tribal people see 'Westerners' coming to experience and enjoy their cultural way of life and traditional arts is magical and can help reduce the homogenisation and infiltration of an unhealthy 'modern' society into their lands.

Participants can enjoy traditional African culture as well as some popular safari destinations. CCC plan to hold their first VIVE trip in 2015, please contact us if you are keen to join in!



Permaculture

Despite unpredictable rainfall, this year has seen some good harvests for the people in the village. The permaculture education programs and raised garden beds have worked to improve soil quality and reduce erosion of topsoil.



The cows, goats and chickens are all growing well and we have invested in a new special chicken coop that will hopefully

become a sustainable poultry business.



To donate some precious livestock or seedlings to a family in your name or as a gift for a friend, visit our website.



We encourage traditional art and craft for sustainable livelihoods.

This village uncle uses 'saisal', a traditional material from a native plant, to hand-weave strong, water resistant baskets. He hand dyes them and we sell them so that he can support his family. This craft was nearing extinction as more people choose synthetic products. We would like to promote these baskets to encourage him to teach others.

Buy a basket for yourself or a unique gift that gives back to this village community.

Call or email to order your basket (very few left until our next trip), or try our website shop which will be open soon.

