



## NURSERY SCHOOL IMPACTS ON EDUCATION IN KURON PEACE VILLAGE

Let the children come to me. Matt.19:14

Meetings are an integral aspect of any program in Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron. There must be a constant line of communication to work with the Toposa people. As such, meetings are frequently held to explain the programs to the people and encourage them to participate as much as possible.

Recently, an annual Parent Teacher Meeting was held at the Nursery School. This school has over 200 registered children but in reality about 90 attend on any given day. There are currently only THREE teachers to handle FOUR classes of rowdy and active children ages 3 to 6. The watchman actually helps supervise the very young who simply play most of this day. From 8:00 am to 12:30 pm Monday through Friday, the teachers are teaching and only paid \$ 150.00 USD per month. It is difficult to find trained teachers who want to work in such an isolated place with the rough living conditions for such a small salary.

In the past, Toposa have been rather ambivalent toward organized school education. Many Toposa say: *What can they learn in school? Our traditional teaching is what they need to know; how to raise animals, cook food, fetch water, collect firewood, etc.*

However, after 20 years of presence, the Kuron Education program is having some impacts on traditional attitudes. Most of the parents showed up for the Nursery meeting early. They were all dressed smartly and took the issues seriously. Everyone had an opportunity to speak.



*Nursery class under the trees in Kuron Peace Village*

One thing we have learned is that the children are now pressing their parents to send them to school as they like it and they want to learn.

One comment from the Chief's own daughter was: *I regret leaving school in early Primary. I wish I had stayed. Now I feel somehow left behind. I don't want my children to make the same mistake.*

About 31 parents out of a possible 87 attended this meeting. They sat and listened to the impassioned pleas of the nursery teachers to pay school fees. At the moment the school is only getting about 50% who pay the fees. For one year the fees charge is only \$ 2.00 USD. If they cannot pay in cash, chickens or firewood are brought.

There are some rather interesting items on the agenda for this meeting. From payment of school fees, to health of the child, to cleaning and dressing the children properly before arriving at the school are part of the issues which need constant repetition. These three nursery teachers actually have to bathe and dress some of the children when they arrive in the morning as they are sent from home without bathing and very filthy clothes.

Everyone was encouraged to speak with many women having a voice which led to a 3 hour long meeting. One of the issues was that the teachers didn't know the parents well as they simply tell their children to go without accompanying them. It was surprising to learn that some parents don't even know the names of their children. This is especially true of the men who might have up to 5 wives and seldom see the children. The mother might enroll several children all with different fathers as men force themselves on women who have no choice.



There are also Baba and Mama clubs meetings. This is parents who come to learn how to do simple things in the house which will benefit the education of their children. Parents work with teaching staff to learn how to make visual aids and small toys for the children to play with. These types of "craft" meetings are well received by the parents.

#### *Working with Baba Mama Club for making educational toys*

Change is occurring in the Kuron area even as it takes time. Slowly the Toposa are seeing the benefits of education. With education comes a wider view of life and hopefully leads to positive change and improved living conditions. The children are the agents of change. They have tasted knowledge. They are hungry for more. Little ones pester their parents to pay the fees so they can attend school. We heard one young boy wakes his parents up every morning so that he can be ready for school on time.

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