



Food Distribution in Kenya

by Usha Shah

The day dawned bright and warm and all worries about the weather being wet dissipated with the sun coming out and the clouds disappearing! We – Induben Shah, Gideon, Patrick and I – left for Machakos at a quarter past nine in the morning. We arrived in Machakos at about 11 o'clock and to our consternation found that nothing, and I mean nothing, was ready! There were no packed food parcels nor was there the truck that was to carry 130 packets of food, each packet containing 10 kgs of dried maize, 3 kgs of dried beans, oil, sugar, salt and 5 kgs of maize meal. We waited and waited as we kept on listening to the sentence, "The lorry will be here in the next half an hour!" Well! That half hour stretched to 2pm, which was the time originally expected for us to have completed the food distribution and headed back home. Then the lorry arrived, was loaded and finally left for the venue!



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But by one o'clock we had decided to leave Patrick to guide the lorry to the venue and we had left in order to organise the whole event there. As we drove on the tarmacked road, we could see desolation on both sides. Rivers bone dry showing huge boulders on the river beds, people going about with jerry cans and plastic containers in search of water, cattle and livestock looking frail and skeletal due to insufficient grass and water! Very sad!

As we had time to kill before arriving at the venue, we decided to take a break and just then saw a school for multi-challenged children. We went in to be greeted by a child suffering from autism. We could see that she was an autistic child but she herself didn't! She came running to us, smiling broadly and happily! It humbled me! We decided to see the administrator and go round the facility. This is a government initiative but also financially assisted by philanthropic NGOs. The children there suffer from various mental illnesses and in most cases are abandoned children or orphans. They are looked after by mothers or ladies with no homes of their own. As we went around, we saw the rooms they were staying in, the classrooms they were studying in, the kitchen and sanitation facilities. Very impressive! The administrator showed us classrooms built by another NGO and an unfinished classroom block. Unfinished due to lack of funds!

We decided to give the children biscuits and the squash that we had carried for the children in Kiikume village. We gathered in the hall and all the children were assembled. They started clapping, jumping and dancing at the sight of the biscuits and the squash! So the biscuits were given out and then we brought in the clothes donated to us. Each child was given a piece of clothing which was received with more clapping and dancing! Many of the children put them on and paraded to show off! The girl who had greeted us on our arrival put on three pieces of clothing and was just delirious with happiness. Yes, I saw the spirit of the Supreme Energy at work!

We now knew why we were delayed in Machakos! To meet God's Angels!

We left the school and were told that the lorry was taking a short cut on rough roads and would be at the venue in 40 minutes!

We arrived at the venue and were given a tumultuous welcome by women singing and dancing. Brought tears to my eyes. Then the children were lined up and received biscuits and squash, the girls received teddies knitted by TOS ladies from France and the boys received friendship bracelets. To put into words the awesome pleasure shown by these children is impossible! The teddies had been all in a cellophane bag for almost two years and must have been so happy to be released from their cramped accommodation and to go to their new homes. At the moment they were tightly hugged and resting on very young bosoms! The boys proudly exhibited their bracelets, colourful and so 'with it' and sooo 'coool'! A big thank you to TOS France.

The lorry arrived and the distribution of food packets began. Ladies had been registered so names were called out and parcels handed out with exclamations of pleasure and happiness. Some clothes remained, and these were given to the lady in charge to give out later.

By this time it was already nearly 6:30 pm and getting dark. We left with happy goodbyes ringing in our ears and a glow in our hearts. The setting sun accompanied us for quite a long distance. The golden sky was a sight to behold. Birds were returning to their nests, people were going back home having toiled in the hot sun and the day was coming to an end. We travelled to Nairobi reaching our homes at 10pm. A long day, yes, but such a satisfying one! 130 families assured of getting meals for many weeks! Time to think about how to assist God's Angels in Kyangoma Special Education Centre! Thanks to all who helped directly or indirectly. God bless all!



Kenyan food distribution – some of the recipients