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**“What lies behind us
and what lies before
us are tiny matters
compared to what
lies within us.”**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

As another year is drawing to a close, I feel it's appropriate to summarize a few thoughts about the past and the upcoming year.



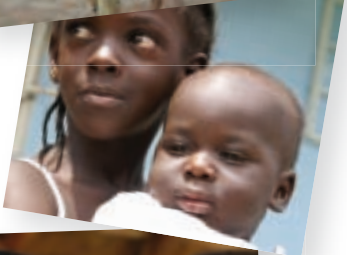


1 Growing strong

In 2009, Kids of Africa grew stronger and reached out further into our neighbouring communities than we ever did. We shared a lot of happiness, laughter and joy but we also shed some tears. When I look back at 2009, I cannot but marvel at what Kids of Africa has achieved in a short time span and with very limited resources. It was a year for which we are grateful.

In 2009, we welcomed twelve new children into our care. Today, 85 young, orphaned or abandoned children live with ten foster-mothers in our village. Every one of them is a wonderful example of the lasting impact we can make by giving them a home, a loving family and hope for a better future.

But as we care for up to nine children per family we near our maximum capacity – unless we built additional houses, which, however, we could not afford today. And while the humanitarian need around us awes me and the positive impact of our work doesn't cease to amaze me, our financial resources limit what we can do. And 2010 is unlikely to be easier from a funding perspective. But I have high hopes when I think of the enormous energy which the many wonderful people who are involved with Kids of Africa put forward to make this village so special.





2 Loss and tears

In 2009 we also mourned. For the first time in five years we faced the sad loss of a newborn child. Anthony was aged only one month. He developed pneumonia days after he had joined us from hospital where his mother had died in labour. We had not even introduced him to the entire village when he fell sick, forcing us to take him to hospital. There, he was looked after by experienced and caring doctors. They did their utmost to help him – but nothing seemed to work. His young life lasted less than a month. Even though he never managed to acquaint himself with our village, every single person from it attended his funeral. It was one of those moments through which we catch a glimpse of what our lives are all about and maybe even what life itself is all about. May his young soul rest in peace.



3 Transforming achievements

2009 was also a year of transition and enormous achievements. Tage and Dorte Budolfson joined us at the beginning of the year to manage the village. Their presence has been a true blessing. However, they are much more than just managers to us. They are leaders and role models for our village and beyond. Their achievements have been too many to enumerate here. They include from educational, social, health, cultural and organizational achievements. Together with our excellent management team – Florence, Timothy and Daniel – but equally with our loyal and long-standing staff, they made Kids of Africa an even better place.

Today, Kids of Africa is a very different organization compared to what it was five years ago. Back then, we were absorbed dealing with emergencies. Many children had to overcome traumata, disease and malnutrition. Our logistical and organizational challenges were enormous. They often required improvisation and luck. But somehow, fortune was often on our side and we managed to progress better and faster than most people thought possible. Today we draw a lot of strength from these shared experiences. In a subtle way, Kids of Africa has become a sustainable engine

of development which reaches deeply into our poor, previously rural-, but increasingly urban neighbourhood.

With this in mind, I can see how the old saying that people will “grow stronger the bigger the challenge they face” can sometimes come true. The last five years have made Kids of Africa one of the most rewarding experiences for many people involved.





4 Challenges for 2010

As I look out into 2010, I can see three major challenges which we must address. First, we must constantly adapt to the growing number of children in our village and their continuous development as well as the many visitors from our neighbourhood. With 85 children and ten families, the responsibility to plan ahead should not be underestimated. Especially educational resources and village infrastructure need to be adjusted to suit the changing requirements of our children as they grow older. Secondly, the environment we live in is undergoing rapid social, economic and environmental change. As Uganda's capital grows, our immediate neighbourhood is also affected. Bwerenga – the area we live in – used to be a secluded, rural peninsula. Today, it is increasingly turning into a suburb of Kampala. This urban growth creates enormous pressures. The cost of living increases almost on a monthly basis. Land prices are skyrocketing. Squatters are pushed back and city people are rapidly building houses, creating social, economic and environmental challenges which will continue to increase in 2010: water quality, soil erosion, depletion of firewood and social change are but a few of the issues concerned. On a positive

note, however, Kids of Africa has demonstrated to be able to help address many of the related concerns and challenges.

Thirdly, fundraising will remain an uphill struggle as the global economic environment has affected all of us and as the scope of our work increases. Beggars can't be choosers – we'd all settle for that. However, the challenges which the many orphaned or abandoned children in Uganda face every day are caused by a vicious circle of poverty which is best reversed sooner rather than later. Helping us break such a vicious circle can – in my view – be one of the best investments any of us can make.

Let me take the opportunity to wish you and your family a wonderful Christmas, as well as happiness and good health throughout the new year. May your dreams come true!

Yours truly



Burkhard Varnholt



«A Christmas candle
is a lovely thing;
It makes no noise
at all, but softly
gives itself away;
while quite
unselfish, it grows
small.»

Eva Logue