
AdvocacyNet
News Bulletin 163
August 12, 2008

YOUNG KENYANS AT RISK SPEAK OUT THROUGH BLOGS AND PHOTOS



Nairobi, Kenya: A pioneering initiative by an Advocacy Project (AP) Peace Fellow is using the Internet to bring the voices of disadvantaged youth in Kenya to the world.

Peace Fellow Kristina Rosinsky is volunteering this summer with the Undugu Society of Kenya (USK), an AP partner that works with children who live and work on the streets, and with vulnerable youth.

Ms Rosinsky has helped USK start a Digital Storytelling Project, which she is using to teach blogging, photography and computers to 17 children who live on the streets and in informal settlements. The project also seeks to change negative stereotypes about them and advocate for the issues they raise.

USK plans to hold a national conference at the end of this year and develop a plan of action around the issues explored in the students' blogs.

“The public can learn that these students are intelligent members of society that have something to contribute to debates on issues affecting the country,” Ms Rosinsky said. “The public’s stereotypes of street children do not reflect reality.”

The students' [blogs](#) range from issues like the environment and post-election violence to stories about their personal life. So far, 19-year-old [Amina Kombo](#) has blogged about discrimination she faced as a Muslim, and about the death of an elderly man that she

witnessed during a post-election riot. Her photos include portraits of a street child getting high on glue.

“The project was very fun from beginning to end,” said Ms Kombo. “I truly love blogging for I get to share most of my ups and downs with other people.”

Of the 17 students in Ms Rosinsky’s workshop, nine were chosen from USK’s Education and Training program, which helps poor youth get an education and learn vocational skills. The other eight were chosen from USK’s Street Children and Youth Associations - groups of young people who live and work on the streets. There are thought to be 250,000 such children in Kenya, and approximately 60,000 in Nairobi alone.

The project received funding from the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation, a US-based charity that contributed \$1,600 toward the costs of digital cameras, memory cards, Internet fees, and travel expenses.

Classes began with an introduction to blogging and photography. Although just two of her students had used a computer before, and only one had used a camera, Ms Rosinsky said the children got used to the technology quickly, and impressed her with their writing.

“I figured that the kids I would be teaching would be uneducated, high and generally hard to teach but...these preconceived notions were wildly off the mark,” Ms Rosinsky wrote in her own blog.

Beginning in September, the ten best students will be trained to teach other students the skills they have learned. Additionally, the top two students will be trained to run the project once Ms Rosinsky leaves Kenya in November. The plan is for a new group of students to start classes in January 2009, taught by Ms Rosinsky’s current students.

AP is helping USK to raise funds for this next phase of the project. To help, please visit their [donations page](#).

- Read the [blogs](#) of the Digital Storytelling Project
- Read the [blog](#) of AP Peace Fellow Kristina Rosinsky
- Learn more about the [Undugu Society of Kenya](#)