Title: Promoting Peace for a Bright Future  
Country: Angola  
College: Luther College  
Student: Isilda H. Hulilapi, Angola, Red Cross Nordic UWC’09

**Goals and Fund-Raising**

*Promoting Peace for a Bright Future* creates a harmonious living and learning environment at Kuzola orphanage with activities that help engage children in an effort to help them overcome many of their fears, frustration and emotional difficulties as they build self-esteem, stimulate their imagination, and connect with other children. The second goal is to prevent violence against children and teenagers by creating an opportunity for the high-school students of INE Marista to develop their voluntary spirit and spirit of solidarity as they work with children.

In addition to the funds received from the Davis Projects for Peace ($10,000), an additional $1,500 was raised through the support of peace-related student organizations and churches.

**Challenges**

Building the *Promoting Peace for a Bright Future* program brought many challenges due to the conservative tradition that people in Angola have, which made it difficult to get them engaged in such a project. One of the reasons was because of the fear I had in how people would take the project since it was mainly focusing on playground. Despite the cultural barrier, people’s view on accepting something without receiving anything in return was intense because they always expect something back. As a consequence of corruption and Government Bureaucracy, there was hesitation to start the project. However eventually I started the project first by interacting with kids. I spent three weeks getting to know the children and finding out which activities they liked the most. I had difficulties in dealing with children with disabilities such as emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, mental retardation and Down Syndrome who were about 40 children out of 245 children. However, children with disabilities participated in developed activities such as painting, puzzle building, and storytelling.

During the project, I have been exposed to many new things. Moreover I had to learn small things such as taking care of babies and specific activities that would help in children development such as first-aid, sports and personal hygiene. I have learned not to take simple things for granted such as washing hands, giving a smile and hug which are indispensable to live, love others and promote peace.

Fortunately, everybody who helped with the project speaks Portuguese and there are some volunteers that helped children who speak French and Lingala, the language from Congo. Many of the children in the orphanage were abandoned by their parents during the ongoing conflicts in Congo.

**Project’s Plan / Beneficiaries**

a.) The project started from the 26th of May to the 15th of August 2012.  
b.) I talked to a faculty member specializing in early childhood education to review the goals and teaching methods we would use before I left Luther College.  
c.) The activities are planned in a way that every child would be able participate:  
d.) I gave presentations that introduce the project to INE Marista high school and the community so that I could obtain their full support. My goal is to have everyone in the community taking part in this project because the long-term results would be greatly beneficial to the entire community.  
e.) Match the volunteers with the children at the orphanage and develop a rotational system so that every child has a chance to take part in all the activities provided as well as getting the chance to visit all the members in our voluntary group for a diverse experience.  
f.) The room that was originally reserved for the project was under construction when I arrived. So we use the sport field to do all the activities such as sport, storytelling, painting, music, readings, sexual education, alphabeticization and taking care of babies under 3 years old. Some volunteers helped the babies to develop their musculature in order to help them walk and talk.
The people that directly benefit from the *Promoting Peace for a Bright Future* project are the children in the orphanage, the high school and community volunteers and the staff they are in direct contact with the children. Some of the volunteers are future UWC students who help maintain the project website and who also work with the children. There are about 245 children in the orphanage and 40 workers including the leadership team. The volunteering program is helping to give a structure to Kuzola orphanage. The project is helping the interaction between staff and children, and create awareness in the community in terms of how they can help save the children’s future in order to promote and to build a country without political and economic conflicts.

**Project’s Contribution for Peace / Long-Term Achievements**

A friend of mine said: *I have always believed that educating children is a way of giving life to a dead society* (Dickson Kwatampora). The interaction I had with the children and people working and helping the orphanage is inexplicable. During the process of searching for more funds to promote “Peace for a Bright Future” project, I was very pessimistic since I came across many questions that I did not have the answers to like how do sports, music, academic education or building a school help promote peace? When I got to Angola I was asking the same questions whether I would be able to answer these entire questions or not. Then I put in my mind I should do what I know and how to do better which is to make people comfortable and play with the kids.

I define peace as an opportunity for a person to live in harmony, respecting and accepting other people’s differences. In my project, peace was the opportunity that I gave to young people to change their lives by respecting other people’s differences and to help others in order to create a better and sustainable place so that everyone can live in harmony and peace. For the children I try to implement and create condition so that they would gain confidence and to develop their skills in order to reduce violence in their homes so they could improve their capacity in order to live as one within the society.

The project focuses on recognizing children’s worth and help them explore their abilities and interests so that they can find something to make them feel proud of themselves. After some time we have thought that the project will also help the community in order to provide workshops for the community or groups of people around children’s issues and ways of improving children’s lives and activities that would help children’s general development.

Throughout the project, the volunteering committee decided that children’s growth is a continuous process. So we came up with an idea to open an organization that deals with traumatized children. Regardless of the backgrounds, we definitely want to focus on the orphanage because they are lacking parental care and support. In the long run we are thinking of starting skills classes for kids from 12 to 15 years old so that they would have a marketable skill if they decide to leave the orphanage such as decorating, designing, informative course and first-aid. The organization’s projects have to give positive impacts to children. They should improve children’s lives to prevent them from becoming worse. By giving them opportunities to have better lives, it will help them create conditions for a brilliant future and encourage peace and harmony within their community. One of the further goals of the project is to build a room for the activities, help the children with disabilities and open an organization that would help other orphanages and improve children’s lives.

I would like to mention that after many contributions from the orphanage staff, volunteer and the smiles and the changes that children were presenting after two months of hard work, we would like to call the organization *esanjo*, which means happiness, content, and joy. The remaining money will build the room where the volunteers would do activities with children in the orphanage and from the communities, which we want to give them an opportunity to change their future as well. To me this project allows people to share love, solidarity and to live as a united community with the purpose to live in peace with each other. *Promoting Peace for a Bright Future* is giving the Angolan community an opportunity to change their way of thinking which is letting the children express themselves openly through playing.
Tuesday’s Activity – Dance and games- Rebecca Cain, Therapeutic Play Specialist, and Isilda Hulilapi, July 24, 2012.
