

## **Nairobi One Stop Youth Centre Gets a Fresh Look – International Youth Day 2008**

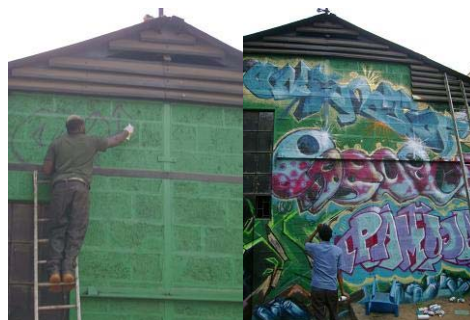
Location: Nairobi, Kenya  
Partners: WAPI, Spark Africa, Environmental Youth Alliance, Nairobi One Stop Youth Information & Resource Centre, City Council of Nairobi  
Donors: Environmental Youth Alliance, WAPI

In celebration of International Youth Day, the Nairobi One Stop Youth Information and Resource Centre got a whole new – and radically youth-friendly – look. The talented young artists of WAPI (“Words And Pictures”, a British Council initiative) took up their spray cans and unleashed a rainbow of talent on the Centre’s front wall.

Wainaina Muiruri, the Deputy Coordinator of the youth centre, which is run by Nairobi City Council, nodded as the graffiti art began to unfold across the main threshold of the building. “It’s definitely going to be much more youth-friendly!” Muiruri commented. The youth seemed to agree. Hundreds of volunteers had come out, in large part thanks to Urban Volunteers Organization of Nairobi, a youth-led community organization, to help coordinate the One Stop’s Youth Day activities. While they loaded chairs and display tables onto lorries for the Youth Market and musical celebrations to take place at Uhuru Park, many youth stopped to watch and cheer on their peers who were adding colour and life to the Centre’s main wall.



Supported by a generous donation from Environmental Youth Alliance, and with the coordinated efforts of Spark Africa, City Council of Nairobi, WAPI and the keen staff of the One Stop Centre itself, a bare green wall of what was one Nairobi’s first morgue, and later a licensing office, was transformed into a colourful array of words and art designed to welcome the young people of Nairobi from their first step into the courtyard. The artwork can even be seen from the busy traffic circle just outside the centre’s doors, and attracted considerable attention from passers-by as it was being painted.



The first word to emerge as the busy audience of volunteers looked on between tasks was “Pamoja” – “together” in Kiswahili, a fitting slogan for this unique urban space for youth to come together across their differences and find common ground. As the day wore on, the graffiti artists worked in dimming light but never lost their enthusiasm, even returning early the following morning for “last touches” to their masterpiece.

The one-day “facelift” event was just the first of a planned series of painting days. With sponsorships coming in on the heels of the successful first phase, the One Stop team looks forward to the day when their entire space is truly “youth-friendly” in its vibe, inside and out. Plans include themed artwork along the interior corridor, to visually cue visitors as to what each room and space is used for – from Entrepreneurship to HIV/AIDS Counselling and Testing to Workshops. Youth Groups active at the centre have already committed their volunteer hours to the next phases of the project, which will also include the sprucing up of the walls of the Centre’s courtyard, a popular hangout spot for visiting youth that will become even more welcoming.