

Supporting material

1. Background



The Mwelu Foundation is an indigenously founded and run self-help group operating in the Mathare Valley slum of Nairobi. The Foundation consists of 50 ambitious, positive and talented children working to realise their own potential through **photography, film production and the building of life skills** and to spread a positive attitude within their community.

The photographs and films show a different side to the slum. They show Mathare through the eyes of the children and reflect their enthusiasm and hope whilst also communicating the stark reality of life in one of the world's poorest communities.

In the wake of Kenya's post-election violence, when ethnic and tribal tensions boiled over into within areas like Mathare, the Mwelu Foundation is promoting an alternative to ethnic division and suspicion.

The Mwelu Foundation was formally founded in 2007 by born-and-raised Mathare resident Julius Mwelu. Julius continues to run the organisation with help from other young local people including Alex Kamweru and Rachael Ouko who are also determined to bring about change within their own community.

The Mwelu Foundation's **vision** is of a peaceful world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that provide hope, opportunity and respect.

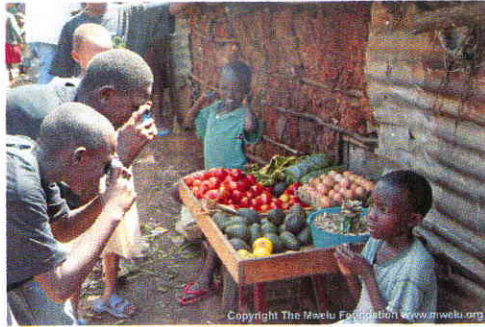
The Mwelu Foundation's **mission** is to nurture the talent of children in the poorest communities of Nairobi by providing training in creative arts and essential life skills. By providing children with a voice and promoting education the Foundation hopes to break the cycle of poverty and violence that exists in their communities.

2. Description of the initiative or project

The Mwelu Foundation's primary activities centre on photography, film production and journalism but also include other creative arts such as poetry and music. The Foundation carries out community work in the form of environmental clean-ups and visits to other vulnerable community groups. A livelihoods programme was

recently started in the areas of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness, computer literacy and language training.

Photography



The Mwelu Foundation provides its members with basic cameras and tasks the children with capturing "all that is good and bad" in their lives and the community. The children are taught photographic skills ranging from photo composition to editing using Photoshop. Photographs are presented on the Foundation website (www.mwelu.org) and at exhibitions.

Photographs have been exhibited locally in Mathare and internationally in Spain, Holland and London.

In collaboration with Africalia (see section 3) a book of Mwelu Foundation photographs is due to be published in 2010 in four different languages.

For a section of photos, please see: <http://www.mwelu.org/photography/>

Film production



The film production programme at the Mwelu Foundation trains members in film-making skills by creating documentaries, dramas, soaps and slide shows. Members are trained in camera work, sound techniques, film directing and producing, lighting and makeup and also computer editing skills. Films are used to highlight the problems within Mathare, to offer insights into life in the slum and to look for positive alternatives to the

usual ghetto life. Through this training a change of culture in Mathare is sought.

Films are screened locally in the slum to promote the work of the Foundation and are also presented on the Foundation's website.

Films have been screened in the Kenyan International Film Festival (KIFF), Norwegian Film Festival (NUFF) and Horitzo TV in Spain.

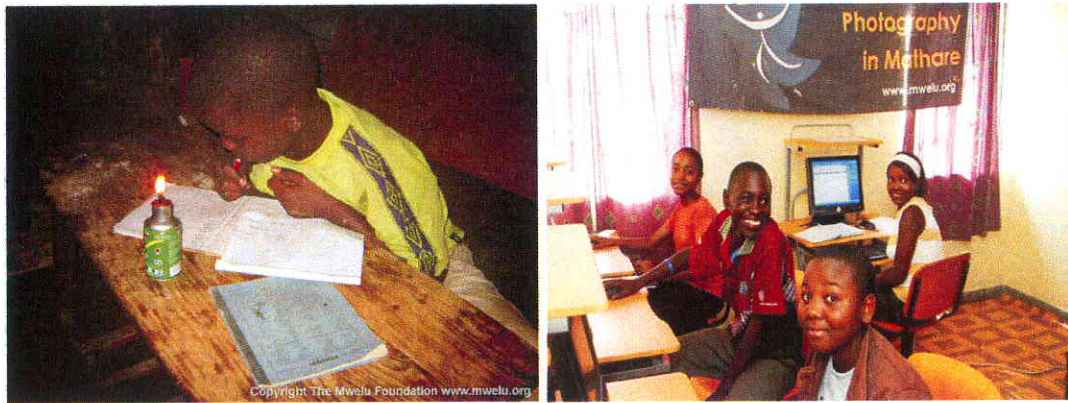
For a selection of films, please see: <http://www.mwelu.org/film-production/>

Livelihoods

The Mwelu Foundation has recently started a livelihoods programme to educate children in Mathare on reproductive health issues and to build life skills. To avoid problems such as domestic violence, prostitution, alcoholism and crime, children must have a basic set of skills and education in order to make better decisions and to help them achieve their goals. The Foundation believes that this programme will help children achieve higher attendance rates at school and hence achieve a better all-round education.

The Mwelu Foundation is in the process of setting up a library where all youths from around Mathare will be encouraged to come and study. For more details, see section 4.

For more information please see: <http://www.mwelu.org/livelihoods/>



Above: The Mwelu Foundation rents an office on the edge of Mathare which provides children with a secure and productive place to study. The office will soon be extended to include a library.

3. Main partners

Africalia Belgium are the main donor and have been providing funds to cover operational expenses since 2008, as well as providing technical training. Africalia are also funding the printing of a book of Mwelu Foundation photographs which will be published in 2010

www.africalia.be

KLM Wings of Support have provided five computers and funds to help set up the first library in Mathare.

<http://www.wingsofsupport.org/en/>

NUFF, Norway has been showcasing some Mwelu Foundation films in Norway.
www.nuff.no

Open Cinema, Canada has been showcasing some Mwelu Foundation films in Canada. www.opencinema.ca

Fotoclub de Broederschap has provided support by paying school fees for 30 members of the Mwelu Foundation. www.debroederschap.eu

4. Impact

The Mwelu Foundation works directly with 50 children. Many of the children are orphans or have been directly affected by Kenya's post election violence (see James Otieno's story of life as in an internally displaced person in section 8). All of the children are residents of Mathare.

With the support of a number of small donors and individual sponsors, all members of the Mwelu are attending school.

Members of the Foundation are encouraged to become ambassadors of peace within their community and to spread the message of positive action within the slum, using photography and film as means to reach out to people. As such the total number of people who are benefiting indirectly from the Mwelu Foundation's activities is several times higher than the number of children involved directly. For example, after receiving training in HIV/AIDS awareness, some members went to the community and shared their knowledge by training other young people outside of the Foundation.

As the Foundation grows, the number of beneficiaries is also increasing. For example, as mentioned in section 2, with financial assistance from **KLM wings of support** the Foundation is opening the first library in Mathare where children can study in a secure and productive environment. The library will have capacity for 50 children and is estimated to reach approximately 500 individual children per week.

5. Sustainability



The Mwelu Foundation is a catalyst for lasting change within Mathare. As a multicultural group, with all the slum's major religions and tribal groups represented, the Foundation is bridging gaps in the community and encouraging people to live peacefully as brothers and sisters.

The Foundation was formally founded in 2007 but has been in operation on a more informal basis since approximately 2003. In essence, very little in the way of resources are required. However, in order to secure its operations, the Mwelu Foundation is now supported by Africalia and a number of smaller donors from Europe. Africalia conducts audits of the Mwelu Foundation's accounts.

In order to ensure long term financial sustainability the Foundation has set up a facility that allows people to buy prints of their photographs from their website. The belief is that selling their creative work is a more sustainable means of raising money than simply asking for donations.

Above: A pregnant women runs past burning homes during Kenya's post-election violence.

6. Transferability and up scaling

The Mwelu Foundation works closely with other self-help groups within Nairobi's slums to share success and best practice. The Hot Sun Foundation in Kibera slum, Kuruka Maisha in Mukuru kwa Njenga slum and Slum TV in Mathare are local partners in film making.

Links have also been formed internationally with other youth groups, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and learning (see section 3).

7. Innovation

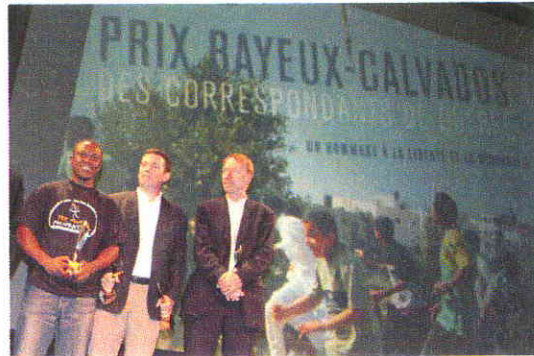
The Mwelu Foundation makes innovative use of photography and film production to engage children in productive activities providing direction and meaning to their lives. As a result, the members of the Foundation are motivated to work hard and bring about change in not only in their own lives but within their families and community as a whole.

The leaders of the Mwelu Foundation, including Julius Mwelu, are role models to the children, having grown up in Mathare themselves and having chosen a different path in life than that of the typical Mathare resident.

8. Recognition of the initiative

Below are selected examples of recognition of the work of the Mwelu Foundation. Please click the links for further details.

Right: Julius Mwelu wins The Young Reporter Prize of the Prix Bayeux for War Correspondence after the Kenyan post



The World Bank visits the Mwelu Foundation

20th July 2010: The World Bank came to Mathare and spoke to the Mwelu Foundation about life in the slum after the post-election violence as part of its research for the World Development Report.

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/conflict/view-from-the-bottom-the-conspiracy-of-violence-in-nairobis-slums>

ICC prosecutor visits the Mwelu Foundation

18th May 2010: Luis Moreno Ocampo, chief prosecutor from the International Criminal Court (ICC), visited the Mwelu Foundation in Mathare to hear first hand how the community was affected by the post-election violence.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkHpi2lInkU>

Mwelu Foundation films shown at Kenyan International Film Festival (KIFF)

25th October 2009: The Mwelu Foundation had three films accepted into the Kenyan International Film Festival (KIFF). Ghetto Girl, Flying Toilet and Inevitable Pain were shown along side other entries in various locations in Nairobi.

<http://www.mwelu.org/film-production/>

James Otieno speaks to IRIN about life in an internally displaced people's camp

13th August 2009: James Otieno spoke with the UN's humanitarian news and analysis organization, IRIN, about the time he spent living in an internally displaced people's camp following Kenya's post election violence at the end of

2007. "I lived with my aunt in Mathare C since I lost my parents as a child. When things got very bad, we had to leave; we moved to camps."

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=85667>

The Mwelu Foundation on NTV, Kenya

25th May 2009: The Mwelu Foundation was featured in "Heroes" on NTV, Kenya. NTV Kenya paid a visit to the Mathare Valley slum in Nairobi to witness the children of The Mwelu Foundation filming their latest movie, Ghetto Girl. Reporter, Rose Wangui, met with script writer Simon Onyango and chatted to Judy Joy Mugechi, Peter Gikonyo and Steven Otieno.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnUc7vWeGyE>

Joseph Kinyua becomes a published photographer

12th March 2009: Joseph Kinyua's photo, Rubbish Heap, was selected to appear in the next edition of the publication Understanding Environmental Pollution by Marquita Hill. The commission earned will be split 50:50 between Joseph's school fees and sustaining the operations of the Foundation.

The Mwelu Foundation on the BBC

1st February 2009: The Mwelu Foundation was featured in "Explore: The Rift Valley" on BBC2 in the UK.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6wQHGwb0qc>

Julius Mwelu wins The Young Reporter Prize of the Prix Bayeux for War Correspondence

11th October 2008: Julius Mwelu won the Young Reporter Prize of the Prix Bayeux for War Correspondence for the photos he took during the post election violence at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. The award pays tribute to journalists who work in hazardous conditions to provide the world with information.

<http://www.prixbayeux.org/index.php?id=131&L=1>

Al Jazeera feature the Mwelu Foundation in Africa Uncovered

20th August 2008: The television network Al Jazeera featured the activities of The Mwelu Foundation in a documentary looking at the post election violence in Kenya.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3S8hvSb8QF4>