

## Newsletter March 2009

Welcome to the first Aidlink newsletter of 2009! We would like to thank everyone for their support over the last year. Whether you attended the Aidlink Gala Dinner, raised funds for the Ghana 08 Immersion Programme with St. Mary's College, ran in the Mini-Marathon, supported the PACT cyclists or set up a standing order; we thank you – your support has ensured that more people have access to clean water, that more children attend school in a safe and appropriate environment and that more people have access to health care.

Despite the current economic climate, Aidlink continues to work in close collaboration with our partners in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana. We are grateful to everyone who supports us. We need you now, more than ever.

### *Turkana: Impact Assessment – “Where there is a well there is a way”*

Aidlink has been supporting projects in the Turkana region of Kenya for the past 8 years. The main challenge for people living in Turkana has been the scarcity of water. Aidlink is focused on the provision of safe, accessible and clean water. Other projects include education in the form of nutritional nurseries, health – renovating and supporting rural clinics and agriculture, in the establishment of small farms or “shambas”. In January 2009 an external consultant measured the impact of the Aidlink-supported projects in Turkana and found that the projects have had a very positive impact on the local people and recommends that we extend our support – we can only do this with your help. Keep checking the Aidlink website [www.aidlink.ie](http://www.aidlink.ie) for updates – we will be publishing the full report next month

### *Latest news from PACT*

The PACT cyclists, Alan Gray, Kevin Hillier, Brian McDermott, Ben Cunningham, Cillian O'Shea and John Garry are on the home stretch now, getting ever closer to their final destination of Ushuaia, Argentina which will see them complete their amazing cycle. We look forward to welcoming the lads home and hearing more about the challenges and the rewards of their epic journey.

Although the cycle is coming to an end, the lads fundraising on behalf of Aidlink will continue! You can [make a donation](#) to the projects supported by PACT in Kenya by contacting the cyclists at [www.pacycletest.com](http://www.pacycletest.com) or visiting [www.aidlink.ie](http://www.aidlink.ie)



*The PACT cyclists crossing the last border of their epic journey to raise funds for Aidlink*

### *PACT Supported Projects:*



*Playing games at KUAP's day shelter for street children*

***KUAP Pandipieri Education Programme*** and ***Diocese of Lodwar's “Support to Vulnerable Youth”*** programmes are receiving vital support from PACT. They provide shelter, healthcare, education and vocational training for the “street children” of Kisumu and the most vulnerable youths in Lodwar, Turkana.

For more information on PACT and to see photos and videos of their journey, please visit [www.pacycletest.com](http://www.pacycletest.com)

### ***St. Patrick's Day Badge Campaign 09***

Students from Blackrock College and Scoil Mhuire, Cork with the support of Independent Newspapers will be selling St. Patrick's Day badges from the 1st of March onwards. This twenty-year-old campaign continues to provide much needed funds for both Aidlink and GOAL. Funds from the campaign are divided equally between both.

### ***St. Mary's/Aidlink Ghana Exhibition***

The week of the 6<sup>th</sup> of March saw the students from St. Mary's College, Rathmines who participated in the Ghana 08 Immersion Programme exhibit and share their experiences with fellow students, families and wider community in a celebration of their Ghana 08 experience. We would like to extend our thanks to all, this Immersion Programme raised over €100,000 for education programmes in Ghana.

### ***Pub Quiz***

Many thank to everyone who took part in the pub

quiz in Slattery's on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February. A fun (and educational!) night was had by all, with the participants raising €2,130. Our particular thanks to organiser Martin Tormey.

### ***Standing Order Donations – Thank You!***

We would like to extend our thanks to all of the people who donate to Aidlink by standing order. The nature of your support allows us to plan in advance the work we do with our partners in Africa. We truly appreciate your support, which is essential for us to continue our work. If you are interested in setting up a standing order for Aidlink, please visit [www.aidlink.ie](http://www.aidlink.ie) to download a form.

### ***Tax relief on donations made in 2008***

Aidlink can recover tax on donations of €250 or more. If you are a PAYE taxpayer, by completing and returning a CHY2 form to us you will be granting permission for Aidlink to reclaim the tax paid on your donation in 2008. Visit [www.aidlink.ie](http://www.aidlink.ie) to download a form.

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### ***Partner Update: Girl Child Network (GCN)***



*Mercy Musomi, Director of GCN, with girls receiving dignity packs.*

In Kenya, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision is illegal but widely practiced among Kuria, Maasai and Somali communities and is mainly carried out in the school holiday months of November and December. In many cases, girls are forcefully circumcised and as a result girls often run away from home seeking refuge at local churches and centres to avoid the procedure. Aidlink is supporting the GCN in its battle against FGM.

Last December, the GCN informed Aidlink that there were approximately 300 girls taking refuge with the local church in centres in Gwikonge and Komotobo. The centres were overcrowded and lacked basic amenities as the majority of the girls had to flee without carrying any personal belongings.

With support from Aidlink, the GCN provided the girls food, counselling and "dignity packs" containing soap, combs, underwear, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sanitary towels and kanga wraps. They facilitated meetings with families and local community leaders to ensure the safety of the girls in the community and to promote their safe return home. Mercy Musomi, Director of the GCN, was quoted in a local newspaper: "It should not be that the girls have defied their parents on the decision whether to circumcise or not. The whole idea is that an alternative rite of passage from girl to woman must be found."

Fortunately, the majority of the girls did return home once the circumcision season was over. However, education around FGM and the protection of girls must continue.