



COPE History

Organizational Background

A. History

The Children of Pokot Educational Fund, Inc. (COPE) was incorporated in the State of Illinois on December 31, 1997. It is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3).

B. Purpose

The purpose of the organization is to provide a Christian education to the children of the Pokot tribe located in Kenya, Africa.

C. Location

The organization's headquarters is located at 1301 Rutledge Drive, Lincoln, IL 62656. The African mission is located in Tapadany, Kenya, Africa. The mailing address is PO Box 60 Kacheliba 30601.

D. Mission Statement

The mission of COPE is to provide education for Pokot children by empowering Christians and their community to nurture their children spiritually, mentally and physically so that they can grow into local and national leaders who think and act from a Christian worldview.

In 1995, Paul and Mary Boatman went to Kenya. They were invited to go to a remote area in north-western Kenya where the Pokot tribe live. Getting to the area is difficult because there are no good roads to get there. The people lived in mud huts with thatched roofs with no running water, electricity, latrines, services or schools. The Boatman's found the whole area in great need and came back to the USA to raise funds to build a Christian school.

In 1997, Paul and Mary returned to Kenya with 3 women from the Lincoln area. Barb was a successful business woman, Nicki was a student at Lincoln Christian College and Jane was a school teacher. The purpose for the trip to Pokot was to dedicate the school that was being built with funds from the USA. The results of that trip led to the establishment of the Children of Pokot Educational Fund, Inc. It also resulted in Barb returning to Pokot multiple times until she closed her business in 2002 and began devoting her time to the ministry.

Goals

A. Evangelism and Discipleship

- The ultimate goal of COPE is to bring each of the Pokot children and adults to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The Jesus film, which is in the Pokot language, is taken to as many communities as is possible. For many of the Pokot, this is their first experience hearing the Gospel in their own language and the first time they have seen the enactment of the life of Jesus.
- Teaching the Bible and encouraging the Pokot to make Jesus their model is paramount. A discipleship program is being developed, in conjunction with local pastors, to follow-up with those who have viewed the Jesus film.
- Currently there is a Bible study program for adults and for adolescents. The challenge is to get community members to attend the adult Bible study.
- There is Worship Service and Sunday School each week.
- Fellowship is celebrated weekly.
- Every Wednesday morning the schools and employees meet to have a prayer assembly. The three topics are praying that Satan be bound, that each person present will accept Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and that the Holy Spirit will sweep through Pokot and bring His light and wisdom to the Pokot.
- Celebration of Christian Womanhood is held in April each year. The focus has been on FGM, forced marriage, education and remaining sexually pure until joined in a Christian marriage. Lack of space prevents us from admitting more than 100 - 120 girls. Local pastors participate in the week-long event and assist with Bible study, prayers and fellowship. USA supporters sponsor the annual Celebration.
- Celebration of Christian Manhood is held in December of each year. The focus has been on responsible behaviour, remaining sexually pure until joined in a Christian marriage, education and having Jesus Christ as their male role model. Local pastors participate in the week-long event and assist with Bible study, prayers and fellowship. USA supporters sponsor the annual Celebration.
- Parents' Week is held in August of each year. The focus has been on helping parents, who have never had the opportunity to go to school, to work together to cope with their children who are educated and want to abandon the Pokot culture.

B. Health

- There is a need to get the COPE dispensary registered with the Kenyan government so that we can receive medication from the USA without having to pay duty and to get medication in Kenya at a discounted rate.
- Increased funding would allow for extended Health Care Education, which is sorely needed. Most of the Pokot attribute poor health to curses and go to witch doctors for "cures" before coming to our dispensary. We have established health care programs for many of the most common problems, i.e., malaria, typhoid, dysentery, HIV/Aids and cholera. Taking these programs to all the places in desperate need is the next challenge.

C. Nursery School

- There are three Nursery classes. The Baby class accepts 3 year-olds who are mature enough to remain in school the whole day.
- In order to be in compliance with the Kenyan government, COPE needs to fence the Nursery school and provide playground equipment. The Maintenance Department can take care of the labor so funds are needed for materials only.

D. Primary School

- There are eight Primary classes.
- Retention of teachers is always a serious concern. The wages we pay are not as high as those paid by the government and we do not have a retirement program to compete with the government. Our employees do participate in the Kenyan social security retirement program and COPE pays employer taxes into the program.
- The current ratio of textbook to student is 1:3 for the upper primary classes, 1:10 in lower primary. There are some subjects that have a textbook for the teacher only. We have a monthly budget for textbook purchase but it will be a long time before we get to a place where each student has a textbook for each subject.
- Our children compete with children who live in metropolitan areas and have educated parents.

E. Female Genital Mutilation/Forced Marriage

- The Pokot tribe believe in female circumcision as a rite of passage. COPE has initiated and maintains a rescue program for any girl who does not want to be circumcised or forced to marry. COPE has partnered with *The Sentinelles*, an organization that specializes in education related to FGM. Many girls have been rescued. The goal is to return the girls to their families once the family has agreed to allow the girl to go to school. At the present time, there are 15 girls who have been rescued and are living in COPE House. The girls need clothing, uniforms, shoes, school supplies, school fees and personal items.

F. Feeding Programme

- COPE feeds 630 students and 43 employees two meals a day. For breakfast we cook uji, which is either corn or sorghum flour that has been added to boiling water. Sugar or honey is added for sweetening. For lunch we cook corn and beans. Salt is added for flavor. Each person gets one cup/bowl per serving. The cost of food is 48% of our total expenses, which is a challenge for the COPE budget.

G. Community Development

- The Bakery has been constructed and has contracts and markets where they sell bread. When the Bakery is running on full-scale, we should be employing many Pokot with various levels of education. It is our goal to have the Bakery self-supporting by the end of 2016. We are also working on getting the bakery approved by the government of Kenya so we can sell bread anywhere.
- There are few alternatives for the Pokot who live in this area. There are no jobs for the un/under educated. Bringing small development projects to the area would go a long way to improving the economic development. Within the area, there are two plants that grow wild and are not affected by the dry climate - aloe vera and sisal. With financial assistance, it is possible to start a small aloe vera manufacturing plant that would involve many of the people. Establishing aloe vera farms, improving collection techniques, centralizing the first-stage manufacturing process, teaching how to make soap and lotion, packaging and selling the products - all of this would go far beyond anything that is currently in the whole of the area.

J. Security

- Insecurity is becoming more of a problem as the economy of Kenya deteriorates, people become more desperate and terrorism gets closer to us. A permanent security wall is under construction and will provide a significant deterrent from those who seek to harm others. The challenge of raising funds for the security wall is on-going.

Constituency Demographics

A. Characteristics of Service Population

- Age range - The COPE ministry provides services to every age group in the area. Our schools offer education to students as young as 3 years, all the way to adults. Our dispensary provides medical care to every age, including pre-natal care. Our evangelism program covers the complete age spectrum.
- Gender - The COPE ministry does not discriminate based on gender. The girl child has been given special attention because of the Pokot tradition of circumcising girls when they reach puberty. Aside from the program to protect girls from Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage, both males and females are cared for equally.
- Ethnicity - The majority of the people receiving services from the COPE ministry are Pokot, but other tribes are included. The fact that the majority are Pokot is because the ministry is located in Pokot, not because other tribes are excluded.
- Educational Level - The vast majority of those served by the COPE ministry have had no formal education. Most of our students are the first generation to go to school.
- Income Level - The Pokot are pastoralists and base their "wealth" on the number of cows, goats, wives and children each man has accumulated. Very few people in our constituency have an income. Few have any job training and there are few jobs available to those who are trained.

B. Numbers Served By Each Program

- Nursery School - 150 children
- Primary School - 480 children
- Dispensary - 600 to 700 people per month
- Evangelism – with Jesus film, 500 per week; without Jesus film, 200 per week