



# BEAM Kenya

Boost | Educate | Advocate | Mend

December 2017 Issue



BEAM Kenya's mission is to advocate for the emotional, spiritual, and educational needs of impoverished children in Kenya.

We proudly partner with Vertical Love Ministries, a 501(c)3 organization.

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## To begin BEAM Kenya, I knew we had to build a strong team.

I had no desire or the ability to do this alone. In June 2016, I started to brainstorm with a trusted mentor the idea of counseling and scholarships for the kids in the slums. That September, God answered our prayers when He brought Olive Jerop onto our team. Olive is a gifted social worker and powerful networker. She is firm in her speech, yet she is soft at heart.

I'll never forget the first day she went to the slums. We listened to the story of a few young girls in the slums whose mother was struggling with prostitution and alcoholism. These girls were



Olive, far left, with the BEAM Kenya kids.

undergoing trauma and neglect as they were exposed to the dark and depressing lifestyle of their mother. I saw tears well up in Olive's eyes as we learned more about the horrendous environment these girls were living in. I knew God was breaking her heart.

The exact same thing happened to me in 2012 when I went to the slums for the first time and witnessed the suffering of innocent children. If we allow Him, God can use heartbreak as a powerful motivator to fight for justice. Olive has worked tirelessly for the last year and a half to advocate for the educational, spiritual, and emotional rights of the children in the slums. We are so incredibly grateful to have her as part of the BEAM team.

With love and gratitude,  
Colleen Costigan  
Founder, BEAM Kenya

## Featured Student: Grace

She is bold. She is bright. She is confident. She sang a solo at church the other day. Her jokes cause stomach pain from deep belly laughter, and her honesty can catch you in tears.

Grace got a BEAM Kenya scholarship last March to attend boarding school at Brook of Faith Academy, where she is receiving quality education in a safe and protected environment outside of the slum where she was living.

If you saw Grace at Brook of Faith in her blue-checked school uniform, freshly shined leather shoes, and infectious smile, you would never know.

But if you ask her, she'll tell you.

*What are some of the challenges living in the slums?* our friend asked recently.

*People drinking chang'aa, an illicit grain alcohol that causes blindness and even death. People being abused. Kids dropping out of school.*

*Oh, do you know people who drink chang'aa?*

Yes, my mom, she said.

*And have you been abused?*

*Yes. You see this scar on the back of my head? My mom took a high-heeled shoe and hit me with it. Her eyes began to well up with tears.*

Then our friend asked about the scar on her forehead.

*Oh that? she said with a huge grin. Well, I was jumping around, pretending to be a frog, when I fell and bumped my head. She was so overcome by laughter she could barely finish the story.*

As BEAM Kenya, we hope to walk with Grace, through tears and laughter, as she grows spiritually, emotionally, and physically and pursues her dreams. Almost daily, Grace tells me, *Auntie Colleen, so many people in my family are alcoholics. I hope one day to change my family.*

We do, too, Grace.



## Partnership Update: Black Street

Black Street is a place near the slums known for prostitution, alcoholism, and street kids. It is as dark and depressing as its name implies—yet we know it is exactly where we're supposed to be.

In September, we began renting a space there. The purpose behind this is twofold: to gain a better understanding of the complex dynamics of the slum community and to introduce counseling services. We work with two professionally trained Kenyan counselors who provide individual counseling, small group counseling, and psychosocial education.

So far, our counseling services have been limited to the children in our scholarship program and the staff and students at Brook of Faith Academy in Kipkaren. We are now beginning to focus more on the families of our students as well as other people in the slum community who are struggling with addiction, trauma, or other psychological issues.



Our most consistent client so far is the sister of one of our high school students. She is a young lady in her mid 20s who dropped out of school in fifth grade. She is addicted to chang'aa, a lethal grain alcohol, and is living with her abusive boyfriend. The other day, she walked into our center for her weekly appointment, frail and weeping. Her boyfriend beat her again, and she was seething with pain. She met with one of our counselors, and they came up with a plan for her to get medical attention and attempt to leave her boyfriend.

We pray and hope and believe that we can build relationships with this young girl and others to see them empowered to make positive changes in their lives and, in turn, impact their families and communities.

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[www.beamkenya.org](http://www.beamkenya.org).**