

## OUR STORY

The story of Cuore d’Africa (HEART OF AFRICA) cannot be separated from the description of our social commitment, which goes back a long time before the idea of founding a charity.

We started helping privately, thanks to the cooperation of our friends, Ciai Onlus (Italian Children Aid Centre); in 2005 we raised funds for the education of a region of Burkina Faso; in 2006 we donated funds to a nutrition center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; in 2008 we supported a school in San Juan de Pasto, Colombia.

All initiative we participated in were designed to help disadvantaged children and their families, if possible.

In February 2008, thanks to the availability and work of my sister Nadia Caroli, I could know Father Charles Kyallo Mutua, Milcah Ndanu Juma and Monicah Kaluki Mulindu, who end up to become our collaborators from Kenya the following year.

Father Charles is the founder of the "Community of Hope" in Machakos, Kenya, an organization dedicated to assist economically disadvantaged children in the area.

After having met Nadia, he asked her if he could accommodate his collaborators Monicah and Milcah at her home, to allow them to learn Italian in order to help him in relations with Italy. Nadia gladly accepted, so over the next four months the girls were able to learn our language, while my wife Pamela, our families and I got in touch with their land, their culture, their problems and their hopes.

Eager to do something for these new friends, we decided to buy money boxes to be displayed in our restaurants, in order to ask for a little financial help to customers and friends.

Shortly after the departure of Monicah and Milcah, father Charles arrived to Italy.

We liked and appreciated him from the start: he is an engaging and full of enthusiasm man, who has done much for his people in Kenya in a few years, thanks to friends met during his studies in Rome.

After talking with him about his work and our little initiative with the piggy banks, it was easy for my wife and me to decided to continue that modest fundraising with a more specific and lasting one.

Before father Charles went back to Machakos, we opened the two piggy banks: with our great surprise we counted well 2.600 euros! An extraordinary result, achieved with the help and goodwill of many friends and customers.

With this figure we could support several projects:

1. buy mattresses, beds and blankets for the poor children of the villages of Kieleni and Ketikomu;
2. pay the fees for two teachers, the matron, the cook and the watchman in “Calosci” cutting and sewing school in Makueni from May 2008 to December 2008;
3. pay the carriage from home to school and back for non-sponsored children who do not live in the hostel near their schools;
4. pay the college fee for Rose Syokau and the University of Nairobi fee for Anna Mutave; both girls had lost their sponsors.

Thanks to direct contact with father Charles and following the evaluation of generosity and enthusiasm of many people who supported us in our first initiative, we made the decision to turn ourselves into a small Association of volunteerism and social promotion.

On 15 July 2008 five friends laid the foundation of the Association: Pamela, Betti and Susanna Tonelli, Franco Melilla and Fabio Caroli.

We wanted to have no intermediaries between the fundraising in Italy and their distribution in Kenya, as these lead necessarily to a partial dispersion of aid.

Fortunately, we have always found collaborators among members and friends, giving their work FOR FREE, and this allowed us to devote the entire proceeds of the fundraising to our projects.

As a first initiative we involved our friends, asking them to provide clothing and various materials, which were to be sent to the Community of Hope along with other supplies purchased with the proceeds of the first collection.

On 19 September 2008 Heart of Africa Association was officially registered as a non-profit voluntary charity.

Following the actual and official creation of the Association we raised funds with membership subscriptions and with other initiatives (such as raffles, lotteries, Kenyan crafts for sale), which enabled us to reach the amount required (2,000 Euros) to ship a container. We loaded it with clothing, footwear, computers, educational material, toys, generators, treadle sewing machines, fabrics, etc.: the container left on Thursday 13 November and arrived to Mombasa on 15 December.

Along the way many other friends have joined our project, helping us in several ways: with work performances, by providing materials for our children in Kenya, creating and maintaining this website, printing cards and tickets, arranging objects to be sold in our charity markets or to be used as prizes for raffles and lotteries, providing raw materials for our charity dinners, spreading news about our activities and projects through their own media formats, offering its professional collaboration. All this at no charge, with the only aim of participating in a small project which may bring great help to many people. And we must not forget all those who, although they cannot actively participate, support us with their donations, with membership subscriptions and sponsorships. This is our team, as it has shaped over the years. We are confident that new friends will join us, allowing us to quickly realize the projects already in place and begin some new ones as soon as possible.

Since the beginning of this experience we all understood that small gestures can create great things and we hope that with your help we can throw the seed for a lush crop.

The President, Fabio Caroli