

AEP Staff Retreat Held in Nairobi, Kenya

January 2005

AEP US and Kenya staff met over three days in Nairobi, Kenya, to strategize about AEP's future. Topics included finalizing the 2005 work plan and budget, evaluating methods to strengthen AEP's programs, reviewing 2004 activities and enumerating lessons learned. The retreat was attended by all AEP staff: Kat Simon-Agolory, Executive Director; Eric Njoroge, Program Coordinator; Benjamin Odiyo, Program Administrator; and William Siwa, Program Assistant.

AEP staff retreats are usually held in January when the US-based Executive Director visits the Kenya program. The meetings began on January 13, 2005, with the group reviewing 2004 activities and discussing the lessons learned. Then the group launched into finalizing 2005 plans.

AEP has some exciting plans for 2005. On the USA 2005 work plan is the completion and distribution of the 2004 Annual Report, two Karamu fundraisers, Board Retreat, launch of AEP's education page, Back to School Fundraiser, and a World AIDS Day Fundraiser. On the Kenya work plan for 2005 is commencement of a new mentoring program concept, group academic meetings, group activities with scholars, induction of

new scholars, registration of the organization in Kenya and a World AIDS Day Activity.

The scholars' intake application process will have different deadlines this year. Usually applications are due in mid-October, however, beginning this year, applications will be due in mid-September. This will give staff more time to thoroughly review applications and notify successful applicants in November.



AEP staff from left to right: William Siwa (Program Assistant), Eric Njoroge (Program Coordinator), Kat Simon-Agolory (Executive Director) and Benjamin Odiyo (Program Administrator).

Issues the AEP team faced this year was lack of strong connection between US staff and Kenya Staff. This issue will be addressed in 2005 through the institution of more periodic tele-meetings (phone meetings). These meetings are expected to take place every two months.

The retreat was also instrumental in building camaraderie among the staff. The group attended dinner together where work-related talk was prohibited. The team also participated in fun activities including attending a Kenyan play that kept the group laughing for hours. These activities were important for the team members to build strong friendships and working relationships. AEP staff members are enthusiastic about the exciting year ahead of them.