

# Benjamin Odiyo Begins One-Year Sabbatical

September 2005

AEP-Kenya sent off one of its native sons to Sweden earlier this month. Benjamin Odiyo is taking a one-year sabbatical to pursue a graduate degree in computer science at Uppsala University.

Uppsala is Sweden's fourth largest city, located 70 kilometers north of Stockholm. Uppsala University is the oldest university in the Nordic countries, founded in 1477. According to Benjamin, it is among top rated universities in terms of research and graduate computer science programs. He was also attracted to the university because it offers a one-year Master of Science (MSc) program and he wanted to experience a different academic environment outside of Kenya.

Life in Sweden has taken some getting accustomed. Benjamin experiences the sun setting as early as 4 PM and rising as late as 8:30 AM. "And Sweden is very expensive! One is tempted to think life is free in Kenya," Benjamin strongly asserts as he discusses the high cost of housing and food in Sweden compared to Kenya. Benjamin is fortunate in that he is attending university tuition free. Although he only caters for the student union fees and his living expenses, life in Sweden is still quite expensive compared to Kenya.

"One major plus here is that the systems work. Everything



**Benjamin Odiyo in Nairobi in 2005.**

works on schedule except on very rare occasions." Benjamin laughs that this in itself is a major change from Kenya.



**Map of Sweden**

Academically, the 2001 Edgerton University graduate has adjusted well and is enjoying the practical orientation of his studies. Benjamin's classes are conducted in English. The amount of school work leaves little time for Swedish studies but he has picked up some Swedish words to get by in daily life. He plans to attend full language classes in May.

Benjamin misses the warm weather, nice people and African food the most about his homeland. He also misses spending time with the AEP scholars and being able to give them direction on their next moves in life.

Benjamin is very grateful for his experiences in Sweden and in graduate school. He feels that he will be in a better position to contribute towards his nation's development. "I think if more Kenyans were exposed to other experiences outside Kenya that we would be able to help our country develop. We have sufficient resources at home. It is only that they are not well utilized." Benjamin is eager to return to Kenya after the completion of his studies.

Benjamin will be dearly missed by the AEP-Kenya team. He has faithfully served as AEP-Kenya's Program Administrator since 2004 and was instrumental in the inaugural year of the AEP-Kenya program. He has single-handedly managed all of AEP-Kenya's finances with great diligence, detail and accuracy.

Upon returning to Kenya in September 2006, Benjamin plans to take up his teaching job at Strathmore University again. When asked whether he would rejoin the AEP-Kenya staff, he positively asserted, "Yes! I am always available for AEP-Kenya!" He plans to return to his position as Program

Administrator at AEP-Kenya. In the meantime, all AEP-Kenya staff, scholars and Board of Directors wish Benjamin "Lycka till!" ("good luck" in Swedish).

#### **Facts about Sweden**

**Official Country Name:** Kingdom of Sweden

**Government Type:** constitutional monarchy

**Capital:** Stockholm

**Geographic Area:** Slightly larger than California

**Climate:** temperate in south with cold, cloudy winters and cool, partly cloudy summers; subarctic in north

**Land Use:** 6.54% arable land

**Population:** 9 million (2005)

**Population Growth Rate:** 0.17% (2005)

**Life Expectancy:** 80.4 years

**HIV/AIDS Rate:** 0.1%

**Religion:** 87% Lutheran

**Literacy Rate:** 99%

**Other Interesting Facts:** Sweden has not participated in any war in almost two centuries.

**Source:** The World Fact Book