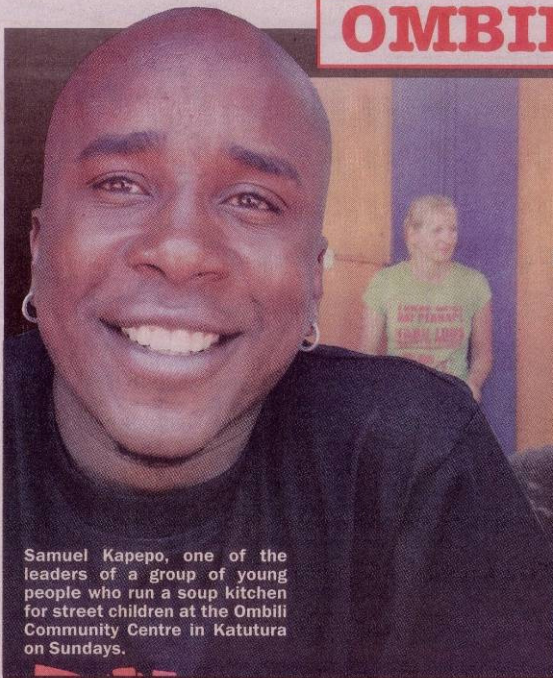


OMBILI SAMARITAN



Samuel Kapepo, one of the leaders of a group of young people who run a soup kitchen for street children at the Ombili Community Centre in Katutura on Sundays.



Mrs Namibia 2007 Evangeline Haoses with a happy smile to the left of Samuel Kapepo and Armina Jankowski, founder and national director of the Mrs Namibia Pageant.
Photos: DOROTHEA MÜLLER

'I KNOW STREETLIFE'

'Big companies and supermarkets are reluctant to help'

■ SIRKA AMAAMBO

SAMUEL Kapepo was just twenty when he started his soup kitchen, the Moses Garoëb Youth Club kitchen, which feeds children on Sundays at the Ombili Community Centre.

He is now 23 and the soup kitchen is still going strong.

Kapepo says that he knows all about hunger himself. His parents both passed away when he was very young and says he does not really remember much about their love. "Seeing other children with their parents was very hard."

"It wasn't easy, but I know all about living on the street", he says.

At the beginning, the club consisted only of a group of actors and friends who wanted to make a dif-

ference.

"We started off by each contributing N\$50 of our own money."

He says they tried approaching big companies for sponsorship but were asked for paperwork they did not have.

"Why not just help", he asks with a puzzled look.

"I also tried approaching some supermarkets, but they would just look at me as though I was not a human being," he says about the experience.

At first, he says, they had 117 mouths to feed with children ranging from 5 to 18 years.

But this year, some of the children

came with their siblings, sometimes as young as one year. Most of them were street children or came from broken homes. "Some have parents who just didn't care about what happens to the children," he says.

Once they were up and running though, Kapepo says that they got money, food or clothes from individuals.

"The way the children speak to us, and approach us to thank us, just shows how much they appreciate the little that we are doing for them", he says with a distant look. Kapepo says that children are the future, but if they are hungry, they cannot be expected

to be our future.

Asked why he chose Sundays to feed the children, he said that it's better to start the week with a full tummy.

"You can't say that we have freedom if such a small country still has people on the streets," he says sadly.

Aside from that experience, he also says that he does the feeding scheme to show other young people out there that they can also do it on their own instead of waiting for the government to make a difference.

"If you really want to help the street children, don't give them money. Rather take them to a shop and buy bread," he emphasises. He adds that when the children are given money, they spend that money on alcohol

or drugs instead.

Kapepo says that just feeding them is not enough because they also need to feel loved. "We invite people to come and join us to play with the children. We are also planning to have an after-school project where we help them with their homework."

At the moment, Kapepo says that they feed up to 213 children every Sunday and store the cooking material in the community centre's toilets.

"We are in dire need of a storage space," he says.

The rest of his time, Kapepo works as an actor in films such as *The Trial*, *Beyond Borders*, *Follow your Heart Part 2* and also in *Where others Wavered*.

