

It takes a whole



CANDID MOMENT: A young girl stops and smiles on the way home to the Foothills Orphanage. Photo: Contributed



SMOKO: Workers have a breather during construction of a new school in the Shimba Hills.

Bundaberg teacher urges locals to

WALKERVALE State School teacher and librarian Cathy Booth got more than she bargained for when she embarked on a round-the-world trip with friends and colleagues in December last year.

The journey took her through Europe, Asia, America and the Middle East and then to East Africa, where she visited villages in Kenya and Rwanda.

The poverty and suffering of villagers in the Shimba Hills area of Kenya stayed with Mrs Booth long after she returned to Australia.

She has since launched a charity initiative to establish an orphanage and help those street children living rough in the region.

"To say it was confronting would probably be an understatement," she said. "It was horrible. "In the end, I couldn't

come back and live my life knowing what those children are going through over there."

Mrs Booth's charity, Umoja, takes its name from a Swahili word meaning unity and togetherness.

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Cathy Booth

Her goal is to establish a staffed orphanage to home children abandoned as babies who lack the basic needs of shelter, food, water and education.

She aims to raise money through fundraising initiatives to buy 10 acres of land in the Shimba Hills,

and start a children's home south of Mombasa, Kenya's second-largest city, towards the Tanzanian border.

The idea began to develop when Mrs Booth visited the Footprints Orphanage as part of her trip to Kenya.

Footprints was opened by British expatriate Kerry Watson, who now lives in a home near the orphanage and oversees the care of its 15 children.

Mrs Booth said her visit to the orphanage was inspirational and virtually demanded that she reappraise her own goals and life direction.

"It was a huge wake-up call for me," she said.

"It made me sit down and think that if other people have done this, why couldn't I?"

Her first project will be fundraising \$20,000 to buy a four-wheel drive minivan to be rented out to tourists wanting to go on safaris around Kenya.