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Strathmore Volunteers at the 2005 World Youth Day

Students and staff of
Strathmore University
participated as volunteers in
the 2005 World Youth Day in
Cologne, Germany.

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Keri Residence had been organising the event since September last year to ensure that everything would go smoothly. “The preparations started

early as we felt that we had to prepare ourselves well for the German Experience” says Irene Ngunjiri, the director of Keri Residence. “We started with social work every month and German classes every Saturday. We even went for a German mass here in Nairobi to get a feel of what it would be like in Germany”.

The trip had exciting side benefits as the team had to spend a night in Cairo. To make good use of the stopover, they visited the pyramids and sphinx of Giza, a papyrus museum, the Egyptian museum and even had time to enjoy a boat ride on the Nile.

There were many chances to explore Cologne, the 4th largest city in Germany which is well known for its magnificent Gothic Cathedral. This Cathedral is on the Unesco’s World Heritage list and is Germany’s most

visited site. It contains the remains of the 3 Magi hence the theme of the World Youth Day – We have come to worship him - and the WYD logo depicting this distinctive symbol of Cologne.

The city boasts a number of old beautiful churches – one of which contains the remains of St. Albert the great, teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas - and many world famous museums and galleries. It is also well known for giving its name ‘eau de cologne’ to a kind of perfume.

The Keri team consisted of 19 volunteers and 3 pilgrims. It was the only volunteer team from Africa as all other volunteers from Africa went individually. The volunteers had to assist the World Youth Day office in a variety of tasks to make the event successful. Tasks included translations, pilgrim transport and

accommodation, liturgy, pilgrim support etc.

All in all there were 26,000 volunteers from all over the world and in such an international set-up the Kenyans worked in teams consisting of people from many countries: France, Poland, Guatemala, Latvia, Croatia, Ireland, etc. “The atmosphere was fantastic. It is definitely better to attend the event as a Volunteer because then you get to participate in all the events while taking care of the pilgrims” says Rebecca, one of the volunteers. “We intend to go to Sydney in 2008 and we want to go as volunteers.”

Training of the volunteers was in Düsseldorf, a town that is 30 minutes from Cologne by train. It concluded on the 14th with a mass for them at the Bayern Leverkusen Stadium. The WYD office showed its appreciation

for services rendered by the volunteers by holding a small party for them on the 22nd and giving out little tokens of gratitude. Among them a signed picture of Pope Benedict XVI.

While there, the volunteers had a chance to meet the Chancellor of Strathmore University - Bishop Javier Echevarria – on the 17th of August – who was conducting one of the Catechesis sessions for the Spanish speaking group.

Any Regrets? “We missed a chance to meet Jim Caviziel due to a last minute change in venue. He gave a talk on his role as Jesus in the movie The Passion of the Christ” says Raha, one of the volunteers.

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