



# Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife

July 2020

Dear Friends,

Because of your generosity, we've had so much to celebrate since FKSWS began its work in Kenya in 2004. I've been sending you a bi-annual newsletter, mostly filled with good news and uplifting stories of accomplishments and transformation and much gratitude for your continuing support. This newsletter is an exception- because these are exceptional times. The news today is not all good and because we want to let you know about the extraordinary challenges facing the communities we support and the people who work with us, we are writing to you now.

We also want to thank you for your fantastic response to our request in the June newsletter for help with Covid-19 relief and to let you know how your donations are helping FKSWS address the critical needs in the villages. Contributions from individual donors, from the Eugene Metropolitan Rotary Club and from a fundraiser that John sponsored on Facebook have amounted to \$14,465 so far, allowing us to distribute food, soap and facemasks, for the past 3 months, to 93 needy families at Kachiuru and Kirepari. We're also giving stipends to teachers and to the cooks at our schools who are hired by the communities but now don't have the resources to cover their salaries, and to older members of the Karunga Women's Group who are no longer able to earn an income. We're optimistic today about receiving another \$2000 through a grant we've submitted to our Rotary District.

While the need throughout Kenya is staggering, what we're able to do with your help is important to these families and communities. Grateful residents have expressed their thanks to us directly or through our partner Samuel Muhonyu, asking us to pass on their gratitude to you for assisting them through this crisis. We talk regularly with Samuel, who many of you met here during our September anniversary celebration, so that he can guide our efforts. Samuel periodically visits the villages and stays in touch with residents by phone to provide moral support during this challenging time, maintaining a caring presence that the government is not providing. In a recent email, Samuel shared his thoughts on the current situation and on what the future might bring.



Women at Kachiuru collecting their food



Samuel in a meeting last year before Covid-19

## **Words from Samuel:**

"Thanks to you and others for your concerns and love. The situation here is worsening by the day because of the government officials who have decided to make life for citizens even worse during this Covid-19 crisis. Starting with demolition of slum villages and informal markets in Nairobi and elsewhere and now the evictions in the Mau forest. The big question is "Why now?" The flooding that has killed and displaced many people is subsiding, thank God, but there wasn't much support provided to the victims. The locusts are literally having a "field day" at Kachiuru and other arid and semi-arid places. The national and county governments don't seem very bothered by their effect on community livelihoods and food security. As more people succumb and disease spreads in the communities our politicians are busy scheming and holding night and day meetings as if Covid was on another planet or can't reach them. As many people lose jobs and many don't have enough to eat, management of resources meant for curbing the disease is in question. Predictions on the disease, poverty and hunger paint a very grim picture for the country!! We live by the day and pray that a solution can be found soon."



## Other News

This past week Samuel shared several bits of sad news - the most distressing was about the death of one of the students we've sponsored at Kiserian Primary School at Lake Baringo for many years.

### Lemari Lemaitano 2003-2020

Lemari Lemaitano joined FKSWS's scholarship program in 2011 at the age of 8. A member of the Il Chamus community, he lived in the village of Noosukuro at the edge of Lake Baringo. The people of Lake Baringo are fishermen and some also own cattle that they graze on the grasses that grow near the shores of the lake.

Conflict between the Il Chamus and their neighbors the Pokots over land and access to grazing has resulted in violence over the years, resulting in many deaths and the loss of cattle. In 2005, the Pokot attacked the Il Chamus communities of Rugus, Noosukuro and Longicharo, killing some herders and stealing 2000 head of cattle. The Il Chamus, fearing continuing violence, abandoned their villages and relocated to safer locations - the people from Noosukuro and Rugus moving to Kiserian, at the far end of the lake, and those from Longicharo relocating to Kokwa Island. Today, some Il Chamus are returning to the villages in spite of the constant danger of attack and many continue to graze their cattle in the area. It's often the boys and young men who tend the cattle and who are the most vulnerable to further violence.

In 2005, at the age of 2, Lemari fled with his mother from Noosukuro to the safety of Kiserian. But the trauma of the attack and the resulting move took a toll on him and on many of the other children. A number of the older children remained out of school for one or two years. Those who did return to school struggled with the memories of the attack and with their studies. At Kiserian Primary School, Lemari repeated 3<sup>rd</sup> grade twice before he was able to advance in his classes and due to a lingering illness, he repeated 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Since his mother passed away, he has been living with his sick grandmother.

In January, during our annual visits to the schools, we met Lemari and other scholarship recipients at Kiserian Primary School. Lemari, 17, was just beginning his last year of primary school in Class 8. He hoped to attend high school next year. But in March, Kenyan schools were closed, creating uncertainty about the future. During breaks from school, boys at Lake Baringo would have again been out with their families' cattle. Two weeks ago, Lemari tended his family's cattle, he was shot by cattle rustlers. On July 13, after several days in the ICU in a local hospital, he died. Samuel wrote: "I am told he and another boy were grazing cattle at Noosukuro when some Pokot raiders attacked and shot him in the stomach. It is very sad and again this young man joins the list of many people who died in the hands of armed raiders who continue to do the same and the government appearing helpless."



2011 - 8 years old in Class 3  
Recipient of a boarding scholarship at  
Kiserian Primary School  
2020 - 17 years old in Class 8



The number of students who receive scholarships from FKSWS each year varies from about 140 to 160. Some begin in nursery school and continue through high school, college or vocational training. Others are with us for a shorter time. Many are the first in their families to go to school. Every year, we review their performance and visit them in their schools. We cover medical expenses when they are sick and we work with their parents, teachers and school administrators to address challenges they face at school and at home. While we do not know every student well, we know their stories and we see their determination to learn in spite of the challenges they face. We watch them grow and change from year to year, becoming young men and women who are proud of their accomplishments and we celebrate with them their achievements. We'll remember Lemari, his wonderful smile and his commitment to learning over the years we've known him.

*Kawheri kwa sasa, Lemari.*

FKSW, NECOFA and Lemari's sponsor for these many years have donated to a fundraiser for the family.



## You've Touched So Many Lives!

Since March 13th, there have been 19,125 recorded cases of the virus in Kenya and the number is rising steadily. So far, there have been no reported infections in our partner communities. In spite of the fact that some families don't need as much assistance as others to maintain their health and well-being, the entire community benefits from your support. Providing assistance to the families with the greatest needs acknowledges the extreme challenges all of the community members face now and they are very grateful for the assistance you and others are giving to those who need it. The fact that all are being cared for means a great deal to everyone.

One unexpected source of relief is scholarship funds that will not be collected by schools this year. In January, 128 students received scholarships to attend high school, boarding at primary school, vocational training schools and special schools for students with disabilities. All are more expensive than the \$50 for primary school and tuition is paid across 3 terms. Because students only attended the first term, the money for second and third terms remains unspent. The sponsors of those children, with whom we've connected, have all agreed to let us repurpose the unused funds for Covid-19 relief, adding almost \$9000 for assistance for the next 3 months. With so much uncertainty about the future, we are doing all we can meet needs now and we'll continue to help for as long as we're able. On behalf of the Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife Board of Directors, our partners at NECOFA and all those whom we serve in Kenya, we say...



Lelo Adano distributes food soap and masks to mothers at Kachiuru



Distributing food, soap and masks on Kokwa Island

# Thank you!!



Karunga Women's Group members



Students at Kachiuru

