



# Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife

June 2020



## Covid-19 in Kenya

As John and I left Nairobi in early February, after three productive and gratifying weeks in Kenya, we were unaware that 2 days before our departure, the Center for Disease Control had reached consensus that the Covid-19 outbreak constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The news we heard while in Kenya mentioned a virus in China but it didn't then seem worrisome and it did not impact our visit. The publicized numbers are low but the projection is for many more cases due to porous borders with Tanzania, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, crowded living conditions and a weak health care structure.

There have been no cases reported in the communities where we work. Endonyio Sidai, Kokwa Island and Kachiuru communities are located in different parts of Kenya, and all are rural and isolated which is a benefit, but depending on location, each community has its own vulnerabilities to infection and challenges for protecting its members.

Kachiuru sits on a main road between Central Kenya and the coast and is the most vulnerable. Public buses, matatus (taxi vans), and freight haulers frequent the road and stop at Kachiuru for food and drink, potentially bringing the virus with them. The government has enlisted police and medical personnel, including staff from the Kachiuru dispensary, to screen all travelers at a barrier at the village entrance, taking temperatures of every person after they alight from their vehicles. A further challenge at Kachiuru is the scourge of the desert locusts that have ravaged the forage that would have been available for the livestock in the area. Even more problematic is that with the closure of the livestock markets, people are not able to sell their livestock to bring in much needed income.

At Endonyio Sidai and at Kirepari, on Kokwa Island, the residents have less exposure to the virus, but the challenge feeding their families takes some members out of the villages to source food wherever they are able to find it, potentially bringing the virus home with them. With lockdowns and market closures around the country, food expensive and scarce and many people can hardly afford what little they can find.



Kachiuru Dispensary Nurse Martin Mukaria takes temperatures of travelers passing through Kachiuru



Fighting off the locusts near Kachiuru



Distributing soap, masks and food to families at Kirepari Village on Kokwa Island

With the support of our donors, FKSWS has been able to provide soap for hand washing and masks at Kirepari and Kachiuru. The 91 most needy families in those communities have also received food supplies for one month. But the need is ongoing. We plan to submit a grant to our Rotary District in June asking for a match for \$2000 that our Eugene Metropolitan Rotary Club donated to continue the provision of food and other support in these villages.. We appreciate all of your help!

Our partner Samuel Muhonyu keeps us informed on the situation in each village and we meet with him by phone frequently to plan our strategies for support. In a recent message, Samuel wrote:

“There has been much appreciation expressed by the recipients of the food support. Surprisingly, other community members, many of them not beneficiaries, have called me expressing their gratitude and that of the recipients. They are happy that we touched lives for the very needy families in their midst. On behalf of all of them I say AHSANTE SANA (THANK YOU) to you and John; FKSWS board and donors.”



Endonyio Sidai Primary School January 2020



Our visit to Kenya in January became an extended celebration in the villages as we came together with community members to share recent accomplishments. At Endonyio Sidai, we shared appreciation for the partnership between the community and Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife that began in 2004 and our commitment to working together to realize the community's dream of educating their children in a school near their homes. At that time, children walked several hours each day to and from a school at the bottom of the 8,500 foot Rift Valley Escarpment, braving the heat and the wildlife. The children in this photo from January, 2006, must be in their early 20's today! I wonder if they remember that they helped to carry the rocks that became the foundation for the first classroom of the Endonyio Sidai Primary School.

Fourteen years later, eight classrooms with an administration block, provide a permanent learning environment for the children of this community. While FKSWS has provided some of the funding for the school, the residents have made substantial contributions to the effort by pooling their resources, holding fund raisers, and even selling their cows to raise money for construction and management of the project, which included toilets, a kitchen for making the school lunch and a water system for the school.

One striking example of how much this community cares for the well-being of their children is their dedication to assisting children whose parents are unable to pay for needed medical care or the costs of attending school. The school committee has, on occasion, requested assistance from FKSWS to assist a child whose needs for medical care or to meet requirements for school attendance exceed what the parents are able to provide. Twenty five students attend school with scholarships from FKSWS this year, 15 in primary school and 10 in high school.

It's been such a pleasure to work with the Endonyio Sidai community, whose vision and collaboration have been critical to the development of the school. Some men and women have participated in the process from the beginning, when the school was just a dream. Moses Kipaliash was a nursery school teacher when we met him in 2004. (Moses has been a teacher at the school, the Chair of the school committee, a member of the leadership team and an involved parent. He has become a good friend and we communicate frequently on FB Messenger to stay in touch when we're back in Oregon. (That's Moses in the blue shirt and gray vest in the group photo on the left.)



The outline of the first classroom in 2006



Moses Kipaliash January 2020



167 students in classes 1-8 attend the school. There is also a nursery school program

 **Kirepari**



Community members and students gathered to celebrate the opening of the new classroom (at the top of the photo)



Students in a new classroom with new desks

At Kirepari Primary School on Kokwa Island, the students, teachers and parents sang a greeting as we arrived at the school and then pulled us into their dancing parade around the school enclosure. The community had gathered to participate in the official opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> classroom at the school, completed in November. We circled the area several times to the rhythm of lively music and then gathered in front of the new classroom where we all cheered as the donor plaque acknowledging Jim Bryson for his support was revealed. Then, we seated ourselves under a shade tree and readied ourselves for the many speeches that would follow. More singing and dancing completed the ceremony.

Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife has partnered with the Kirepari community since 2004. We know the many challenges they've overcome to meet their commitment so assuring that their children, many of whom are the first generation in their families to attend school, to receive a quality education. We share their joy!



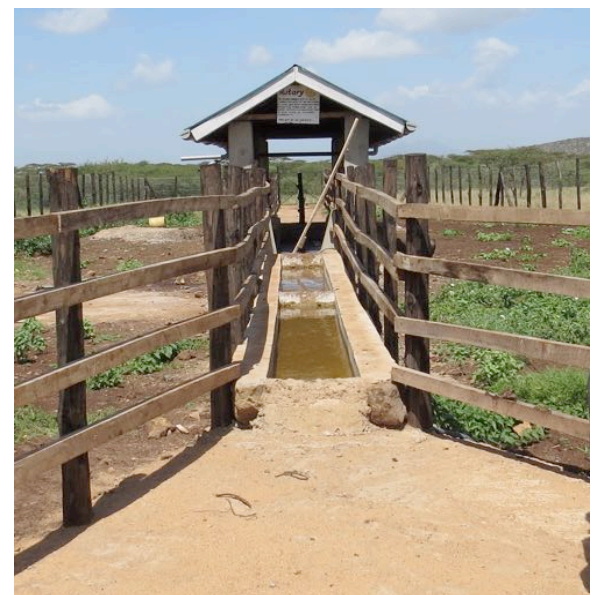
Kirepari dancers

 **Kachiuru**



At Kachiuru, we celebrated the completion a different type of project, one that will protect livestock. The people of Kachiuru are pastoralists who depend on livestock for their livelihoods. Their cattle, sheep, camels and goats are their “walking bank account” and the loss of animals is literally a loss of money. One great threat to the livestock here is death caused by tick borne diseases which can be controlled by periodically treating livestock with chemicals that kill ticks. With that in mind, our Eugene Metropolitan Rotary Club sponsored a \$36,384 project, funded through Rotary International, to build a cattle dip at Kachiuru. The project was hosted and implemented

by the Kenyan Rotary Club of Nithi and was completed in December. A committee of cattle owners, trained in the safe use and management of the chemicals will oversee the dip's use. Besides protecting the animals, the cattle dip will generate income for the community as other livestock owners from the area bring their animals for treatment and pay a small fee per animal. Income will be pooled with earnings from a watering trough in the village that currently pays the salary of a teacher at the primary school.



Entrance to the cattle dip

## Elburgon



On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, John and I spent a joyous afternoon with the group of farmers and meat processors, celebrating the opening of the Elburgon Community Slaughter House. The facility was built with funds the group had raised to replace a facility built in 1963 that was condemned by the government. But the group was short on funds to finish the project. A \$43,000 Rotary grant sponsored by our Eugene Metro club and hosted by the Rotary Club of Gilgil, funded processing equipment and water and power to the facility. The grant also covered training for the workers and a sewage system that would purify waste water for reuse. The celebration marked the official opening of the facility and many guests, including the Chief and Assistant Chief of the area, enjoyed songs and dancing, speeches and a delicious meal. The facility is now in full operation.



## Three Young Women on Their Way



**Diana Sintogia**

**DIANA** entered the FKS<sup>W</sup> Scholarship program at Endonyio Sidai Primary School when she was 5 years old. Her gorgeous smile is the first thing you notice about her and she has a personality to match! Diana graduated from high school in November of 2019 and her high marks on the national exam qualified her to attend university, beginning in the fall. She wants to study nursing. In the meantime, she's finished a computer course and is waiting for the reopening of schools in Kenya.



**SIAN** began school at the age of 15, after a teacher at Endonyio Sidai asked if would talk to her parents about enrolling her in school. Blind since birth, Sian had never attended school, but had a strong desire to learn. In 2013 she was enrolled at



**Sian Mulwa**

Thika School for the Blind. Today, she speaks fluent Swahili and some English. She is in class 6, and uses Braille to read, write and do math.



**SOFIA** has been in FKS<sup>W</sup>'s school program since she was 5. She finished high school in 2018 and last year attended a Community Health training program at Kenya Medical Training College in Isiolo. She completed an internship early this year and will begin her second year of studies when schools reopen. She's been working with mothers who are



**Sofia Adan**

pregnant or have just given birth and she loves the work! Right now she's volunteering in a clinic in Isiolo to gain more experience. Sofia is very proud of her accomplishments so far!



## Karunga Women's Group Makes Face Masks to Protect Kenyans

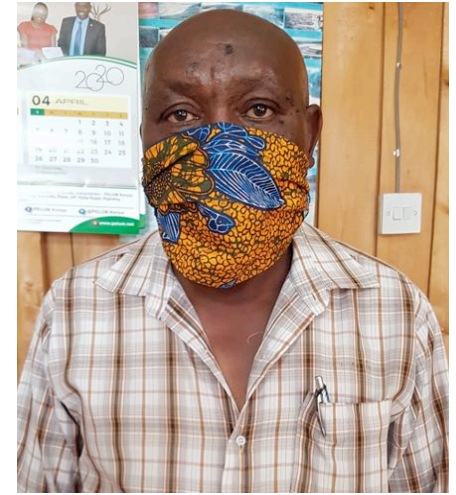


Beatrice Kamau, Chairlady of the Karunga Women's Group in Elburgon

To help meet the challenge of Covid-19 in Kenya, the Karunga Women's Group recently added face masks, made from beautiful African fabrics, to their growing line of products. Last week, FKSWS purchased 800 masks from Karunga that were sent to the residents of Kachiuru and Kirepari.

In the last two years, the Karunga textile enterprise, which began with FKSWS assistance in 2008, has become independent of our support. As their skills increase and their product line grows, so does their business. Their knitted, woven and tailored items include reusable hygiene kits, sweaters, blankets, school uniforms, clothing, toys and bags. A customer in Spain keeps them busy making one of a kind items for sale in her boutique.

**Hongera Karungal Congratulations!!**



Samuel Muhonyu of NECOFA  
FKSWS's partner

Right now, when connections are so important, I love this connection between Karunga and the communities that, in different times, would not have happened. Today, the Karunga women's skills and creativity are supporting the people at Kachiuru and Kirepari, and you, our donors, are supporting all of them with your contributions. I feel as though today, we are members of a family,  
**a Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife Family!**

**Hayo ni yote kwa sasa!**

**That's all for now!**



Lelo Adano and her team distribute food, soap and face masks to families at Kachiuru

*In these challenging times, please help us to address critical needs in the communities for food, masks, and soap for hand washing with a check sent to our address below or through PayPal on the FKSWS website.*

**Thank you!!!!**

**"Kidogo kidogo hujaza kibaba!"**

**"A lot of small steps will make big difference!"**



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## Teacher Samuel Mutabari



Teacher Samuel Mutabari arrived at Kachiuru Primary School in 2008 as a new teacher. The school, built with FKSWS funding in 2005, had only 3 classrooms, few materials and was hours away from his home. He lived in the community during the week, returning home on weekends. In 2011, Samuel was promoted to Head Teacher at Kachiuru and served in that position until January of this year when he was transferred to another school.

During his 12 years at Kachiuru, Samuel became a dedicated leader in the community and was well-loved and respected by all. In the absence of a chief or headman at Kachiuru, the school committee, led by Samuel, became the governing body. His quiet manner and his dedication to the children and their families never wavered in spite of many challenges. He recently wrote:

“Madam Gwen, We started the journey when I was so naïve. You and Samuel have really mentored me to be what I am today both in my profession and in my individual life. I have gotten a lot of courage and one thing I have learned from you is appreciating the small effort one makes because it gives courage for one to do something bigger.”

We will miss Samuel greatly, but as he suggests, he is moving on to something bigger. We were so fortunate to work with him and we wish him all the best!



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