



SUITCASES for AFRICA

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ANNUAL REPORT 2012

I recently came across a quote by **Arthur Ashe**

*"Start where you are,
Use what you have,
Do what you can"*

This simple yet powerful choice of words would be the perfect description of the many grass roots volunteers, supporters and friends of SFA. Nothing could explain more clearly how they have all become engaged in their own ways, using whatever talents or energies they have, within their own families, work places, churches, schools, and community organizations. We are astounded by the continuous and generous support that has come through to fund SFA Projects in 2012. This is the true highlight of this amazing year.

It gives all of our members the inspiration to continue and do what we can. Please read on and learn what the "many" did accomplish with small but heartfelt service to those in need this past year.

The year 2012 began with the completion of a beautiful new classroom for the level 8 students of St. Paul's Primary School in Mwirembe. The many challenges facing this struggling, overcrowded rural school can be read about in more detail in the 2011 Annual Report. We started with a new well and 8 new latrines in 2011 to promote better health and hygiene. We continued in 2012 to address the many hurdles faced by these students in obtaining an education. With crowded and crumbling classrooms and few teaching supplies the teachers seemed heroic to us when we met them in 2011. We learned that this fairly young school was in desperate need of more classrooms to accommodate the projected new grade 8 level class. Although the parents had pitched in to build some temporary mud/dung classrooms there were still children learning under the trees and crowding into small hallways when the rainy season arrived. Morale of both students and staff was low. Suitcases for Africa secretary Charlotte Marcella was working at the projects in January 2012 when the new classroom was completed and ready for the new term to begin.

The classroom was a beautiful sight to the excited students who arrived for the opening ceremony. It was spacious, freshly painted and with good lighting from the large windows installed. Fr. Paul blessed the building and Charlotte presented the school with a new Kenyan flag to replace the tattered original.

Music and dancing completed the day in the true Kenyan tradition of thanksgiving. In April of 2012 the school received more school supplies and library books donated by our supporters and delivered by Wendy in partially sponsored suitcases. We thank St. George's Church, Lindsay Place High School and Patricia Jackson for helping to sponsor the shipment. In 2012 we tried this new approach of funding the cost of bringing much needed items over to our projects. We buy local whenever possible as we believe it brings more income and assistance to the community when we buy Kenyan materials. However some items such as books and medical supplies are difficult to come by and must be brought with us. We also place great value on the comfort teddies, dolls and blanket squares we bring as they are gifts of love handmade by Canadians. They bring so much happiness to children who have never had anything of their own. Such a gift is priceless and we see its impact on the child immediately. For many orphans we work with it is a tangible comfort in lives that are often harsh and filled with sadness and anxiety.

The purpose of Charlotte's extended stay in Kenya in the early months of 2012 was mainly to oversee and help implement the biggest project SFA has worked on to date... the development and opening of a Medical Clinic and Resource Centre in Emalindi. Emalindi is a highly impoverished community in which we have been working in for several years. This is where Fr. Paul's parish is located. Many of you may have met Fr. Paul when he visited us in 2011.

Comprised of approximately 6,000 people, and with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the region, Emalindi scores high on the poverty index. During our 2010 visit to work in the region we saw a small empty concrete building languishing abandoned and unused in a field of high grass. We learned from Fr. Paul that it was built to be used as a medical clinic by the Kenyan government years earlier but it was never completed. This is in keeping with the government requirement that such communities must complete and furnish the building on their own.

In a community too sick and too poor to feed itself, the opening of this clinic was doomed to never take place, despite the desperate need. The picture was grim... 6,000 people in ill health with no medical access, no medicine and no hope of wellness. We knew Fr. Paul was carrying a heavy burden of worry. At times he was paying for the burial of his parishioners with his own stipend.

Often Fr. Paul was paying for people to be admitted to the nearest hospital 20 kilometers away in order for them to receive pain medication in the final hours of their lives.

As the only person with a car Fr. Paul would often be called upon to ferry the ill to hospital in the middle of the night, over great distances. He became affectionately known as "Fr. Ambulance." We wished we could do something about this empty building but we never dreamed our small organisation could ever fund such a big project.

The seed was planted that day also in the mind of a family who had accompanied us to Kenya on that trip in 2010. The Beraldo Family had come with us to open a nearby community well which they had funded in memory of their late father. It was destined to be. When the family advised us in late 2011 of their wish to make a substantial donation to benefit the Emalindi community our dream became reality. The Beraldo Family Medical Centre was suddenly a real possibility.

Many months of planning went into effect as consultations for the project were made with health officials, contractors and the locally formed Kenyan management team. Our Kenyan administrator David Eshihuula and Charlotte, now on site, received estimates for every aspect: plumbing, electrical work, masonry, carpentry, and painting. Local workers and tradesmen were hired. They dug very deep holes by hand for a large underground storage tank to hold the water that would be obtained from a roof top water collection system. The huge tank was transported all the way from Nairobi. Twice! The first tank was cracked and had to be returned. The workers dug soak pits, latrines, a placenta pit and a medical waste unit. They built a laboratory for the testing of patients for Malaria and HIV/AIDS. The district medical officer visited often and explained what each room would be used for. There would be a delivery room, a room for resting post-partum, a pharmacy, 2 consultation rooms and a laboratory.

We are pleased to report the Beraldo Medical Centre has now been up and running since April 2012. It is a busy place which provides mother and child clinics, vaccinations, visiting specialist clinics for eye and dental care, prenatal and childbirth assistance and general healthcare. There are 2 primary schools, a secondary school and a hostel for 72 homeless children all within a short distance. The centre's impact will be significant! We are profoundly grateful to Charlotte for her dedication and determination in seeing it completed, David for administration and reporting and Fr. Paul for his guidance.

SFA is very grateful for the generosity of the Beraldo Family in funding this amazing project and their involvement and vision in its planning and operation. This medical center is a gift to the community that will undoubtedly save many lives and improve the health of thousands of people in its first year alone. There are plans in the works for continued assistance and development of the clinic for the coming year of 2013.

One of our most successful ongoing projects is the Educational Sponsorship Program which assisted 27 primary school children in 2012. After the great success of the program this year the project will increase to assist 40 children in 2013. All of the children in the program are selected based on the likelihood that their attendance at school would be unattainable without this program. Many are orphans who reside with extended family members or caregivers who cannot afford to send them to school or who would force them to drop out and work to bring in a wage.

Although the Kenyan government claims that primary school is free, the reality is that school fees, exam fees and the need to purchase school supplies, and compulsory school uniforms make it unattainable for many. When a child is sponsored by an SFA donor all of those items are supplied at no charge to the family and the child will also receive a nutritious meal at school each day at noon. This meal also lessens the burden on the family and helps the child to be well enough to concentrate on work at school. The program has been developed and coordinated by our Kenyan administrator Susan Nanjala who works on the front lines in community healthcare management in the Diocese of Kakamega. She is highly experienced and dedicated to the people she assists. We are very happy to see this program expand to 40 children in 2013 after a very positive year in 2012.

SFA has also continued in 2012 with secondary scholarship programs for 3 students who attend high schools. The "Man Man" Scholarship funds both a boy and girl graduate from Itegero Primary School. These two students have completed secondary 3 successfully and will now enter their final year to graduate in 2013. A third student who is hearing impaired was funded to attend a special vocational high school for hearing impaired students. She will train as a seamstress. She too has completed sec 3 and enters her last year in 2013. We celebrated the graduation of our first Seamstress Scholarship recipient in Dec. 2011. We are happy to report that the young woman is now working and also sews school uniforms for students in our programs.

The Emalindi Orphan Hostel is another ongoing project that has received funding from SFA in 2012. This fledgling Hostel is beginning to get up on its feet as we improved infrastructure and assistance throughout the year. Originally the nuns of The Sisters of Mary order were struggling to supply one meal a day to 85 homeless children in the area. We met Sr. Salome in 2011 when she asked for assistance with food. At that time 13 children were sleeping in the unfinished quarters of a storage room.

We have been funding the hostel for emergency food at intervals as needed this past year and also replaced 2 collapsing over-filled wooden latrines. They were an acute health hazard and were replaced with 4 new cement ones. The new latrines were built to high standards and will work for 15 years. The health risks to the children will lessen significantly.

SFA also began a fundraising campaign in 2012 to turn one of the buildings into a safe and secure dormitory for the girls. 72 homeless children were sleeping in the facilities at this point with only 12 broken beds, a few soiled, shredded mattresses and a leaking roof. Mattresses were stuffed into the roof to absorb the rain leaking into the structure. We are close to our goal and work has just begun in the last month of 2012. We hope to have it completed in early 2013 once all interior and exterior repairs are done, the painting and new roofing completed. The purchase of 72 new beds and mattresses will be the final step for this project. We foresee continued work in 2013 to improve the conditions of great hardship faced by these young children.

Feeding Programs have been a key component of the work of SFA from the very first one established in 2006 at a small orphan day school. Hunger is a constant companion in Sub Saharan Africa. It is the root cause of many problems. The Great Famine of 2011 brought attention to the problems in dramatic fashion as thousands faced starvation due to drought but the truth is that the people in these regions are the most malnourished in the world all the time. Throughout 2012 SFA continued to fund these food programs. In 2012 we funded 3 different types of food programs.

The first type is a School Feeding Program for children. They receive one meal a day, 5 days a week at school. They are nutritious meals of beans, corn and rice or cereal followed by fruit. The guarantee of one meal a day makes all the difference to survival and the ability to function at school. In 2012 we had one such program at an early childhood school in Shamberere for 90 children and one at Itegero Primary School for 59 level 8 students studying to write exams and graduate.

The second type of food program is a Food Supplementation Program. In this case we supply a community with food once a month to boost nutrition and stave off malnutrition.

We have had these programs running continuously since 2007 in different communities. This year we supported Shitochi community (75 children and their caregivers) and Chevoso community (112 children and their caregivers).

At these monthly celebrations SFA also supplies medication for the deworming of the children and a special treat of food and juice or milk for all. There is much singing and sharing that takes place on these enjoyable occasions and healthcare workers help Susan assess the individual needs, problems or concerns of the group. It helps Susan to have the "pulse" of the community and to call in authorities for interventions if needed in these highly vulnerable situations.

The third type of Food Program is Emergency Food Funding and we have had several of these donations this year following the famine. They are separate donations of food trucked into a school or community in dire situations. We have assisted two special schools for disabled children in this past year, St. Joseph the Worker at Malava, and St. Ursula School in Chamakanga. We also fund medicines for the children at St. Joseph many of whom are epileptic.

Unfortunately 2013 is shaping up to be another year of difficulty. There will be food shortages and high prices due to wide spread failure of the maize crop resulting from a blight. We foresee a need to increase funding in this area.

Throughout 2012 we have been increasing our efforts and funding in promoting self- sustaining projects for communities and groups in order to help them get up on their feet with a means to future independence.

In the past these projects have included a sewing co-op for women and several poultry projects. In 2012 Our Cow Project has gone very well. In the community of Shanyinya one small project began with the funding of a cow for a group who organise early childhood classes for 45 vulnerable children. The children now receive milk as well as eggs from a poultry project funded in 2011. The cow recently gave birth to a healthy calf which will increase the benefit.

Three cows purchased for the Maisha Mapya Group are doing well. One cow is due to calve in Feb.2013. One cow is healthy and well but has not conceived yet. The third cow had a very grave illness in the autumn of 2012.

Thankfully due to the excellent care and attention given by the women who manage her she recovered. Sadly she did however lose the calf she was carrying. She is now fully recovered.

The widows and widowers in this project all suffer from HIV/AIDS and their name Maisha Mapya means "New Life" They support each other and meet regularly to receive counselling and encouragement from our administrator Susan who is also a trained therapist for HIV/AIDS. The group members are now role models to others in the community as they help to erase the stigma of the illness and continue to strive for a productive life despite the illness. Organised into groups of five they will eventually have independence by selling milk from the cows. Encouraged by the time and effort the groups are showing in caring for the cows, we hope to expand the program in 2013 with the purchase of more cows.

The Poultry Projects continue to operate in various communities and in 2012 we had to re-commit to them as some were struggling after the Great Famine. In some cases the hens were not laying as well as previously as the cost of "layers mash" was too high. We will build contingency funds into these projects in future as layers mash is a necessity for high egg yield. In some cases chickens were eaten during the famine so we are assisting with restocking in order to re-stabilize the projects. Some Poultry Projects emerged from the famine still going strong and productive. During the spring visit to the projects an animal officer was taken to review and assess them individually and he gave the members advice which will be put into practice to improve the projects.

Over the years when we have given presentations or met with donors helping fundraise for projects, we were sometimes asked how many wells or schools or communities we have assisted over the 6 years that we have been a presence in Kenya. Oddly enough we had never taken the time to tally the projects as we kept steadily moving forward.

When we were granted Charitable Status in the summer of 2010 our donations began to increase slowly but surely and the scope of our work also grew. In autumn of 2012 we decided to sit down and take that look back over our brief but energetic first 6 years. We were pleasantly surprised at how much was accomplished in that time. None of the projects would have been realised if there had not been a small but loyal and still growing group of people on the ground working to raise funds to make it happen.

This past year people have: *started where they were, used what they had, and did what they could.* They baked cupcakes, held garage sales, organised toy sales, held a comedy night, did Irish dancing, sang in concerts, designed a calendar and gift cards, sold books, collected supplies, shopped for a cause, sold pumpkins, knitted scarves and bears, blankets and bed mats, sponsored children's education, funded a medical centre, took up collections and gave of their time and energy!

Throughout 2012 there was even a young 7 year old boy who was selling lemon aid and hot chocolate to fund a well in Kenya. Incredibly he is almost there!

How can we ever express our inspiration at learning of the myriad and imaginative ways ordinary people have found to..... *"Do what they Can"*, big or small. Every penny counts and effectively transforms lives and futures.

We know our supporters are the true heart and soul of this organisation and as we enter 2013 we are proud to have them as our partners in doing what "We" can.

Yours sincerely,

Darlene Anderson
President, Suitcases for Africa

Ahsanteni wote

(Swahili for: Thanks to all who made it happen!)

For those of you who are interested in the statistics of SFA's first 6 years on the ground in Kenya we have included an Appendix at the end of this report. Please scroll down to view it.

Appendix:

Statistics on SFA's Work to December 2012

Schools & Communities that have received assistance: 23

Itegero, Busali, Butiti, Tirimas, Chekombero, St. Ursula, Khayega, Emalindi, Chevoso, Shamberere, Shitochi, Sacred Shrine, Upendo, Lion Hill, Malava, Maisha Mapya, Mwirembe, Mwikhomo, Mukumari, Mukumu, Likule, Shanyinya, St. Joseph's/ Malava

Hospitals & Clinics receiving drugs & medical supplies: 15

The Institute of Tropical Medicine, St. Elisabeth Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, Pandipieri Clinic, Givudembali Clinic, Bakura Clinic, Butere District Hospital, Eshimukoko Health Center, Shiraha Health Center, Shisaba Health Center, Eshirembe Health Center, Elukoye Health Center, Khwisero Health Center, St. Joseph/Malava, Beraldo Family Medical Clinic & Resource Centre

Creation of a New Clinic:

Beraldo Family Medical Clinic & Resource Centre 2012

Wells & Water Projects Installed : 10

Tirimas School Well 2007

St. Ursula School for Mentally Challenged: Water reservoir, pump house & 3 tanks 2007

Chekombero: Water Tower & Collection System 2008

Itegero School: Water Tanks & Collection System 2009

Sacred Shrine: Community Well 2010

Mukumu/Likule: Community Well 2010

Isabella's Well: Shanyinya 2011

J.Jackson Memorial Well: Mukumari Community Well 2011

Mwirembe: Emalindi Community Well 2011

Beraldo Family Medical Clinic: Water Collection System 2012

Latrines: 7

Titimas 2009

Buttiti Primary 2009

Mukumu Childrens Home 2010

Itegero Primary 2011

Mwirembe/St. Paul Primary School 2011

Emalindi Orphan Hostel 2012

Beraldo Family Medical Clinic & Resource Centre 2012

Library Set-ups & Books:

Buttiti 2009

Itegero - Ebi Kiminani Memorial Library 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

Busali High 2009

Chekombero 2009

St. Peter's Seminary 2010, 2011, 2012

St. Ursula 2009 & 2010

Lion Hill 2010

St. Joseph/Malava 2011

Shamberere 2011

Shitochi 2011

Chevoso 2011

Mwirembe/St. Paul's Primary School 2011, 2012

Drug Shipments connected by SFA:

May 2010: 2 containers of anti-retrovirals & antibiotics distributed in Kakamega Region

Feb.2011: 6 40ft containers of antibiotics, antifungals and anti-retrovirals. Treatment for 300,000 people distributed widely in Kenya.

Dormitory Renovations:

St. Ursula 2007

Mukumu Children's Home 2009

Emalindi Orphan Hostel 2012

Feeding Programs:

During the peak of the Famine in 2008-2009 SFA was feeding approximately 1,000 children through feeding programs.

Locations of Food Programs past and present:

Tirimas School, Khayega , Emalindi, Chekombero School for Hearing Impaired, St. Ursula School for Mentally Challenged, Mukumu Children's Home, Itegero Primary School, Chevoso, Shamberere, Shitochi, Shanyinya, St. Joseph/Malava

Classrooms Constructed:

Tirimas 2009

Mwirembe/St. Paul Primary 2012

Anti-Malaria/Mosquito Bed Nets :

over 3,500 distributed

Educational Sponsorships & Scholarships:

Chekombero - 12 Deaf students' annual sponsorships

Khayega - 1 vocational scholarship

High School - 2 four year scholarships & 1 3 year vocational high school

Annual Primary School Sponsorships - 29 children

Animal Husbandry:

Poultry Projects:

Mukumu Childrens Home,

Emalindi Parish,

Shanyinya Community,

Emalindi Orphan Hostel,

Sacred Shrine,

Lion Hill,

Upendo,

Cows:

Maisha Mapya 3 cows (1 calf pending) ,

Shanyinya 1 cow and one new calf

Farming:

Mukumu Children's Home (vegetables & maize),

Emalindi Parish (ground nuts, millet & soya beans)

Emalindi Small Plot Farms -47 Families - (maize, ground nuts & soya beans)

Hearing Aids:

36 children have been fitted with new hearing aids

Women's Sewing Co-Op:

Kayhega community, 40 women