

Suitcases for Africa Annual Report 2015

Suitcases for Africa experienced a very positive year in 2015. We rejoiced in the success of our Educational Sponsorship Students. We also oversaw the graduation of some of our long term communities to sustainable projects which will lead to independence and brighter futures.

Educational Sponsorship Program 2015

2015 saw the promise of several years of groundwork realized as so many of our sponsored students came into their own. Students often struggle in the first year or two of sponsorship due to the hardship they experienced before joining the program. The poverty they experienced at home, poor nutrition, poor attendance at school and lack of fees and school supplies meant they had fallen far behind. Sponsorship turns that around and the children slowly catch up.

This year marked a great leap in the student's abilities and their confidence. Not only did their efforts show a marked academic improvement, they became motivated, proud and determined to succeed. The healthy meal provided daily with sponsorship improved their health and ability to focus on school work. The children became competitive for better marks and were excited to do well. The solar lights funded by donors and presented to the children when our team visited, enabled them to study after school and chores. Darkness normally makes that difficult. In Kenya darkness falls around 6 pm due to their proximity to the equator and most homes have no electricity. A small thing like a solar lamp makes a huge difference.

The team visiting in 2015 celebrated the many huge successes with the children. They delivered letters of love and support from their Canadian donors and watched as the children happily wrote letters back to them. To read some of their heart- warming responses please see the Summer/Fall 2015 Newsletter on our website at www.suitcasesforafrica.com.

We are proud to say that all of the high school students will be promoted to the next grade level in 2016 and most of the grade 8 students will go on to high school.

The newer sponsored primary students will, in the same way, gain ground as they move forward academically.

We expect the current 63 sponsored students in 2015 to expand to 66 in 2016. We thank all our donors in 2015 for this remarkable gift of a new future to these remarkable and resilient Kenyan children.

Educational Support Programs 2015

Suitcases for Africa provides educational support and development to schools in remote and struggling communities. Over the last three years one Canadian family and their friends have sponsored the small struggling **Shanyinya Community**. Over those years they have helped to build- up this community with sustainable projects for income and food such as a thriving poultry project and a very successful cow project. These projects now feed the children. The donor family funded the building of latrines and a start-up Early Childhood Education Project. They provided funding for school uniforms, desks, chairs, books and supplies to give the children a good start in their education.

Shanyinya is one of the SFA communities which are now graduating at the end of 2015 into self- sufficiency in 2016. We are confident that the leadership group formed in working towards these goals, coupled with the development and supports now in place, will help them flourish. It is always hard when it is time to say good-bye but it is an essential and important part of the program to allow them to fly and grow in independence when the time is right.

Mwikhomo School for the Hearing Impaired has been a long term recipient of SFA funding. A new large water tank for rain water storage helped an emergency situation. The children were also funded for many years with hearing aids for those who would benefit. SFA is proud of the program which funded 48 students to become part of the hearing world over the years. We hope to fund 12 more students for hearing aids in 2016, bringing the total to 60 students before this program ends.

Healthcare Support Projects 2015

SFA supporters have been following the ongoing developments in 2015 of a large 40 ft. container of Healthcare supplies being sent to the Kakamega region. It is meant to assist the Beraldo Family Medical Centre, two hospitals and several other community healthcare clinics. The project was funded by the generosity of the Beraldo Family of Toronto. The container was unfortunately ensnared at the port of Mombasa.

After much frustration, red tape, inspections and we believe unnecessary delays and added storage costs, the container was finally released and allowed to proceed to its destination in Mukumu. Upon being opened some of the medical & dental equipment had been damaged by the port inspector's fork-lift trucks. It was a very rough and discouraging experience. Despite all of this and more the Beraldo Family stayed the course and covered the additional expenses incurred. Our Medical co-ordinator on the ground in Kenya was able to successfully repair most of the equipment including hospital beds, dental chairs and patient lifting equipment for the hospitals. It also arrived so late it missed the window for our team on the ground in Kenya to disperse the contents to all of the recipients.

As we come to the end of the year in 2015, the project is still on going. Many items have now been distributed such as bicycles for community healthcare workers. Many wheelchairs and hospital beds are now in use by grateful patients. The remainder of the contents, mainly books and school supplies destined for SFA schools will be dispersed in Feb. of 2016 by the SFA team who will return to complete the project. We thank the Beraldo family for sponsoring the return flights for the team in Feb. 2016 and for their unwavering support and completion of their project in the face of such difficulty.

Dental X-Ray Machine Installation

Thanks to the fundraising efforts of West Island Dentist Dr. Anne Weary, her staff and patients, funds were raised for the installation of a dental x-ray unit at Ste. Elizabeth Hospital in Mukumu. A much needed new service for patients.

Distribution of Bed Nets against Malaria in 2015

The campaign to fund bed nets in 2015 was very successful. The team visiting in July was able to take part in some of the dispersal of nets. Over 2,000 nets were funded by our donors and were delivered to families, dormitories and to community members of our various projects. We thank our administrators Susan & Esther for their guidance in the choice of communities in need and in organizing the logistics of the deliveries.

Joshua's Second Well 2015

There was great excitement at SFA and in Kenya when young Joshua and his friends raised the funds to provide another well to a community in Kenya. The well was installed at a community medical dispensary in Chevoso. It is now providing clean accessible water for the first time to the staff and patients at the dispensary. They formerly relied on unsafe water hauled from a river. In addition the well supplies the neighbouring primary school and surrounding families. A total of approx. 3,000 people now have a reliable, clean water source and better health.

Nutrition Projects 2015

The very first project ever funded by SFA in its infancy was in 2006. It was a small feeding program for orphans. It was the first of many nutrition programs of various types and durations. Over the years SFA has fed thousands of Kenyan children. The Feeding Programs included regular ongoing community support, supplemental food programs and emergency food funding interventions. During the Great Famine in east Africa in 2011, SFA fed over 1,000 children and saved many lives as a result.

For the last several years SFA has funded three communities with feeding programs. These communities are Chevoso, Shamberere and Shitochi. We have been working with them closely throughout 2015 to research and implement a sustainable project for each. Through- out 2015 we have carried on with the feeding support.

With the expert research and guidance of our administrator Susan and her assistant Esther we have begun to implement 3 new self- sustaining projects in 2015. The community of Shamberere received funding in 2015 to start a **Firewood Project**. Chevoso embarked on a Paraffin Project which will be expanded to include a **Posho Mill** in 2016. Shitochi has developed a **Goat Project** which will raise income with the breeding and selling of goats and milk.

The members of the **Maisha Mapya Cow Project** are thriving and taking great pride in their project and their new livelihood. To learn more please read our newsletter update on them on our website in the Summer/Fall 2015 edition.

SFA is a totally volunteer- based charity and could not do the tremendous work being undertaken without the support and generosity of so many good people. These projects are the work of their hands. In a world which is constantly bombarding us with bad news, we have hope in the future because we meet these generous and caring volunteers and supporters on a daily basis. It is an honour and a privilege to be part of this grass roots effort. We **can** change the future for many, one person, one community at a time. Thank you on behalf of all our members for sharing this journey through 2015 and on into 2016!

Darlene Anderson

President, Suitcases for Africa