

Suitcases for Africa Annual Report 2014

The year 2014 brought with it some great new projects and the completion of some projects that we are very proud of. We hope they will have long term benefits to the communities.

Sustainability Projects

SFA is committed to funding more and more sustainability projects which will take these communities into the future. The project which has thrilled us beyond our expectations in was the Banana Plantation Project which was initiated in the Fall of 2013 at Mwirembe St. Paul Primary School in Emalindi. We have been working in this community on many levels since 2009 as it is an extremely impoverished outlying rural area with high rates of Hiv/Aids and illness.

We have worked at the school for several years providing the basics which were sadly missing.....securing clean water access with a new well, new latrines, new classroom, books, desks, uniforms and school supplies. We have seen the improvements change the health and wellbeing of the children. Malnutrition was however still a very real issue at this school. Please see the 2013 Annual report for details on the start- up and back ground on this project. Through -out 2014 we watched the trees grow and thrive under the care of the staff, students and supervisors. Encouraged by the progress we funded an expansion of the original 100 tree project by adding another 100 trees to the plantation. The project had a bountiful first harvest in early 2015 much to the delight of the community and all involved. It provided nutritious food for the school children but will also bring in funds when the extra bananas are sold locally. This income will fund the purchase of other food staples for them such as maize and beans and allow them to have a sustainable feeding program which they will carry forward into the future. The project is also giving back to others in the local communities.

The banana trees each produce sucker plants at their base during the growing season. They are being harvested and passed on to 4 other schools which will now be setting up their own plantations as well. The school committee has identified 10 most vulnerable families and have given sucker plants to them to start themselves off on a sustainable income plan too. This project is rolling forward quickly and benefitting so many in such a short space of time.

SfA funded another sustainable project for the Maisha Mapya Group in 2012 which is still continuing to expand with the arrival of 5 more calves in 2014. Its continued success has also encouraged us to move forward in 2015 with more sustainable projects including another cow project for Emalindi.

The Educational Sponsorship Program

This program has also been a source of great joy and encouragement for the SFA team. Orphans and vulnerable Kenyan children are sponsored by Canadian donors as individuals, churches or groups. Their sponsorship allows a child to attend school who would otherwise drop out due to extreme poverty or difficult home situation. They are provided with a mandatory school uniform, all school fees and exam fees, school supplies and books and one nutritious meal a day. It is life changing. When a child first starts in this program they struggle to catch up with the academics but by the second year they are usually up and running with marks improving and improved self-esteem. In 2014 we saw great results across the various grade levels as they continued to improve and some have now entered into local high schools. They have a much brighter future. We had 53 children enrolled through 2014 with 10 more just added for the 2015 year.

In addition to these benefits mentioned above, the children have yet another safety net...they are under the watchful eyes of our two project administrators, Susan and Esther who follow them closely and monitor their progress and their home situations.

They are an endless source of encouragement and guidance for the children. In 2014 as well as in previous years they have intervened in a case where a child had to be removed for their own safety. This year after a problem was identified by Susan and Esther, our donors came in to rescue a child who was being abused, so he could be placed in a boarding school. As formally trained social workers and community healthcare workers, their compassion and caring approach has been essential in keeping the children on course in spite of the many challenges they face. We are fortunate to have them on the ground and in constant communication.

SFA Feeding Programs

SAF has been running 3 community feeding programs which supplement vulnerable families once a month with extra food staples to help stave off malnutrition in the children. These three communities of Shitochi, Chevoso and Shamberere were in their final year of food support in 2014 and the first 6 months of 2015. They are each working on the development of their own sustainable projects to be funded by SFA which will take their communities forward into the future. Emergency food deliveries were also made in 2014 to the Early Childhood Project in Shanyinya , St. Ursula School for Mentally Handicapped Children in Chamakanga and St. Joseph the Worker in Malava. At St Joseph we also funded medicine in 2014 for the children who are suffering from epilepsy, and many of whom are severely disabled. It helps to lessen their suffering as drugs are hard to come by in these special institutions.

Emalindi Orphan Hostel 2014

SFA has been working intensely over the last several years to overhaul this orphan refuge which was in terrible condition when we found them in 2011. Thankfully living conditions are now greatly improved. Please see our annual reports of 2011-13 (for the story on the complete renovation of the girl's dormitory, beds mattresses new latrines)

In 2014 SFA funded the building of two bath houses, one each for the boys and girls. Rusty tin sheet enclosures were replaced with concrete block structures with roofs. The bath houses now have private cubicles for bathing with dignity for the children. The conditions at this facility have improved greatly although the continually rising numbers of orphans does put a lot of strain on the situation.

Educational Support for Schools 2014

A number of projects to assist struggling rural schools were implemented in 2014 as follows:

Mwickhomo School for Hearing Impaired received funding for the installation of a new water tank to collect rainwater. The old tank had been rusty and leaking for several years and the staff and students were overjoyed to having clean water again. We also fund new hearing aids for approx. 12 students each year.

Itegero Primary School 2014

SfA funded the school in for 3 upgrades. New school uniforms and new desks were funded. SFA linked the sewing and carpentry work for these items to the St Ursula School's Training Program for children with special needs. The uniforms were done in the sewing program workshops and the desks were built by students in the carpentry program there. The link makes great sense to us and we hope the local schools will tap into this service more to benefit these special students as well. Itegero also received funds for 2 swing sets for the students to enjoy.

Rural schools also received new library books and team soccer uniforms which were distributed by the SFA team during their October visit to Kenya.

The Beraldo Family Medical Clinic and Resource Centre 2014

The Centre continued its great work on Outreach Programs in the Emalindi community in 2014 (for the history on the building and equipping of the Medical Centre please see our annual report for 2012) The Clinic serves a local population of 6,000 in a remote and highly impoverished area. Jigger infestation is endemic in this region and it is a painful and debilitating health concern. Whole villages can be affected with children unable to walk to school or adults unable to work and lead productive lives. The clinic has taken on this health problem with outreach visits to schools. A team of healthcare workers from the centre ensure the children are screened and then treated for the parasite. After treatment shoes are provided when possible to prevent re-infestation. In 2015 outreach clinics will be added at the Centre for whole families to be attended to as well. They will also be taught measures to control and avoid infestation in their homes. The centre has also helped in the safe delivery of babies and the screening for high blood pressure to name a few of the benefits now available to those who previously had no access to even basic medical care. SFA is grateful for the continuing funding provided by the Beraldo Family in maintaining this facility.. The Beraldo Family also initiated a project in 2014 to ship a container of medical and educational supplies to the Kakamega region. Many valuable items such as hospital beds, dental chairs, wheelchairs, bicycles for healthcare workers and medical supplies were gathered and placed in storage until the project is completed in the spring of 2015. It is expected that the container will leave in mid-April for Kenya. We thank all those in Canada who have donated for this endeavor.

SfA is proud to partner with the many generous and compassionate people who have given so freely and with such enthusiasm to make all the SFA projects and programs of 2014 possible. You brighten the lives of so many less fortunate in Kenya and you give us great hope in a time when the world is so full of bad news and unfathomable darkness. We see in these projects that good is alive and well in the hearts of the majority of mankind. Thank you. Asante Sana