

# **Suitcases for Africa Annual Report 2016**

Suitcases for Africa started the year in a spirit of thanksgiving and celebration as it marked the **Ten Year Anniversary** of the founding of the organisation in 2006. SFA was founded in memory of Dr. Ebi Kimanani Johns and began with a trip to Kenya by members of her church and community. The group wanted to visit her family, her former primary school, and her community of Itegero. The group brought library books, educational and medical supplies donated by well-wishers in Canada. It still amazes us how this event turned into a fully registered Canadian Charity over the following years. Many people responded to bring assistance to the rural area of Western Kenya over the years.

During February-March of 2016, the SFA team of Wendy Buchanan and Michele Shepard were able to visit several communities and continue to work on the previous year's Container Project. The 40 foot container of medical and educational supplies had arrived after much delay in 2015. The team had already left Kenya when final delivery was made. It was a priority of the team to finalise the distribution of much of the contents. The larger items including hospital beds, dental chairs, patient lifting equipment and many wheelchairs had already been distributed by Kakamega Medical Co-ordinator Peter Roser-Rott. Wendy and Michele set about sorting and delivering many clothes, educational supplies, library books, soccer balls (a huge delight to the children) and bicycles for healthcare workers. They also had a visit from Sr. Bernadette of the Pandipieri Clinic in Kisumu. She was given much appreciated medical supplies. In the process they visited the various 2016 projects. Some of these projects were studied and developed in 2015 but implemented and completed in 2016. Included are the following:

## **The Shamberere Firewood Project**

This project was developed by the community with input and funding by SFA. The goal was to make the group independent and able to replace the SFA Early Childhood School Feeding Program with their own program. This was to be achieved through a self-sustaining, income generating project. SFA funded the

construction of a large wooden building, tools such as a power chain saw and axe and an initial stock of wood. The group is already doing very well and business is encouraging. Local people and a nearby restaurant purchase wood from them. A trained member also goes out into the community on hire which is proving to be very lucrative. By year end the group had used funds they raised themselves to rent  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre of land to grow maize and beans for the lunch program for 60 children. They also had enough funds available to purchase new desks for the children. The donated school supplies from the container were an added bonus which delighted the children.

## **The Shitochi Goat Project**

The community of Shitochi is comprised of 22 families caring for 75 orphans/vulnerable children. SFA ran a Supplemental Feeding Program for several years to improve health and wellness. The goat project was decided upon as a workable means of going forward and helping the group to self-sufficiency. Working with the experience and expertise of our administrator Susan Nanjala and with funding from our Canadian donors, the project got underway in early 2016. The project began with the initial purchase of 11 female goats and one male goat for 11 of the 22 families. They were supported and advised by a Livestock Specialist and monitored to see if the program was working well. By early autumn the group was determined to be doing well. Several goats had delivered healthy off spring and the manure was being used for the community gardens. The second phase of the project then commenced with the purchase of 11 more female goats and one more male, for the remaining 11 families. We are very pleased with the early results. It is rewarding to see this community gain confidence and become more food secure.

## **The Chevoso Posho Mill Project**

Chevoso Group is the third self- help group which was funded by SFA for a Supplemental Feeding Program for several years. The community also received

funding for a community well at a local medical dispensary which was completed in 2015. The well enhanced the health of the community, medical clinic patients and staff and the school nearby. It was decided that an income generating project for the community was necessary for them to become self-sufficient in taking over the feeding program. A Paraffin Project was funded in 2015. A brick structure was built and tools and start up stock were provided for the sale of paraffin. However the project was not bringing in enough funds to support their needs. It was determined that the structure would be more productive with a second commodity to be sold. After consultations with the community and SFA administrators, it was decided that the purchase of a Posho Mill machine could be installed for grinding maize. The Mill was completed and opened for business on October 28, 2016. It was an exciting event and the first customers were soon arriving. Often it is children who spread the word far and wide and they are the ones who actually bring the maize to the mill to be ground. There was great excitement and joy during the opening day event which helped it get off to a great start.

## **The Emalindi Cow Project**

We were very pleased to also complete the Emalindi Cow Project in 2016. The project has been developing for three years to help provide a sustainable source of milk for the nutritional needs of the local children. It is also a source of income with the sale of surplus milk. The first cow we purchased when the project began has since had a healthy calf. The new cow purchased in the autumn of 2016 has also recently delivered a healthy calf. The large barn funded by SFA at the start of the project is well on its way to occupancy. We trust it will make a difference in this community.

## **The Educational Sponsorship Program 2016**

We at SFA believe The Educational Sponsorship Program is one of our best initiatives. This program is having far reaching benefits for the children involved and their families. In 2016 we had over 60 children sponsored at both primary

and high school levels. Two of the original students sponsored are now on their way to graduating from high school in 2017. This far exceeds our original goal of having them complete primary school. We have watched the children getting healthier with a funded school lunch each day and becoming stronger academically. We plan to focus more funding towards our educational goals in 2017. With that plan in mind SFA started a **Special Educational Fund** in 2016. We realised from experience that from time to time unexpected emergencies may crop up that may endanger a sponsored child or cause him/her to be forced to drop out of school. In such cases this source of extra funds may allow the child (for example) to be transferred to a boarding school. This funding goes beyond what the sponsor would fund. Sometimes a family in a temporary crisis needs a bit of help to keep the child the freedom to continue to attend school instead of dropping out to work. Over the last two years we have had 5 such emergencies. The family situations are improving with the extra support. The Special Education Fund will also give us extra funds to award a partial scholarship to an outstanding student in need, to aim for higher education. It would not cover all expenses but would make it more feasible for them to attend. We know this will make their futures more secure. These students are bright and motivated to be in school and sometimes they need that extra help that our donors are happy to provide through this emergency fund.

In closing SFA would like to thank all the supporters who have brought so much assistance to those we have served over the last 10 years of our existence. We could never have imagined all that has been accomplished working together during that time. We look forward to the coming year and any challenges that may arise. 2017 will be an election year in Kenya which can be unpredictable. It may add more strain to the vulnerable people we work with, but we know we have a strong base of supporters to travel with us on the next year of the journey and together we will all do the best we can.

Asante Sana,

Darlene Anderson, President Suitcases for Africa.

