

## Suitcases for Africa Annual Report 2023

It was with relief and happiness that we greeted 2023 seeing that normality was being slowly restored to our work both in Canada and Kenya after the trials and turmoil of covid 19. The world was gradually becoming more predictable and so was our fundraising ability and our projected planning and budget. Our team in both countries was thankfully intact and functioning. There was still some fallout to contend with and the news that some projects were impacted adversely. There was also a tragedy in 2023 that was heartbreaking and that reminded us once again of the added hardships that can threaten our SFA children and their families.

The sad news of this tragedy came to us from our administrator Susan in early spring 2023. One of our most successful **sponsored students**, Walter, was working at university in his final year of a teaching degree. He was enjoying his student teaching stage at Mukumu High School for girls when news came that his father was killed in a mine collapse. Workers tried to dig him free but he did not survive. The family had been struggling when Walter was first brought into the educational sponsorship program with SFA when he was 12 years old. The whole family worked in the mine for a wage of only \$2 a day each. All 5 children were working there. Life was difficult despite their hard work and Walter wanted very much to go to school. Sponsorship has been a huge success for Walter who worked hard and was very disciplined at his studies. Following the shock of such enormous loss Walter had to drop out of university to work again in the mine to support his family. We are so blessed to have amazing supporters who rallied around to help us set up a plan to assist the family for a few months so Walter could return to his studies and complete his last year. He will be in a much better position as a teacher to take over the care of the family once he graduates. SFA also enrolled his 3 younger sisters in our educational sponsorship program which also helped the situation. They will all receive school fees & supplies, exam fees as well as a school uniform, sanitary supplies and one meal a day supplied at school. All of this meant Walter could return to complete his program too. Our friends and supporters really saved this hardworking family once again. Our thanks to them are profound.

Another past SFA funded several years ago was a Goat Project which helped women provide a source of income for their families by selling the milk and raising kid goats for sale.

The challenges of recent economic hardship over covid and the lack of income resulted in goats being sold to feed their families in some of the cases. Only 3 have remained functioning.

Two cows from our **Cow Project** also died of a contagious disease outbreak that had affected them.

At our **Posho Mill Project** there were many challenges faced as the grinding machine kept breaking down with long wait times for repairs caused by covid. The group persevered and managed to sustain the project. Due to the challenges the group has not had the benefits expected yet but they are encouraged to now be functioning well again at the end of 2023. They group decided to use the proceeds raised to assist 5 needy children in primary school with school uniforms and school supplies. Replenishing worn out items is their greatest challenge.

All 3 recent Wells installed were still functioning at the end of the year. There were challenges due to extreme drought in the region so water levels dropped.

1. **Shamoni Well** was dug deeper and now has adequate water levels despite the prevailing drought and it is still serving their needs.

2. **Indulusia Well** has reduced water flow due to drought but also still providing water.

3. **Chevoso Well** had broken down but has now been repaired by the community and is also functioning once again.

Despite the difficulties of climate, nature and events beyond their control we applaud the great efforts put into the challenges of their everyday lives. We have been a witness to much over the years and we remain committed to assisting as much as our resources allow. We are confident in the hope for better days ahead.

Our **Educational Sponsorship Program** is a great encouragement to us. Nine students have graduated from their colleges and technical trade schools recently. Six of these students are generating their own income. One student has completed her program and is now enrolled in upgrading with further studies. Two are still searching for placements. Many have graduated from High School in recent years.

Some former students have remained connected by forming a social media group. This group have returned in past years to encourage the younger students still enrolled. Three new students were entered into the program in 2023. We thank all of the amazing sponsors who made this a possibility and encouraged their efforts.

And now some really exciting news to close this 2023 report. SFA is excited to say that after the recent years of covid restrictions and recovery our team is finally heading back to Kenya once again! The cancelation of this annual event has been felt keenly both here in Canada and in the Kenyan communities. Both sides have missed the joy and celebration of being together at the projects. Sharing these events in person is a big part of the bonding experiences of our two cultures and our work efforts. Adding to the excitement awaiting in early 2024 Joshua and his mother will be making their first trip over to see the wells he has raised funds for over these last 13 years. Joshua started raising funds for a well when he was only 5 years old! He has funded 3 wells to date which is quite astounding! As you can imagine there is much excitement in those communities to finally meet this young man who made it happen. There will be some celebrating for certain and possible scouting for a new 4<sup>th</sup> well site to come as he continues to raise funds. We will keep you posted on these happy events so stay tuned via our newsletters, website and facebook page. Many thanks from all of us at SFA.

**THE JOURNEY TOGETHER CONTINUES!**

Darlene Anderson, President,  
Wendy Buchanan, Treasurer  
Suitcases for Africa