

November 26, 2010

Dear Friends,

On this Thanksgiving weekend we are profoundly aware of the many things for which we are grateful. Construction of St. Francis Xavier Secondary School for Girls (SFG) is complete, the first class of 17 girls has graduated, and the school continues to grow and to prosper. None of that would have happened without the generous support of our donors. You! Not only do we at Kenya Help thank you, but more importantly, the students, their families and the entire staff of SFG, as well as all the workers who have been kept employed for 5 years, are most grateful.



Form 4 graduates, with Principal Jecinta Nduta (left) and Deputy Principal Peter Muigi (right)

On November 13, 2010 SFG held an American-style graduation ceremony, one of the first-ever in Kenya. In most schools, students complete their KCSE, the end-of-4-years exam taken by every Kenyan high school student, and then quietly leave, having no event to mark the occasion. For many it is their last connection to school. We wanted this to be different and special, as we see our school as different and special. Although they didn't have caps and gowns, there were speeches, certificates, songs, dancing, joy and tears.

We are confident that some of our girls will have achieved a sufficiently high score on the KCSE to be called to the university. Others will go on for further schooling in colleges. Until the results are announced we can't tell much about their future. We do know that many of them will be unable to pay for further schooling. We are hoping we can support at least two. Some of these girls are orphans or half-orphans. Without scholarship support from Kenya Help they would not have attended high school and without further support they will be unable to pursue their life goals---to be doctors, dentists, lawyers, pilots, engineers, designers.

In 2010 Margo McAuliffe spent her 6th summer in Naivasha, accompanied by Portland teen, Victoria Bohlin, who attended SFG for 2 weeks. She's shown below with Theresia, her long-time pen pal (one of our graduates). Kenya Help board member Anita Dippery visited for 3 weeks, along with Anita's 16-year old grandson, Riley Murtaugh and a young friend, Christina Robinson. They spent many hours visiting classes and talking to students and staff, at both SFG and Archbishop Ndingi, the parish high school for boys. For Anita and the others it was a first time experience---"life changing," according to Riley.



Anita tells us, "I was so amazed at the wonder of the school, the spirit of the girls, the dedication of the teachers, and their appreciation for all the people who have donated their time, money and interest to make this school such a success story. I will never forget this visit."

The school construction is complete---that is, all the buildings are complete---8 classrooms, 2 science labs, computer lab, teacher offices and workroom, library, infirmary, dining/multipurpose room, kitchen, 2 dorms (capacity 400), housing for 6 staff, barn with 2 cows, basketball and volleyball court, soccer field/pasture.



St Francis Xavier Secondary School for Girls, begun June 2006. This photo was taken November 2010.

However we have 2 projects: (1) A solar/wind system to generate electricity. Energy costs are rising rapidly in Kenya, so becoming independent is vital. (2) A borehole (like a well) to supplement the rainwater we harvest from the roofs of all the buildings and store in an underground cistern. With a future capacity of 320 girls, our electricity and water needs will be great. [Note: the water tower in the foreground belongs to the convent next to the school. We hope to have our own someday.]

Kenya Help also supports:

- Scholarships for 22 girls at SFG and 22 boys at Archbishop Ndingi;
- Four students in college or university;
- *Mji Wa Neema*, children's home---clothes, shoes, school fees for high school students;
- St. Francis Xavier parish social work, providing school uniforms, food and medical support for the poorest of the poor.

With gratitude for your continuing support,

Margo

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