

2018 Fall Newsletter

Supporting women and youth in Kenya

P. O. Box 516
Menlo Park, CA 94026

November 2018

What's new in Kenya this year?

Alison Staab reports on back-to-back August reunions held in Naivasha: one for recipients of Empower the World (ETW) scholarships, the other Mji Wa Neema Children's Home.

The **ETW reunion** took place on Saturday, August 11 at Archbishop Ndingi Secondary School where 55 current and former scholarship recipients gathered. Roughly 200 students have received scholarships. Margo gave the introductory



A discussion group at the ETW reunion.

remarks and all present introduced themselves, telling what they're doing now. The beneficiaries then broke into four groups to discuss how ETW was helpful for them, how ETW can be more helpful for future beneficiaries, and, for those still in school, to brainstorm about what would be helpful for them--academically, socially, and materially. We also asked the beneficiaries to consider how they could contribute to future scholarship

recipients--financially, academically, and when they are ready to move into the workplace. After lunch, the student leaders of each group reported the highlights from their discussion groups. Valuable feedback included:

- 1) Students need a positive peer group with which to associate.
- 2) Make the ETW website interactive so students engage in discussions and post useful information.
- 3) ETW is not well-known in the larger community—advertising its services would get the word out.
- 4) ETW provides valuable mentoring and advice to those who do not have parents.

Contact information was collected from those who attended and a database generated to facilitate communication among the beneficiaries.

The following day, most who have lived at Mji Wa Neema returned to reconnect with each other and share a meal. A sheep was slaughtered by the older boys early in the morning and roasted over a fire, while the girls fixed salad, fruit, ugali, and chapattis in the kitchen. As most have now finished high school and are either away at college or working in another

town, they had not seen each other for a while. There was much catching up and taking photographs with their mobile phones. The reunion is something they look forward to each year!

Summer Tuitioning

Secondary schools in Kenya break for the month of August, before the students begin the 3rd term culminating in the KCSE, which covers 4 years of high school instruction.

During the break, free math tutoring was offered to high school kids in Naivasha for 2 weeks. The Catholic parish generously donated their facilities where Margo, Alison, two math teachers from St. Francis Girls' and two friends (one a former resident of Mji Wa Neema who is now studying to be a math/science teacher in college) explained concepts and drilled students on sample problems for three hours each day.

Although the classes were voluntary, they were well-attended, especially by Form 4 students hoping to score well on the KCSE. #



Form 2 (10th grade) students pondering a math problem.

What is ETW?

In 2011, when we learned that Fr. Kiriti was being transferred from the Naivasha parish to another--a routine event in a priest's ministry--we knew we needed a transparent and safe way to ensure all our funds would be used as intended.

We asked him to establish a Kenyan foundation to receive our funds. That foundation was named Empower The World, hence ETW. Our requirements were (1) It be headed by Fr. Kiriti, whom we know to be a person of integrity and who would provide a continuity of effort. (2) It would hire a social worker (only paid person in the entire program) who would interview scholarship candidates and parents, vet their information and submit a list to the ETW board for selection. (3) The board members and the social worker would follow the progress of the students, providing mentoring, advice and encouragement. (4) The social worker would keep a contact list of all our recipients and organize an annual meeting (reunion) to hear their stories and document their successes as well as encourage them to pay back by paying it forward—that is, contribute to ETW.

Our current social worker is Hillary Agisa, who is doing a wonderful job for us.

--Margo McAuliffe



Newest KH Board Member:

Tom Gibboney

Until I met Margo a couple of years ago I had no idea an organization like Kenya Help existed. But you can't know Margo without hearing about her



incredible project in Kenya where, after retiring from teaching at Menlo-Atherton High School for 20 years, she got inspired by Father Kiriti and embarked on a quest to build a school for girls who had no opportunity to obtain an education. For me the story is inspirational, enough that I quickly accepted her request that I join the Kenya Help board of directors. As a longtime newspaper editor, publisher and writer in Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Mountain View, I hope to contribute to keeping Kenya Help thriving and healthy. I have a lot of catching up to do, as most board members have served for many years, some from days when Kenya Help made its first foray into Kenya. I look forward to working with Margo and my fellow board members to continue this incredible journey.

Donate easily to Kenya Help:

Sign up at smile.amazon.com, and choose Kenya Help as your donee each time you make a purchase. As long as you go through smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates .5% of your purchase to KH, without adding to your cost.

If you are 70 1/2, look into donating your RMD to a charity. You don't pay tax on that money--ever, and it reduces your end-of-the-year amount, so reduces your RMD for next year. Call your IRA provider and ask about this tax savings.

We are set up to receive donations through Pay Pal Giving Fund: 1) Go to the secure Pay Pal Giving Fund Website: <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/hub>; 2) Enter "Kenya Help" in the space titled "Search for any charity name or keyword"; and 3) When the Kenya Help name appears, click the blue "Donate" button on the right.

College education in Kenya—some factoids:

"Regular Admission" to college requires a C+ score or higher on the KSCE exam (the comprehensive multi-subject final exam in November that all Form 4 students take). Not all students who score C+ will be admitted—a score of B is safer. The government pays more than half the cost for students in the regular admission; students take loans to help pay for the rest. All ETW recipients who get the regular admission take it--managing somehow to raise their share of the money. However, it is challenging when they first start college because they must present KSH 40,000 (\$400) up front at the start. Parents will conduct a fundraiser to raise this amount, or take a loan.

Students who are not accepted into the Regular Admission can apply for "Parallel Admission". This usually requires a C+ or above on the KCSE for admission to a 4-year degree program, or a D+ or above for a certificate program (up to 2 years study) or diploma program (3 years). One can do a certificate or diploma program and go on to study for a degree afterwards--it will then take 2 more years to complete the degree. Government loans are available for students who enter on the parallel admission as well as the regular.

There are two sources of loans. Government loans are interest free, and are automatically available to students in the regular admission. Non-government loans charge between 13 - 20% interest, payable starting when the student finishes school and starts to work.

—Alison Staab

Greeting from Sr. Irene Loina:

Peace be with you dear friends, thank you so much for your support.

Our 2018 ARP (Alternative Rites of Passage) began with a meeting of mobilizers on 30 October to plan all the program activities. This was to create awareness among the community members of Kositei in East Pokot where the program for girls will take place in December. This awareness involves both men (Elders) and women, who will have separate meeting places. Various people talk about the importance of ARP and incorporate the community members in advocacy against FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). The program with the girls will begin on 2 December where an estimated 200 girls will gather together and be taken through the initiation rite without undergoing the "cut" process.

On 5th of the same month, while the girls are still under instruction, the young men will have their training also on the same issue and be made aware of the process the girls are undergoing and how they will be prepared to be responsible and reasonable women in the society. This will make the young men consider these girls eligible for marriage even though they will not have undergone the "Cut".

Girls will be confined in a totally enclosed environment, not leaving the compound, with women who will be caring for them up to the great day when the whole community will celebrate their victorious "passing out" ceremony. This will be officiated by Fr. Kiriti and attended by many other people. How we wish you could join us!

Thank you for being with us through your support financially and moral support. Thank you on behalf of these girls.

With love and care,

Sr. Irene Loina



The story of Leah Wambui:

By Hillary Agisa, ETW's Social Worker

Leah completed her high school in 2017. She was under the sponsorship of Empower the World for the four years in high school. Leah is a very hard working, focused girl, determined to be the change that she desires. If I told Leah's story, it wouldn't be as good as if she did it herself. Here below, I present Leah's story, which she wrote and gave me to type for her; she calls it "my true story".

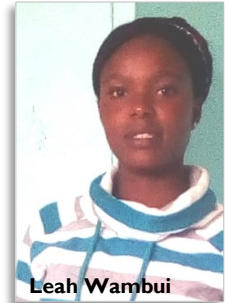
"My name is Leah Wambui Gachugi, I live in Mungu village. I was born in 1997 at Naivasha District Hospital in a family of seven children. I am the fifth born in our family.

When I was five years old, I was taken to Munyu nursery school where I studied for a period of two years. In 2004, I was taken to Munyu primary school where I spent eight years studying for Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). During this time, I would be sent home for school fees most of the time. My parents would not be able raise the small amount of fees that we were required to pay at school and this meant that I spent a lot of time at home before I would go back to school.

I did KCPE for the first attempt in 2011 and managed to score only 197 marks out of the possible 500. This actually shocked me, because I believed I was better than the 197 marks. This was way below average. Despite the low marks, one of the local high schools (Munyu secondary school) sent me an admission letter to join Form One in 2012. I did not manage to join Form One in that school because my parents were not able to raise school fees and other related expenses for me to join high school. "What next?" was the question that rang in my mind for several days. I later joined my parents working at other peoples' land to earn us a living. My parents and I worked as casual laborers for several months until I decided to go back to primary school and repeat from class seven. My parents consented to my idea of going to repeat in class seven but again, I remember very vividly that they only had Kes500 to cater for school fees. I was bought a school uniform by a neighbor of good will.

Finally, I was in school again, this time repeating class seven. The thought of repeating primary school could not let me slumber. The school was about 5km away from home and I would walk to and from school every day. I could read at home up to 10:30PM and would wake up as early as 3:00 in the morning to read and to prepare myself for school. At times, if I felt sleepy before I could finish what I was reading, I could place my feet in a cold water basin to avoid sleep.

I did the second attempt of KCPE and this time round, I managed 295 marks out of 500. After the KCPE results were released, I was given a scholarship form by Mr. Andrew Muigai to feel for a possibility of being sponsored. Mr. Muigai was my Swahili teacher and also a member of Empower the World Foundation. After a few weeks, I was told that my application was successful and I needed to go for an interview to join Form One at St. Francis Xavier. I was overjoyed for this great opportunity awarded by Empower the World Foundation. This meant everything for me... I was given hope, but again, my parents didn't have money to purchase the requirements for a boarding school. Nonetheless, through the help of neighbors and some relatives, I managed to get the requirements and was enrolled at St. Francis Xavier Form One in 2014.



While in Form One, third term, my father was involved in a tragic road accident that resulted in him losing his left arm. I was downtrodden by this reality. He was the one who used to get me money for the shopping of small personal items that I could use throughout the term at school. I didn't give up. In school, there existed a group of students called 'sister to sister'. This group was organized to help those who would not have enough personal items. They could share what they did not need with me so that I could survive through the term.

While at St. Francis, I worked really for many reasons but most importantly not to let ETW down and to acquire the grade that will lead to an admission into university. The school fees payment was a thing of the past, so I couldn't worry at all about being sent home because of fees that have not paid because ETW was committed to paying it on time. I finally scored a mean grade of B- (minus) of 57 points. Even though the financial situation at home hasn't changed, I believe that I shall join university.

I would I have not been able to narrate my story were it not for Empower the World. This foundation found me when I was in absolute need. I can't thank them enough. It was my dream come true. Many people out there are in need of such opportunities; it isn't that I was the best of all but because I was lucky. I look forward to a day when I too shall be able to give a similar opportunity to a needy kid out there!"

Leah asked me to type this story and send it to all those people who were involved in one way or another in raising money for her high school fees. She shall be joining university in September 2018. She looks forward to it. #



Supporting women and youth in Kenya

Kenya Help Board of Directors

Flora Sullivan, President
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Members:

Njeri (Jane) Albrecht.
Tom Gibboney
Rev. Daniel Kiriti
Judy Murphy
Peter Ojany
Mary Anne Rodgers
Alison Staab



Margo McAuliffe, Executive Director

See Margo's past blogs at www.kenyahelp.us. To receive posts of the 2018 blogs (beginning in June), email to deepashiva@gmail.com.

Phone: 650-322-0821
margo@kenyahelp.us

Fr. Kiriti's October visit:

It is now 12 years since we started Kenya Help. Looking back I can only appreciate how much we have been able to do.



Fr. Daniel Kiriti

All has happened because of our faithfulness to education of needy children and the commitment of our donors who have stood with us all this time. May you be blessed abundantly.

Some of the things we have done are worth mentioning. Over 200 hundred kids have gone through our hands. We have offered them either high school, college or University education. Currently we have 40 kids in high school and 21 kids in college or university. We thank God for his presence in all of us.

Our mission is to plant the seed in all our children of giving back. Slowly this is happening. In the month of September, they raised \$60. Credit goes to Mithlet Alivitsa who has been able to mobilize the other working recipients of scholarship. It's good to mention here that Mithlet is also taking care of her nephew and niece in high school.

—Fr. Daniel Kiriti

Friends for Kenya Help:



Carol Clazie

I proposed to 10 women friends that we support a girl in Kenya to go to high school. She would be a poor girl from a family

that could not afford the tuition to send her to school. It has been a very satisfying experience for all of us. Kenya Help gives me the name of a girl who wants to come to the school or who is already enrolled. A highlight for me was when my husband and I were able to travel to the school in Naivasha, Kenya and meet Jacqueline who was one of the first girls supported by the 10 women. The group of 10 has supported a second girl and I look forward to supporting more in the future.

—Carol Clazie, Menlo Park

Douglas Gathitu's story:

Douglas is from Karima Village in Naivasha, the first of three children born to a single mom, who is a farmer. In 2009, when Douglas was in Class 8, Margo and Fr. Kiriti came to Karima Jr. Academy to speak to the first group of students in that school who were going to take the KCPE exam; they promised to pay the school fees for the student in that school who scored highest on the test. Douglas scored 342 marks, and so came to Archbishop Ndingi. Studying Botany and Zoology at Nairobi University, he graduates this year (2018) in October. He's hoping to get an attachment (internship) at the Nairobi National Museum for a few months, and would eventually like to work there permanently. He's particularly interested in botany and entomology (insects). Later in life, he'd like to expand into politics, and work on tackling corruption and assuring that social services (health coverage, education, transportation) are available to all citizens.

—Alison Staab

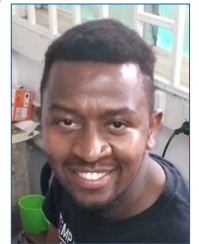
In his own words:

As I write to you my heart is full of joy and my eyes are half-tearing and my emotions are running high. I have completed my four years in the University undertaking Bachelor of Science in Botany and Zoology. It has been four long years full of ups and downs, but God has always been there for me.

In a very special way I want thank you, Empower the World Family, for making this possible by paying my

school fees since I joined Archbishop Ndingi Secondary School in January 2010. When I joined the University of Nairobi in September 2014, you went on with kindness and paid my university tuition fee for 4 years.

A big THANK YOU to Miss Margo and Fr. Kiriti. You are my miracle and a blessing in my life and to the entire family. May God bless you abundantly. ASANTE!!



Douglas Gathitu

To the entire (Kenya Help) board, thank you for making it possible for us to stay in school without worrying about the school fees. God bless you for your time and dedication.

Thank you, Mr. Hillary, for all the work you do for us, always being there for each and every one.

As I move to the next step, I will continue working hard always to give back to society. I pray and hope for the best as I look to do my masters and doctorate in either environment or entomology in the near future. --Douglas



Cyrus

Great news! Cyrus Kariuki, the oldest of the 35 residents of Mji Wa Neema, has completed five years of medical school in pharmacy. To Margo, he says: "I know you have been waiting to hear this and am glad that I have not let you down this time. My graduation will be on the 21st December and I know you will be with me in spirit... I am sure I am going to change the life of other people too. A million thanks to you for believing in me."