

2025 Fall Newsletter

Supporting women and youth in Kenya

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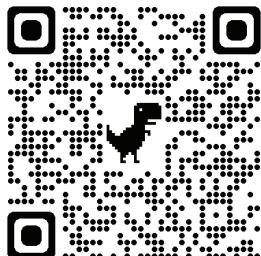
Father Kiriti

Back in the 1999 as I was going back home from the US to Kenya, a Jesuit priest and a friend asked me, "Kiriti, what can we do for you?" Right away I knew that was not a simple question. The following day I called him and told him I will have answer for him when I get home.

Three years later I wrote my friend an email telling him I have many needy children in the town I'm serving as a priest. That was the birth of Empower the World, although it didn't become a Kenyan registered foundation until I left the Naivasha parish in 2012. At that time ETW became the sister foundation to Kenya Help in the US. They raised funds for our work. We did the work.

To this day I do cherish my friend who is now late due to Covid19. The insight of seeing the question so simple is also cherished. Many young people have benefitted from the NGO and will still benefit. I would hope the organization will live beyond me especially now when half of the board members are beneficiaries of the project.

Please Donate



Calestor Kizito

I was born and raised in Naivasha in a humble and happy family of 8 siblings. Today I am writing to share my journey with Empower the World. From a young age I loved art and music, and I used art as form of distraction as well as comfort from the hustle and bustle of growing up and staying awake in long afternoon classes, where I sketched with my pencil. I did not know that art would be what opens a door for me to meet incredible people who, to date, shape my story.

Fast forward, on one occasion at St. Francis Xavier church parish, we had a youth diocese drama festival, and I painted the backdrop that caught



attention of a few individuals who saw the potential of what I can do. In the same Parish as a member of youth, is where I interacted a

continued on page 5

The Future of Kenya Help

by Margo McAuliffe



As I've written in the past, Kenya Help, as an organization has pared down significantly. Since my move to a retirement community in San Diego, I've been unable to do any fund-raising events, other than giving a talk in this community. Yet the need in Kenya is as strong as ever. As I approach my 90th birthday, I am even more aware of my own mortality and making plans for the continuation of this work. At this point, it isn't clear to me who might take over, but I am committed to keeping this work going.

The real work is done in Kenya, where Father Kiriti directs Empower the World (ETW), our sister foundation, based in Naivasha. From Kenya Help, ETW receives your donations, chooses the students to be sponsored, follows up with each one, offering mentoring where needed.

Kenya Help and Empower the World work hand in hand to see that the funds we raise in the US are used to best advantage in Kenya. As you will see in Fr. Kiriti's article, he is committed to keeping the scholarship program going, so if you are concerned that your donations might go astray, I say, "Not to worry". He will keep those kids in school.

When You Educate a Girl: Bernadine's Story of Hope and Resilience

By Hillary Agisa



Meet Bernadine Chepogisho Gilbert, a resilient young woman from the rural, traditional Pokot community of Kenya. The sixth born in a family of nine, Bernadine's childhood was marked by deep loss. When her father, the family's sole breadwinner, passed away, everything changed. Overnight, her mother, a housewife, was left to carry the heavy responsibility of raising nine children alone, with few resources to provide for their basic needs.

In many Pokot communities, the death of a breadwinner forces children into early responsibilities: fetching water, herding animals, or dropping out of school to survive. For girls, the risks cut even deeper, forced early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM).

Growing up in this environment, Bernadine's education was far from guaranteed. "My education was affected greatly," she recalls. "I often struggled with lack of school fees, constant threats from banditry, and the reality of girl-child circumcision. At times, it felt almost impossible to continue with school."

Yet, her story did not end there. When Fr. Daniel Kiriti was sent as a missionary priest to one of the most interior parts of East Pokot, he encountered Bernadine at a crossroads in her life. Having completed her primary education, she was unsure of what lay ahead, and with no means to continue her schooling. It was in that moment of uncertainty that her path shifted. Through Empower the World Foundation, funded by Kenya Help, Bernadine received a scholarship that changed the course of her life. Fr. Kiriti became more than just a benefactor; he stepped into her life as a parent figure who believed in her potential. He made sure she could remain in school through secondary education and later pursue college studies. For Bernadine, this opportunity was not just about sitting in a classroom, it was about rewriting her destiny. While many of her peers were forced into early marriages, teenage motherhood, or a lifetime of poverty, Bernadine discovered the transformative power of education.

A girl in school has a voice. She has choices. She has a future," Bernadine reflects. "Without education, many of my age-mates were married off as teenagers or became mothers before they were ready. For me, school opened the door to a career I once thought was impossible.

Determined to follow her passion, Bernadine pursued Electrical Engineering, a field where women are few and challenges are many. She endured skepticism, harsh words, and stereotypes for daring to step into a male-dominated profession. But she never gave up.

Today, she proudly stands as Engineer Bernadine, with over six years of experience in the electrical field, serving as a Team Leader at Power Control Limited Company. Her journey is living proof of what can happen when a girl is given the chance to learn. But Bernadine's story is not just her triumph, it is a call to action. Across marginalized communities, countless girls like her are still waiting for a chance. Poverty, harmful traditions, and insecurity continue to dim their dreams. But with the support of donors and organizations committed to girl-child education, those dreams can be reignited. Every scholarship is more than just school fees, it is freedom from early marriage, protection from exploitation, and a pathway to dignity and independence. Today, Bernadine is not only an engineer but also a symbol of resilience and hope. Her life reminds us that when you educate a girl, you change a family, a community, and an entire generation.

David Luther



I missed nearly the whole second term of my form 1 year at Archbishop Ndingi Secondary School, because of lack of school fees. The previous term wasn't much different as I was at home for a good number of days for the same reason - lack of school fees.

Raised by a single parent, my momma didn't have funds to keep me in school. On multiple occasions, she visited a government office to apply for a bursary. We did get the bursary on several occasions, but the allocation wasn't enough to keep me in school.

Momma always remembers her friend who told her, God will make a way. It wasn't long after when Madam Regina, Ndingi math teacher, introduced us to Margo, after she had graciously told her our story. The rest, as they say is history. I never missed another school day because of lack of fees.

For a boy who loved schooling and was determined to make it in life, I was disheartened to be at home while friends were in school studying. That second term was particularly tough as I was at home for approximately 3 months. It was

technically over for me. I remember receiving something like a standing ovation from classmates when I came back, a few days to the end of term examinations (which I aced despite it all). I was lost but now I'm found - I guess that was their reasoning.

During my time at Ndingi (2006-2009), in our month-long August holidays, I attended Margo's free mathematics tuitioning which sharpened my math skills a great deal. She shared about her life and her passion for teaching. I grew up knowing she was paying for my fees and it's only later that I came to know about Kenya Help/Empower the World.

I've had a great experience with Kenya Help/Empower the World Foundation through my formative years at High School to my time at The University of Nairobi. Every time I think of the impact Kenya Help/Empower the World has had in my life, I remember the well-known "Are you God's Wife" story, about a kind woman who buys socks and shoes for a cold and barefoot boy, staring at a shoe store window and praying to God for a pair of shoes. The young boy, overwhelmed with joy for the kind lady's act, asks "Are you God's wife?"

I am now happily employed using my computer science major and am supporting myself and my mother. I also donate to Empower the World, which has been kind to me, a stranger. I'm forever grateful for everything.

Calestor Kizito

continued from page 1

lot with Fr. Kiriti, then met Margo and the late Jacinta who opened a door of sponsorship for me to go to school. While doing that, I was supporting them with a few art pieces which they used for note cards, to help raise funds for building a girls school.

I joined Jomo Kenyatta University to pursue a Degree in Technology, from which I graduated in 2011 and started the second phase of my journey.

I have worked with small tech firms, main stream banks in Africa, large telecoms (Safaricom) and currently I work with Microsoft, a multinational tech company.

I owe it to the ones who believed in me under the ETW umbrella, an organization I have been serving as a non-executive board member representing the alumni and taking the responsibility to organize alumni meetups for the last 5 years.

I have learnt quite a lot working under the leadership of Fr. Kiriti, the ETW board chair and board members, and I know what it takes to steer ETW and to offer support to those who need it most to provide them access education. This year (2025) I was invited to join the main board as an executive member, and I am thrilled to continue offering time and my experience to support ETW and contribute to steering it into the future.

I am a testament of ETW, and I share my story as an inspiration and gratitude to all who have stood with me, particularly "Mary" my anonymous sponsor. I wouldn't be where I am today if it were not for you. Thank you.



Kenya Help Board of Directors

Margo McAuliffe, President
Julie Schatz, Secretary
Peter Ojany, Treasurer

Kenyan Coordinator:

Rev. Daniel Kiriti

**Kenya Help/
Empower the World**

Kenya Help is a US registered Foundation, established in 2005, receiving tax-exempt status (EIN 35-2314350) in 2007.

Empower the World (ETW) is a similar tax-exempt foundation registered in Kenya. It was established to disburse funds raised by Kenya Help, receive applications for scholarships, vet the families and choose the students to be sponsored by Kenya Help funds. They are “sister foundations.”

**National Schools/
Government Schools**

National Schools are the top schools, accepting only the best students of the country.

Government schools can vary in quality, but many are quite good.

It costs \$800-\$1000/school year to support a student. Support includes tuition, boarding, uniforms, and other fees and personal items. Private schools are mostly boarding, mostly church sponsored and of good quality.

Our Investments Are Paying Off

by Margo McAuliffe

Recently ETW elected new board members, three of whom are graduates of our program. Calistor Kizito was a bright high school graduate in Father Kiriti's parish who had no hope to further education until a donor offered to sponsor him. He graduated top of his class, with a degree in computer science. He now works for Microsoft in Nairobi. Many of you have received notecards with his whimsical drawings. He gave his drawings to us in appreciation for the gift he was given, a hand up from poverty.

I met Mithlet Alivitsa in my first free “tuitioning” class in summer 2006. After she graduated from Archbishop Ndingi, Father Kiriti hired her to run the Catholic bookstore in Naivasha. She was so efficient and organized, he asked us to find her a sponsor to attend Strathmore University in Nairobi, where she earned a degree in accounting and business studies.

Mary Kaguura is a graduate from St. Francis. I met her when I taught math classes, finding her to be quite bright. This is borne out by her success at Egerton University in Nakuru where she majored in Economics and Statistics. Her education was sponsored by Kenya Help and ETW.

All three, Mithlet, Mary and Kizito have been enthusiastic supporters of ETW and are happy to be giving back to the organization.

In addition, I met David Luther while teaching “math camp”, a free program for kids who wanted to brush up their math. He was only a Form I student but eagerly followed as I talked about topics far above his level. We sponsored him to university, where he majored in Computer Science. Now, as an employed adult, he regularly contributes to ETW.

Ways to Donate

- Send a check:
Kenya Help
PO Box 516
Menlo Park, CA 94026
- Go to website: www.kenyahelp.us
- Use our new QR xcode
- Make a provision for Kenya Help in your will
- Donate appreciated stock or mutual funds.
- And if you are over 70 1/2, one of the best (most tax-efficient) ways to donate is to do so directly from your Rollover IRA
Please contact us if you have any questions.
Email: kenyahelpdonate@gmail.com



My Journey with Empower the World Foundation

by Hillary Agisa



I joined Empower the World Foundation (ETW) in May 2016. I was particularly driven by the desire to work in an organization that, as one of my university professors used to say, “graduates the poor.” When I learned about ETW and its mission of educating boys and girls who otherwise could not afford education, I knew I wanted

to be part of that story so that I could contribute to a mission that transforms the lives of vulnerable children through education.

One of the most fulfilling experiences in my work has been seeing the transformation of young people who pass through our scholarship program. I have watched boys and girls join ETW’s scholarship program timid and uncertain about almost everything, only to graduate four years later full of confidence, joy, and hope for the future. Many of them have gone on to the universities and colleges to become doctors, nurses, engineers, accountants, and teachers. Watching the journeys of these boys and girls unfold reminds me every day that education is indeed the greatest equalizer, and it makes the words of Nelson Mandela a reality: “Education is the powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

None of this would be possible without the support of Margo and Kenya Help. Margo makes are that every donation to Kenya Help directly supports education, or our two other projects, Sr Irene Loina’s project to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation, and Fr. Kiriti’s tree seedling project.

At ETW, I work as the Project Officer, responsible for the daily running of the office. My work involves visiting schools to identify deserving students, distributing and collecting scholarship applications, and conducting home visits to verify applicants’ circumstances. I also prepare reports, oversee audits and budgets, and monitor students’ academic progress through school visits. Apart from administration, I mentor students to help them navigate challenges and to stay focused on their dreams.

Tree Seedling Project in Lare Parish

By Fr. Kiriti



Taking care of our environment is taking care of humanity, for of us all depend on mother nature. It

has been 2 ½ years since our tree nursery came into being. It has had very positive support from the people

The picture shows the preparation for the rainy season which will start in mid-March 2026. We are busy planting the seeds in small black plastic bags, where they are nurtured until planted. We estimate that we have sold about 45,000 seedlings, which seems like a lot, but this area is very large, and many more trees are needed. Also getting fertile seeds had been a problem. I am hoping to gather some acorns and redwood

cones/seeds during my next US visit. The cost of a seedling is ksh.20 (about \$.15) but we subsidize, so that farmers can buy as many plants as possible. Our people plant them to honor a loved one who has passed on, or to celebrate a birth, anniversary, or birthday. Sometimes they buy them just to increase the number of trees in our area.

Thank you to all those who have been able support the project. Others may help by sending a check to Kenya Help with “Tree Project” on the memo line.

Mithlet Alvista



When I first connected with Empower the World (ETW), I was simply looking for direction. I was a student trying to figure out her path. I had dreams but no clear way of getting there. ETW gave me that bridge. They didn't just support my education; they walked with me through moments of doubt, growth, and discovery. Never in my wildest thoughts did I imagine that one day, I would sit on the board of the same organization that once believed in me. It is a beautiful turn, and a reason for me to be very proud. Now, being a beneficiary-turned-board member feels both surreal and deeply humbling. Every time I sit at that table, I'm reminded of where I came from; of the student who once attended mentorship sessions, listened, and took notes eagerly. Today, I get to speak, to influence, and to shape ideas that could change the lives of other young people walking that same road. There is no better satisfaction than this.

What makes ETW special is that they don't just talk about empowerment and inclusion - they live it. My presence on the board is proof of that. My opinions aren't treated as tokens of representation; they genuinely matter. The team encourages me to ask questions, to suggest, and to see things from the perspective of someone who has lived the experience we're trying to improve.

This role has opened my eyes in many ways. I've learned how programs are built, how policies are shaped, and how every small decision can ripple out to impact a student's life. But perhaps the greatest lesson has been realizing that leadership doesn't start with power — it starts with perspective. It's being able to turn your own story into a source of change for others.

Sitting on the ETW board isn't just a position for me - it's a full-circle moment. It's a chance to give back, to represent, and to ensure that the next student who walks through ETW's doors feels the same warmth and belief that I once did.

This journey has been beautiful so far, and I know it's only the beginning of something even greater - for me, and for every young person Empower the World continues to uplift.

Eliud Magana



Eliud is a 10-year-old boy who was born deaf. He comes from a single-parent family. For most of his life, Eliud and his mother have lived with his grandmother. Eliud's mother is a casual laborer, who depends on menial jobs to feed her son and mother.

Despite being of school age, Eliud has not attended school. Before we met, the family of Eliud, believed that he was bewitched and needed an exorcism. This has since changed, and the family is willing to support our efforts to see that Eliud goes to school and gets the best education that there is. He has joined Ngala School for the Deaf, and he seems very excited to start his education journey.

Eliud's dream is to be a teacher someday. He hopes to help other kids like him to realize their full potential. Eliud is the first learner to be supported by ETW to join a special school.