



FRIENDS OF THE KAREN STREET CHILDREN
www.karenstreetchildren.org

Summer Newsletter 2017



For the past twenty-two years the Karen Street Children's Trust has been working to build a brighter future for impoverished and disadvantaged children from the slums surrounding the Karen suburb of Nairobi. To date we have helped 174 young people build worthwhile lives through education, training and employment opportunities, and currently we are working with 40 bright sponsored students. Each has been selected on the basis of

hardship at home and the potential to benefit from a good education. We are proud that so many have grasped the opportunity and worked hard to achieve top grades. Amongst our many alumni we have an architect, quantity surveyor, clinical officer, nurse, actuary, many accountants, environmental scientist, computer engineers, bankers, community workers, businessmen, solar engineers, caterers, electricians, carpenters, mechanics and many

others. For each of our students, these achievements are the result of many years of sponsorship and mentoring from the Karen Street Children's Trust. Their paper qualifications do not show the gain in self-esteem and complete change in life direction that they have gained, and we are proud of each one of them. None of this could have been achieved without the generous support of sponsors and donors and we thank them all.

Up and Coming Successes



CALEB

Caleb was brought to us by one of our graduates who found him living in dire circumstances with his older brother having been effectively abandoned by his single father. He is tiny for his age but a really sparky boy and we had no hesitation in taking him on. He attends a modest Secondary School where he has been consistently top of his class. He says that "Life has been full of challenges." "If it were not for you I do not know where I would be." He always comes with a delightful smile and is full of enthusiasm. There is no doubt that Caleb has a bright future.



KELLY

Kelly joined us for his last year in Primary school. His single father is deaf and crippled having worked for many years on the racecourse as a training jockey and had many falls. His primary schooling had initially been sponsored by a well-wisher but this had come to an end so we accepted him to join the programme. At the end of 2016 Kelly sat for his Primary School leaving exams and achieved an impressive 82% earning him a place in a top National Secondary School, where last term he scored a clean sweep of "A" grades except for one "B+". He has always been at or close to the top of his class. In a recent letter he said: "Any second that I get, I use it appropriately . . . and I will expand my tentacles in education". We know that Kelly is taking full advantage of the opportunities we are able to give him.



LENA

Lena was selected in January 2016 having come top in her Primary School exams and coming from a very impoverished home. Now in her second year at secondary school she has been chosen as the school Deputy President and is showing leadership potential. She said in a recent letter: "I always offer myself to help my fellow students despite their race or tribe. I really love giving back to the community because you have taught me to have a heart to help the person next to me. . . . I started a movement in our school where every student including the teachers plant trees every month and everyone is expected to bath with half a bucket of water rather than full because of the lack of water being experienced in our country"! Academically she came 2nd in class with a "B+" and wishes to study Nursing and go on to do a Masters. She is a very caring girl and a delight to help.



STEPHEN KAMAU

Stephen Kamau - given a new life
 Stephen joined us two years ago. He was selected on the basis of his extreme need as the oldest of eight children living in dire poverty. He was very shy and would barely open his mouth. When he did it was evident that his teeth were in a poor state and stained deep brown from the excessive fluoride in the local water supply. This was the main cause of his great lack of confidence. He started at a local boarding secondary school and in the holidays went to see Dr Pete Griffiths, our kind dentist who cares for our children at no charge. He described Stephen as a "walking dental disaster" but agreed to work to give him his smile. After a year of extensive work this is a photo of the new confident Stephen and his brilliant smile.
 Pete has given Stephen his life and a whole new future. We are so grateful to him for his immense kindness.



Village Life, by Lena Kashukuri.

If you visit Kenya you may be surprised to see how many villages there are. To live in a village is the best because you learn very many things like cooking, fetching firewood, watering the plants and taking animals to graze

In a village people live hand to mouth and may sleep and work without food, only water. Children may not go to school if their parents are not able to cater for the fees. But I was lucky to be raised in a village as there you really learn to live life the way it is.

You see children from other families that are

able to go to school doing their shopping and you really feel bad, but your parents and neighbours will be there to encourage you and give you advice, for in a village people care for each other and when you have a problem they will be there with open arms to help you. Children in a village share small things with each other, sing and play together. When your neighbour lacks something you are there to help him or her in any way you can. December is when good things happen. Women come together to prepare and cook meals and you can eat

meat and chapatis once in your life. People dance and sing folk songs because they are happy. When it is your birthday people will wash your clothes for you and pour water all over you which feels really good.

Every child wishes to go to school and make their future bright, but some can only graze their cows and do construction work to make money and help the family. I am the lucky one who was raised in a village but also was able to go to school and build my dreams.

How Do We Select?

This is a question we are very often asked and the one that gives us all sleepless nights.

In Kenya free education ends with Primary School where up to 50 children struggle to learn in each poorly equipped classroom. To achieve well in such an environment is exceptional. As soon as the results are out they flock to our KSC office pleading for help.

First each one is asked to write a letter saying why they need our help. Often children will bring smart letters written by a local scribe but we need to see what each actually has to say, in their own words and handwriting. We watch the confidence with which they greet us and ask them very stereotyped questions about the family situation and employment history of family members. Often these children come from single parent families with very little support. We search for those who have absolutely **no** hope of going to secondary school without us. We then ask about the home - what is it made of, stone, iron sheets or timber? What is the floor made

of, cement or earthen? How do they light the home, electricity or paraffin lamps? Where is the nearest water supply? If we have a high achieving orphan child living with a grannie, coming from a tin shack with an earthen floor we are starting to get closer to the type of child we think is ideal for our support.

What does the child eventually want to do in life? This produces some interesting replies. Recently we have had children wanting to be engineers (a big new bypass road has been built close to the village) and being a pilot is also a popular choice (but not an affordable one for us). What we are really assessing is the potential "spark" in the child. Is this a candidate who has the potential to go far? This in itself is very hard to assess for children who are often cowed by grim situations at home.

After interviewing up to forty children we then have to select around twelve to fifteen for home visits. This is to ascertain that the stories are true. We are so well known in the village that the mothers are quite wise. Last January we were taken to a dusty hovel with

a cobweb-encrusted motorbike leaning against the wall. Catherine is experienced and asked the girl where her school books were. She took down a plastic bag of books from a nail on the wall (they are usually kept under the mattress). She was then asked where were her clothes. She pulled down another plastic bag. Catherine then went to look at the simple charcoal stove in the corner and found that it had not been used for a long time. She took the mother outside and eventually the mother agreed this was not the home, but she was frightened to take us there because it was too smart and had a colour TV. Very sadly for the girl concerned this immediately precluded her from the programme, since honesty is an absolute requirement.

The hardest part is choosing those we can sponsor. With our limited funding we can only help so many. Over the years we have gained a wealth of experience in this selection process and end up with a great group of bright children who are a delight to work with and who will go far.

"I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel." Nelson Mandela



Meet Some of Our Team



Romi Grammaticas
Founder and Chairman



Rodney Sutton
UK Trustee



Dee Huth
Trustee



Elizabeth Spyropoulos
Trustee

A BIG 'THANK YOU'

We have many generous people to thank for without their support none of our work would be possible: donors, sponsors, mentors and supporters. We owe so much to all of you. We would like to make special mention of Sue Withers and Summit Recruitment. Sue offered

to help our school and college leavers with assessment, interview training and possible help with job placements. All our students have benefited from her generous gesture but Margaret Wanjiku, an Environmental Science graduate, is especially grateful since she was successfully

recruited by Pure Circle in Nakuru and is thrilled with her new job. Our ultimate goal is to educate and mentor young people and to help with the final difficult step of finding a job. Thank you Sue and her team.

The Cost of Education

Educating a student for one year in secondary school costs 95,000 Kenya shillings (UKP 750 or £62.50 a month). This includes boarding school fees, all uniform, stationery and books, holiday activities and a share of Catherine's services.

We also value any donations however small, and assistance from Kenya residents such as mentor-ship, helping students to find work experience or intern-ship placements.

Any donations are very well received and can be made through:

MyDonate.bt.com

Then search for: **Karen Street Children** (in the Donate to Charity Box). Please tell us if you are a UK tax-payer so we can claim Gift Aid.

DONATE WHILST YOU SHOP!

For our UK based supporters - you now have the option to donate to KSC whilst you shop online at all of your favourite stores. And what's more, the donation does not come out of your own pocket. It can provide us with valued donations without any cash input on your part - a Win/Win for us all

Easyfundraising.org.uk provides a FREE fundraising service where you can raise funds for KSC when you shop online with shops like M&S, John Lewis, Boots, Amazon, Tesco Direct, Sainsburys, Boden, Crew Clothing amongst many!

You can make a living by what you get, but you can make a life by what you give.

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