



Child enjoying maize



Children eating school lunch



Girls with Afripads



Home where guardian was interviewed

January 2015 Children of Bukati (COB) Newsletter

Dear Donor, thank you so much for your support of the children at the Bwalio Primary School (PS), the High School and University Students and the community development projects. The request for additional funds to ensure we fully supported the lunch program for January 2015 was met thanks to your generosity. This is the school term with the most need because the harvest in December tends to be small. We also had 3 families offer to support high school students. We now have sponsors for the 2 children in grade 10 and the girl going into grade 9. If one more family or group comes forward, we will be able to sponsor a boy to go to grade 9. The commitment for boarding school is \$900 per year for 4 years.

As I mentioned in the November 2014 newsletter, Nia King and David Borish, two University of Guelph students, lived in the Bwaliro community for 2.5 months and conducted research on the Children of Bukati Project. The overall purpose of the research was to help move the project forward. It should be noted that none of the costs of their trip came from Children of Bukati donations. The following are results from their work. David's research looked at the impact of the project. In total, 64 adults participated in the research; 32 regarding their own child at school and 32 regarding an orphan in their care. Currently 35% of the students attending the school are either orphaned or vulnerable children. Their parents died of unidentified illnesses (37%); HIV/AIDS (21%), malaria (16%) or other causes such as road accidents. Of the 32 parents interviewed for the project, 20 were caring for their own children as well as some orphaned children. Participants said the benefits of going to school were to enhance their ability to communicate, to gain future employment, to support the family and to encourage additional development projects in the community. Guardians said their child's academic performance had increased likely due to better concentration, energy, motivation, and more efficient use of time at school (the children did not have to walk home at lunch). Some guardians (25%) said their children only go to school because of the lunch program. One guardian of a 12-year-old boy said that he worked in the fields until recently but now that there is a lunch program, he is attending school.

Nia's research investigated reasons why children were absent from school. Malaria accounted for 40% of the school absences. Augustine (the principal) started a program whereby each child brought 20 KSH (23 cents) at the beginning of each school term. Then, when a child came to school with malaria, he sent them directly to the clinic with the 20 KSH required for treatment. He said that when he sent the children home, the parents or guardians kept them at home, preferring to let them recover on their own. The children missed many more days of school if they were not given treatment. Girls in grades 6 to 8 missed an average of 2 days in a two- week period, whereas boys in these grades missed only 1 day. Girls commonly miss school due to menstruation because they do not have adequate protection. One of our donors provided funding so that we could purchase Afripads – reusable, cotton menstrual pads. Nia purchased a few sets and asked three students to trial them and tell her if they worked. They gave a positive report. So, we purchased sufficient supplies for the girls at the school and community members. The project was launched at the open house. Students and community members purchased the Afripads for half their actual cost. The money will be kept in a separate account to enable the school to purchase more when the supply is diminished. Nia gave tutorials to the girls on how to properly use the pads. We hope this will increase the girls' school attendance.

David said the participants (48%) mentioned the positive environmental impact of the school project in the community. This included trees planted at the school and in the community, and improvements in soil fertility, and water availability. Most participants (70%) said the agriculture projects positively influenced the community's farming practices. Half of the participants had adopted new farming techniques (crop diversification and crop rotation) and many began raising pigs and growing tomatoes, and termite resistant bananas. Two years ago, Natalie Carter (another student) led workshops for pig farmers.

Most participants (83%) mentioned the program had a positive impact on family relations. There was less conflict and stress and confrontation over food. Others said the families were more united, happier, and stronger. There were also improved partnerships, cooperation and friendships between community members, there was less theft and enhanced overall security. A few (22%) mentioned improved community and school relations and positive business collaborations. However, many (64%) wanted more regular gatherings at the school for the community. When asked about long term sustainability of the project, 58% said they would donate food to the school to keep the lunch program going. It is clear that we must continue to encourage the involvement between the community and the school as we move towards self-sustainability. Over the next year, we will continue to build local projects to enhance the income of the school. David and Nia did encourage the school to hold an open house before they left. It gave them an opportunity to share their results. One remarkable part of the event was the discussion, led by the principal, Augustine, about the community assuming responsibility of the project in the future.

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