



Augustine & pawpaw tree



Watering plants



Kindergarten children at Bukati



Cate with Douglas

January 2013 Children of Bukati (COB) Newsletter

Dear Donor, thank you so much for your support of the children and the community development projects. I was in Kenya in the first week of February to visit each of the three primary schools; Bukati, Bwaliro and Buduma enrolled in COB projects. As we hoped, the projects have increased the enrollment of vulnerable (orphaned and destitute) children at all of the schools. For example, at Bwaliro, enrollment has increased from 600 to 941 students.

A very successful project was completed by three University of Guelph (U of G) students in 2012 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49tSbrYPbog>). The students lived and worked in the community of Lugulu (near Bwaliro Primary School) for 3 months. Natalie Carter, a PhD student, was the team leader. She ran farmer workshops on pig keeping for women, evaluated feeds given to pigs, and together with the others, facilitated the strategic plan workshop at Bukati PS. Kiera Hoekstra, a student in International Development, worked with farmer groups and enhanced the community's engagement with the school project. She interviewed families to determine whether students are bringing improved farming techniques from school back to their family farms. Natalie and Kiera worked with the students and teachers on the permaculture project and helped to organize the field day at the school. The whole community was invited to the school to learn about permaculture and the success of the Children of Bukati project. Saqib Mannan, a MSc student in human nutrition, interviewed women to determine what the students are eating at home. He will determine the limitations to the children's diets. His results will be used to modify the lunch program to ensure that the lunch provides the nutrients that are missing.

This project is an example of how we are enhancing the donors' funds to maximize the school community projects. The Project Board of Directors (PBoD) at the Bwaliro School, and Lynne Mitchell and Cate from the U of G together wrote a successful proposal that was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The PBoD said the students' work in the community was extremely helpful. They also said the Strategic Plan is their 'Way Forward', now they have a 'road map'. I thanked the committee for volunteering their time and explained that all of the Canadians working on the Children of Bukati project are volunteers too. I also explained how you, the donors, give generously. They said they were very grateful that you have such kind hearts.

In this hot, dry season, the fields are fallow. The school vegetable gardens and fields are being hoed, supplemented with manure and harrowed in preparation for the March rains. All 3 schools have bananas hanging heavy on the plants – supplementing the lunch programs. Sweet potatoes (a small, white, potato) are planted along the edges of the swales and act as ground cover between the young growing trees. These will be harvested for the lunch as soon as the rains soften the earth. At each school I heard their plans to plant millet, maize, sorghum, rice, and vegetables such as cow peas, kale, and lentils. Bwaliro is growing nappier grass that is used for zero grazing of cattle. Augustine told me that the farmers vie for the opportunity to purchase the grass. The recently repaired greenhouse at Bukati has tomatoes. Buduma's has kale. The grade four girls were watering the plants the day I arrived. Unfortunately, there was a terrible wind storm in the Bwaliro school area that demolished a local church and the original greenhouse. The new greenhouse we purchased in the fall was recently erected. The tomato plants are being started in the nursery for transplanting in 3 weeks.

Augustine, the principal at Bwaliro PS, is considered the 'guardian' of the high school students we sponsor. The high school phones Augustine when there is a problem. While I was in Kenya, Douglas, one of the students, was suffering acute pain. We took him to the hospital in Mumias (a one hour drive from Butula). He had a hernia so he was to return Monday for surgery. I told Douglas not to eat breakfast. Augustine took him back early Monday morning but he was bumped to Tuesday afternoon. When we visited, he was in a ward with 11 others, on a bare mattress with one sheet for cover. We bought him a basin, soap and toilet paper. Although he was in pain, he was hungry. He hadn't eaten since Sunday night. On Wednesday, he was ready to be discharged. Augustine said he would go to the bank on Thursday, and then return to pay the bill so Douglas could go home. While Augustine was getting the bill, Douglas changed into his school uniform, clearly anxious to leave. Luckily, I had enough cash to get him released right away. We are fortunate that Augustine takes on this responsibility.

Five of the sponsored high school students have graduated and two of the girls are now in university. Currently we are sponsoring 15 students with high academics who are either destitute or orphaned. These children would otherwise end their education at grade 8. Sylvester's grandmother wept when she heard he could go to high school. Brian, a boy entering grade 9 said "I am happy. Thank you so much. I didn't know that I would go to grade 9."

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