



Kenyan Orphan Children's Foundation Newsletter



December 2020
Covid-19 edition

Dear Friends of Mama Orphans,

As for most people all over the globe, 2020 has been a very challenging year for Mama Orphans Children's Home (MOCH) in Busia, Kenya.

In addition to the concerns regarding the spread of Covid-19 in Kenya, Busia has experienced unique disruptions due to its status as a border town. Beginning in March the border with Uganda was closed. The resulting collapse in cross-border trade had an immediate impact on the local economy, leading to serious problems with the availability of food. Furthermore, prices for the food that was available quickly increased so that funding for food which was supposed to last a month was spent within a few weeks.

Many of the shopkeepers and suppliers fell ill with covid-19 and were not able to work or worked shorter hours than previously. Furthermore, the home was required to purchase masks, gloves and additional cleaning materials in order to manage some activities in the home. All of this added to increased costs and reduced ability to purchase food during most of the year.

With the border closed, long-haul trucks began to queue at the border, with the line eventually stretching more than 100km away. When some movement across the border was allowed, all truck drivers were then required to be tested before crossing. Given the cramped conditions in which they needed to wait out their time on the border, it soon became clear that the drivers were a major source of new infections, as up to three out of ten tested positive for Covid-19 during some periods. During this period, Covid-19 cases in Busia quickly increased as did the number of deaths. By April, the Kenyan government imposed a general quarantine, which included nightly curfews and

further restrictions on commerce and other activities.

Schools were actually shut down prior to most of these other restrictions - at the end of February - and only recently reopened. With so many children and so few activities in which they could become engaged, it became very difficult to manage the children at home. The younger children managed better than the teenagers, since they were better able to play their own games and required less external stimulation.



The new sport of tire racing as developed by MOCH children

Each day the children would wake up in the morning, tidy their rooms and the compound, play with each other, eat their three meals, clean up their dishes and then go to sleep. This was their routine for months on end. Some of the teen boys would leave the compound at night, breaking curfew and risking arrest in order to find something else to do. Eventually, Monica and Betty, the home administrator decided to move the teenage boys into Mama's house at the other end of the compound, so that they could be better supervised.

Education for the younger children has now restarted in the primary school on the compound of the Home. However, the children in secondary schools leave the Home each day to attend classes in the community. As such, they continue to risk Covid-19 exposure through their interactions with other children and teachers. Therefore, these children are now housed separately from the other children and take their meals and other activities separately. There have been Covid-19 outbreaks associated with some schools in the community, but, to date, none of the children or staff at Mama Orphan's Childrens Home have been diagnosed with Covid-19!



A newly promoted barber at the Home

Despite all these hardships, the lockdown, did allow some of the children to apply skills they had previously learnt. Some of the teens started cutting the other children's hair and a few revealed some previously unknown talent for hair cutting and styling. This has continued as a very welcome means of saving money on an ongoing basis. The children also planted some plantain banana plants along the orphanage perimeter wall. While commonly eaten in neighbouring Uganda, plantains are not a usual part of the local diet in Kenya. However, due to their relatively short growing period, they have become an important addition to the meals that the Home is able to offer the children.



The new plantain banana crop along the perimeter wall

Poultry farming has always played a big role at the Home as an income generating activity. However, during the period where food was in very short supply, the chickens also had to be used as food for the children. We hope that we will be able to replenish the flock of chickens sometime in January as prices normalize somewhat.

Volunteers

As visitors to Kenya are still somewhat restricted, the orphanage has put its volunteer program on-hold for the time being. The Home has been very pleased with the enthusiasm and high quality of service provided by these volunteers, over the previous years and will like to continue this program when it is safe to do so. Anyone interested in visiting Mama Orphans Home and/ or volunteering should contact Betty Oduor at mamaorphans@yahoo.com

Thank you for all your support throughout the year. Those wishing to donate online can go to our website at www.kenyanorphans.org You can also send a cheque to:
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THANK YOU AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!