

SGG PROGRAMME FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN 2019

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The OVC programme in Busia county, West Kenya is SGG's longest-running project. It has now been in operation for 12 years so it is perhaps now time to review progress and evaluate what has been done. In October SGG Trustee Carole Keeley visited the various OVC groups, and most of what is found in the following report is based on her observations. Reference is sometimes made to Director Paul Keeley's experience previous to October 2019.

Before considering details related to the OVC groups which SGG currently supports, it is worth giving a brief outline of the development of this OVC programme. The salient points to mention here are as follows:

- the OVC project started in 2007 when SGG was conducting initial discussions among various community groups around Busia about what support would be most helpful for local farmers. Assistance with orphans was an immediate response within those 'participatory approach' discussions, so SGG agreed to provide a single weekly meal for up to 1,000 children within the Busia area. At the time official figures suggested that there were some 17,137 children within a population of 330,495 where the average household income was Ksh. 1239/- [approximately £10] to be shared among an average of 4.5 persons/household. There was clearly a need to such assistance;
- the budgeted cost for this initial plan was £12,000. However, 2007-8 was the time of the 'credit crunch' in the UK, and SGG failed to raise sufficient money to fund the project. By 2008 it was agreed to provide one meal/week for approximately 500 children based on a budget of £6,000. The project would be implemented through the establishment of 10 women groups who would each be responsible for providing a weekly communal meal to 50 'home-based' OVCs in their locality. This basic pattern has remained for the last 12 years;
- by 2009 it was clear that SGG would struggle to raise the £6,000, so SGG began to focus on improving the household income where OVCs lived. The 'table-banking' system was established with the aim of using funds for income generation projects e.g. poultry/pig/goat keeping, microirrigation, small business enterprises, VSL/'internal table-banking' etc. The cost for this additional project has usually been less than £2,000 and has proved a great success every year. However, lack of funds for the weekly meal throughout the year and unsatisfactory local leadership resulted in some women groups leaving the project. When funds have been scarce, there has been a pattern of SGG paying the agreed funding of £50/group/month for at least 6 and up to 8 months of the year, with the groups themselves managing the best they can for the rest of the time. For these two reasons Matendo, Bukhayo West Widows, New Jerusalem, Galilaya, Namulekhwa Wedinye, and Khuyala Self-Help Group, all one of the original 10 women groups, have left the project or been refused continued support. When one group leaves the project they are usually replaced by another group wishing to participate in the project;

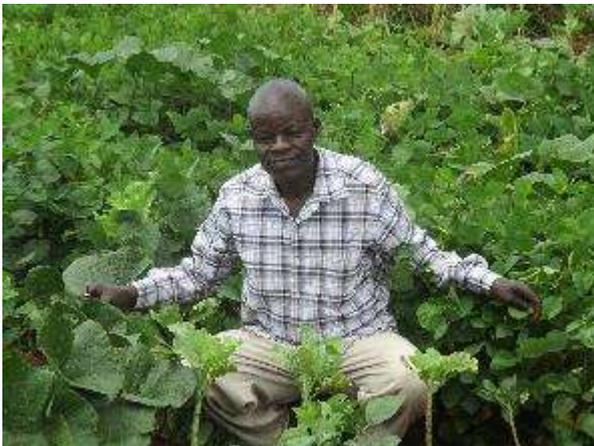


Here is Bukhayo West Widows [see above left] and Namulekhwa Wedinye [see above right], who were both among the first 10 groups to provide weekly meals for OVCs. Both eventually lost their partnership with SGG because of mismanagement. When one group leaves the project another rapidly takes its place. Here [see below left] is the CIF group, who recently joined the OVC project after years of waiting. Table-banking has proved very popular with the OVC groups. Here [see below right] is a photo from the first table-banking meeting in 2009 when some applicants waited more than 3 hours to have their application and proposals for an income-generation project accepted.



- with a frequent shortage of funds, SGG has looked to provide other benefits to these OVC groups in order to encourage continued hope and action within these groups. They have become the 'priority groups' in Busia when SGG has received additional support. WL often provides SGG with a bag of clothes & 'odds & ends' which disappear very quickly from our luggage once we reach Mundika. MF has supplied Siguli Orphans Centre with both educational resources and recreational equipment. The biggest additional benefit which SGG has provided is the introduction of COCO to the Focussa group, who have been donated a set of classrooms by the Tyneside charity;

- since 2014 the various OVC group have had the benefit of SGG's tree-planting initiatives. For example, in 2017 Gosforth Rotary Club allocated £900 for tree-planting within the household plots of 450 OVCs. Each OVC received 1 banana sucker and four seedlings. If the guardians & OVCs take good care of their trees, we would anticipate the trees increasing in value by approximately £1/tree/per year. This scheme has also proved very popular, and each of the 9 OVC groups are participants in Gosforth Rotary's current project to plant 100,000 trees;
- one of the measures of success with this project is that SGG can still find serious poverty, but it is nowhere near as extensive as in 2008 when approximately 45% of the OVCs we met were undernourished, underweight & undersized for their age. The issue for many youngsters now is not getting sufficient food: the concern now is getting sufficient nutritious, high-quality [not quantity] food. SGG has been aware of this problem for a few years now, but in 2019 we had for the first time sufficient funds, £6000, donated by JK specifically for the feeding programme. This enabled SGG to invest other funds in the establishment of kitchen gardens;



When I visited Busia in October the OVC kitchen gardens were in different stages of development. Here [see above left] Macmillan Ochieng of Lonely Orphans is surrounded by a mass of green vegetables. In the photo you can see sukumawiki, gourds and beans, but there are several other vegetables ready for harvesting. The garden at Mukwano [see above right] still needed much work, but by the time of my visit they had a healthy crop of sukumawiki.

ISSUES

This project has been very successful, as far as PK & CK can see, so the prime issue for SGG to consider now is where do we go from here. How can we improve on what is already a success? Should we consider expansion to another area in greater need? Or should we make further improvements so that these groups no longer need our assistance?

To answer these questions you are invited to read CK's report which provides a summary of her observations in late 2019 for individual OVC groups.