



## WE HAVE STORIES TO TELL

March 2018

### **Greetings to you all from Kenya!**

We are excited to welcome many new supporters to this Sasa Harambee community. I provide these letters periodically to share with you our experiences here in Sigomere that directly result from your support. We want to engage you in both the beauty of the Luo culture and the incredible, ongoing successes of Sasa Harambee projects. You are an integral part of how we come together to make it work.

Looking back to 2007, I was looking for a community where I could make a difference. George Oyeho graciously invited me to come and serve in his home community of Sigomere Ward in Western Kenya. My life and the lives of our friends here have never been the same. We hope the same is true for you as a part of our community.

We have now been working together for over 10 years. Sasa Harambee serves 32,000 people in this unmapped, subsistence community of approximately 35 square miles.

It has always been our approach that by focusing on being responsive to local leadership and by primarily providing “knowledge transfer,” the lives of the farmers of this community can be radically changed. I can, now, without reservation say we have done that. When we began, 99% of the farmers were not feeding themselves or their families and were living on less than \$2 a day. The farmers who committed to our organic, push-pull methods are now making \$8-10 dollars a day. They feed themselves and their families a variety of healthy, organic foods. They sustain this year-round and even through droughts. And the next phase of growth, agro-business, has also begun. This path leads to “food sovereignty” and is integral to sustainable change as opposed to unsustainable charity.



We come so far because of so many of you and your contributions. We are not charity; we are investing in a program that is creating sustainable growth. Thank you to all of you for all the support through listening, sharing ideas, and your financial resources.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING...

## The Big Buzz: A Recipe for Profit

Recently, 100 farmers were trained and given starter seeds for drought-resistant grass plantations. After planting, the simple recipe calls only for rain (no irrigation needed), a bit of weeding, and harvesting four times a year. The result:  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre creates 80 bales per cutting. Each bale is sold for 300 ksh! Jane and Sara (shown in the picture) just sold 80 bales!



*Sarah Awour in her hay plantation*



*Jane and Sarah sell their hay and are busy planting more!*

**Currently, our key focus areas are:  
organic farming, clean water, and people  
living with disabilities.**

## Trees for the Environment

George Oyeho has set a goal to plant 1 million trees to fight drought, keep moisture in the land, slow the winds, and create a carbon sink.

In September, Joackim (right) coordinated a pilot project of planting 400 trees. In April, 600 more trees will be planted. Sasa Harambee donors, the Rotary Club of Evergreen, and the ACO Foundation are making this possible. ACO is now helping to establish tree nurseries in our community. Our first one--led by George Sanga, a long time tree farmer working with his HIV support group--will provide 500 trees and is receiving ACO financial support for the seeds.

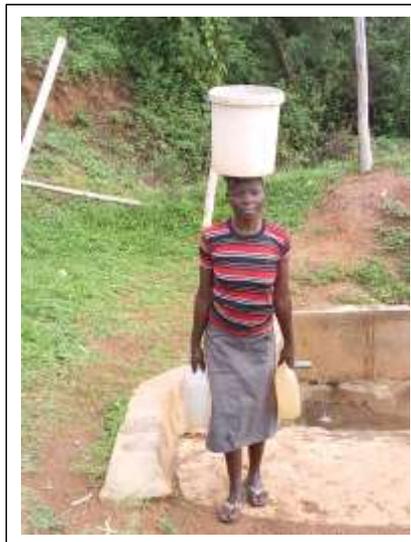
He will become coordinator of our basic farm program in April. He is a Sasa Harambee scholar (supported by Americans in 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and is graduating with a 2-year degree in Agriculture.



*Joackim shows us his Grevilea tree seedlings.*

## The Learning Curve

In 2010, George introduced irrigated farming. It did not take hold. Now it is slowly, slowly gaining ground. To the right, Ephriam shows us his irrigated beds (taken at the end of the drought period). His next goal is to collect rainwater runoff from his metal roof to fill his cistern. An engineer by training, he lost his job when the railroads collapsed. When his resources were spent, he came home. When I visited he said to me, "I can see the light at the end of the dark tunnel. It is what I have learned about farming that has changed my life."



And of course: spring protections! I have now visited 6 of the 15 we have put in. Everywhere they tell me that the waterborne diseases and mortality have gone *way* down. It is incredible what a bit of money from the Rotary clubs of 5450, donors from the Rotary Club of Evergreen, and interactors at Fitzsimmons Middle School in Bailey have done. (right) The woman balances the bucket with no hands. When I was admiring her she just said I was not as strong as her. At every spring the people come out to say *Asante Sana*--that means, *thank you*. **Rotary and Sasa Harambee are not only changing lives we actually are saving them too.**



Finally, a picture of me holding an abandoned child. Tragically, there are babies thrown in the river, found on the road, or left in a cornfield. *Babies Home* currently has fifty children to care for. I have decided to go once a month to help with diapering and feeding.

## Coming Up...

So much work ahead of me until I leave June 18: I will help give out crutches with David from with Crutches4 Africa. Students are coming to build a playground for disabled children. And two documentarians are coming in May.

It is time to tell our story and share our successful methods with a larger audience. Please help support the films and all of our work. For each of you, we are eternally grateful.

