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, micro irrigation, 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.

Carole Keeley OVC groups visits October 2019

1. Mukwano

The children are fed a communal meal once a week on Saturday. On the day we visited they were eating only boiled rice but the guardians explained that they normally get vegetables with the rice but the vegetables had just been sprayed with pesticide so they were not fit for consumption at that time. The funding supplied by SGG does not fully cover the cost of feeding so members of the group supply some food themselves. They commented that in dry weather it is difficult to have enough food.

The group members are all guardians and many of them are grandparents of the OVC. Often only one parent has died but the other has moved away to find work or to return to their own parents and the child or children are left behind at the family home. Sometimes the absent parent will send a little money but this usually dwindles over time leaving the grandparents to find money for food, clothing and schooling. We interviewed a few guardians to find their individual stories:

1.Mary Onyango and 9-year-old Joan.

Joan is the daughter of Mary's son who has died. When Joan was 4 years old she and her 3 siblings were abandoned by the mother leaving them with Mary. Mary's husband has also died so Mary has charge of the 4 children. In the school holidays they sometimes go to stay with their other grandmother. Mary has a small business in the local market selling tea and mandazis (doughnuts) and she also does casual farm labour for cash. She has her own small farm where she works early in the morning before going to work. The children help a little with the farm when they are not in school.

2. Raphael Oduor and 5-year-old John, the child of Raphael's oldest son who has died. The mother then left without the children. Raphael and his wife have looked after John and his sister since he was 2 years old. Raphael farms to produce food to feed the family and he also sells some maize and millet to raise a little income

3. Christine Wandera and 10-year-old Joan.

Joan is the child of Christine's son. Joan's mother left her husband and chid and then the father moved to town and no longer contacts Christine. Christine's husband has also died so she lives alone with Joan. They have a small farm and Christine makes a little cash from cereal trading (buying a big sack of maize and selling in 1 kg "debes").

4. Christopher Juma with 10-year-old John

Christopher and his wife care for their 5 grandchildren who are total orphans (both parents dead). All 5 are in primary school. Christopher farms maize, beans and millet to help feed the children and raises some money to pay school fees by selling millet. He also has some chickens from an SGG table banking poultry project.

Children dancing to greet us

Children eating their Saturday meal

2. Upendo

There are 20 members of Upendo group and all were present at the meeting. The children received a meal of kidney beans and rice but no vegetables. They include vegetables sometimes but in the dry season they are expensive. If money is short, they purchase less food and give the children a smaller meal. The members supplement the money given by SGG with contributions of food or money when the funds run out so they manage to feed every week. The members feel that this feeding programme helps keep the children healthy.

We are always greeted with a traditional dance and song when we arrive at Upendo. The children were highly amused by my attempts to join in!!

The feeding queue.

Enjoying the meal

We also got some stories at Upendo:

1. Macbeth Odero with John (7)

Macbeth has 4 children and John is the youngest. Her two daughters are in high school and she struggles to find the cash for school fees. Her husband left home 3 years ago to work in Mombasa and at first sent a little money home but he has now taken a second wife and has stopped supporting Macbeth and the children. Macbeth has recently found work as a nursery nurse which gives her a small salary in term time. She grows food on her quarter acre arid piece of land. Macbeth has been working with us for many years now and she has benefitted from several table banking initiatives, pigs, poultry, goats etc. She is the co-ordinator for Up endo, Mukwano and CIF and this allows her to earn a little money from SGG as reward for the work she does for us.

4. Almerda Barasa with 7-year-old Joan who was born out of wedlock to Almerda's daughter with a father who is unknown to the family. This daughter has a job as a house help in Nairobi and sometimes manages to send money for the child. In the meantime, Almerda supports her with casual farm labour and keeping poultry. Casual labour pays 250 Kenya shillings (less than £2) per day but this is not a regular reliable income.

2. Regina Ajiambo with baby Joan (2 months.) Regina and her husband also have 3 other children and they try to support them by doing casual farm labour. They only have half an acre of infertile land on which they grow some maize and beans but not enough to feed the family. They have benefitted from table banking poultry which brings in a little income. This is a case where simple poverty is making the children vulnerable even though they have both parents.

3. Jane Obuor with Joan (17 months)

This is Jane's granddaughter. The child's father went to Nairobi to try to make a living but he does not send any money home -quite probably he has no work and lives in a slum. The mother went away leaving Jane to care for the child. Jane also cares for a 10-year-old relative who is a full orphan. She does casual labour as well as growing vegetables and keeping poultry and pigs which she got through table banking. Jane's husband George was a group member but he died 2 years ago.

3.CIF

Although we have supported CIF with tree planting and a little table banking this is the first time we have supported the orphan feeding group. We have been able to take on CIF because Khuyala and Namulekwa groups are no longer regularly feeding. CIF have been asking to join the project for some time and they appear to be considerably poorer than groups who we have been supporting for 12 years.

We asked them to set up a group of 50 OVCs but when we arrived they informed us that they have registered 77 and the queue for feeding seemed to have even more than that - see picture below.

There was a very good turnout of guardians at the meeting where the children received their meal of rice and greens washed down with sweetened black tea (milk is too expensive). The leaders explained that they feed the children rice rather than the more traditional maize because the cost is about the e same but rice cooks much more quickly so they use less precious fuel. All cooking is done using wood as fuel and wood is becoming hard to find and expensive to buy – a very good incentive for them to plant trees. We asked the group to select a few people for case studies:

1.Rose Nafula with 6-year-old John

Rose is the mother of John who is a twin and her youngest child. She lost her husband in 2013 and was left caring for her 7 children including the new born twins. Her eldest two have now married and her 16- and 13-year olds have gone to live with an aunt. Rose is left with the twins and their 8-year-old brother. The only means Rose has of earning money is to do casual farm work for other people. She also has her own small farm where she grows sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, beans and sorghum mostly for family consumption. She owns 3 chickens which gives her something to sell when she is short of money. John and his twin will start Grade 1 school next year. Rose is very grateful for the feeding programme.

2. Magdalene Nekesa and Joan (8). Magdalene's husband died in 2008 leaving her with 3 children but Magdalene has had 2 more children since then from casual relationships. The father(s) of these last two do not give any financial support. The 3 children from Magdalene's husband stay with their uncle who supports them so she only has the two small ones to look after. She supports them by farming maize and beans and by selling tomatoes which she buys in bulk and sells for a small profit. As with most people in this project her biggest challenge is cash for clothing and school fees.

3. John (12) and Joan (4), who are in feeding programme (plus brothers 10 and 8). Mary Obuya cares for all 4 siblings who are her grandchildren. Mary's son died this year and his wife returned to her own family. Mary's husband is still alive but he is old and frail. Mary supports the children by farming a small piece of land where she grows maize and millet but does not produce any to sell. Mary has 5 other grownup children who help support the little ones.

4. Gladys Auma with Joan (12) and her 3 younger children who are not in the programme (although they received food on this occasion). She lost her husband in 2016 and now cares for her 4 children by farming and selling onions and tomatoes which she purchases from a farm and sells at market.

Mary Ofunya with John (6) who is Mary's youngest of 8 children with the others ranging from 30 to 14 years. Her husband is still alive but he is unable to walk so can't help with the farm. Mary supports the family by farming including some groundnuts for sale. John and the 14-year-old are in school and Mary also cares for a 4-year-old grandson who was the child of Mary's daughter who has died.

Ladies from the church serving up the meal

4. Nyusa Farmers

We have supported Nyusa Farmers with tree planting and table banking schemes but they have only recently joined the OVC programme. They had been waiting hopefully for some time but we did not have capacity to add them to the programme until some other groups dropped out. There was a very good attendance at the meeting which was held in their tumble-down church building. They reported that the feeding programme is going well and that they try to vary the children's diet. They reported was that the food went more quickly than they had expected and in order to grow some food they requested help setting up a kitchen garden. They gave a report of the poultry project for which they had used their last table banking money. 21 members had received 3 small chickens each which they were raising to sell for a profit.

Children waiting for their meal

Individual stories:

1.Josephine Agola Oduor

is caring for 3 grandsons and 1 granddaughter who are the children of her 2 sons who have both died. The mothers are still alive but as in normal when a husband dies, they have returned to their own families who will have to keep them. The children are left in the paternal home. One of the mothers manages to send a little money but Josephine mainly supports the children by selling small fish (omena) which she buys in the market. She has a small ¼ acre farm where she grows maize, beans, millet and vegetables. She has had chickens from table banking and has sold some. She finds that this has been profitable. She has also grown trees under the Treedom scheme.

2.Teresa Auma Onyango

cares for her own 13-year-old and two grandchildren who were born out of wedlock. One of the grandchildren is lame which adds an extra burden. She buys and sells tomatoes, onions and small fish to make some money. She is fortunate to have 5 acres of land on which she grows maize, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, arrowroot and vegetables. She harvests about 4 bags of maize, 1 ½ sorghum and ½ bag beans. She also has chickens and 1 cow and has planted trees through the Treedom scheme.

3. Risper Adhiambo Were with her 3 grandchildren, all born out of wedlock to her 2 daughters. Risper's husband has died but one of her daughters still lives at home and helps Risper with their 7-acre farm on which they can grow enough food to feed themselves. Risper also collects reeds from the river and prepares them for weaving into furniture. She also keeps some free-range chickens and has some trees. She sells timber and firewood and finds the timber more profitable.

5.FOCUSSA OVC

We have been working with FOCUSSA since 2010 and this is one of the groups that has shown the most progress. The group have a children's home and farm as well as a school and have made huge steps in sustainable development to support the children.

Joshua and Phaustine proudly showing the new tap for watering the vegetable plot.

Their recent successes include: A new kitchen and dining room has been constructed after the old one collapsed; They have drilled for water and now have a permanent source on tap supplying both the kitchen and the farm; The feeding programme has allowed an increased number of children to live at the home and attend school; They have planted vegetables where they used to grow maize as the maize production was very poor. The vegetables have been very successful; They get a good income from their poultry farm where they buy small chickens and grow them for sale. They report a big market and a quick turnover.

The challenges reported mostly concerned construction. They need two more dormitories to ease the overcrowding. A bigger problem was the state of one of the classrooms as the government has become more vigilant in its inspections after a classroom collapsed in Nairobi. They were expecting a visit from the North East charity CoCo and had good hope of funding for a new classroom.

The other issue they have is that they have abandoned growing maize as the land wasn't suitable so now have to buy it. They now use the land to grow vegetables for consumption and sale.

Vegetables planted under tree and in circles according to permaculture principles

Today's lunch was just a plate of rice but plenty to fill their stomachs and give them energy for the afternoon.

The children are fed 3 times a day: porridge and black sweet tea for breakfast, beans and rice for lunch and ugali with eggs or vegetables in the evening. On special occasions they get some chicken and fruit. The vegetables and eggs come from their own land and they have some guavas, oranges, mulberries and mangoes but not yet enough to give the children every day. They are planting more fruit including bananas which are beginning to produce. The farm has been so successful that they have rented another acre of land and plan to grow sweet potatoes. The group are managing to raise money by selling chickens and surplus vegetables. They also have 5 indigenous cows and sell any calves that are born. The cows also provide manure for the farm and a little milk which is reserved for the very young children. There is also a successful fishpond which was last harvested in September. They were looking to table bank to repair and restock the 2 ponds.

The boys' dormitory. Each child has their own place to sleep with a box under the bed for their personal clothes. Although shabby it was very clean and tidy.

Individual stories:

John aged 4 is a total orphan who has been at FOCUSSA for 2 years. Both his parents died of HIV but Neville was not infected. Neville attends the pre-primary class at the school.

Joan aged 14 was not so fortunate as John. Both her parents died of HIV and she also came to FOCUSSA aged 2 but she was already HIV positive at this time. She is now treated with anti-retroviral drugs but frequently gets sick. She was being treated for malaria when this photo was taken. She is one of 5 children at FOCUSSA who are HIV+ve.

John, is 9 years old and was brought to FOCUSSA 2 years ago. Phaustine had gone to Nairobi for a conference when he met a group of street kids. He got chatting to them and found that John had no idea who his parents were and could only ever remember being on the streets. He had never been to school and was using gum and glue like the other street kids. Phaustine was moved by his story and brought him home to Matayos. John is now doing well at school and loves his new home

6. Siguli

Siguli is one of the 3 groups that are based at a school or early learning centre. They feed the children twice a week during term time. They get maize porridge in the morning and maize and beans (githeri) for lunch. The school does not usually give vegetables because the staple diet for the children at home is ugali and vegetables with the most common vegetable being managu a very strong tasting local green leafy vegetable. The guardians reported that they find it hard to feed the children the extra meals in the school holidays. Many of the guardians are HIV positive themselves but taking anti-retrovirals. These drugs keep them alive but not strong. Most people only eat one meal a day plus porridge and black tea for breakfast. A lot of the Siguli guardians find it hard to get any cash together to do table banking so we agreed to pay Macbeth from Upendo to train them in Voluntary Savings and Loans (VSL). This has proved very successful in other groups as a way of collecting together a table banking deposit for the group. The members were all keen to try some income generating projects. In the past we have done table banking with the school and a few guardians but we would like to extend it to the rest.

Some of the Siguli guardians. There appears to be a lot of poverty in this group where land is rocky and farms very small

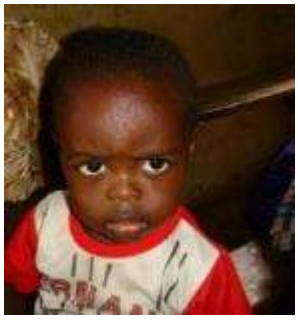
Initial training for VSL. Some interest was shown and we hope small groups will form to receive in depth training.

Individual stories: The ladies here were all keen to tell me their story so I include them all.

Francisca Awuor cares for 4 grandchildren. Two were born out of wedlock to her daughter and the other two belong to her son who divorced his wife who subsequently ran away. The children get porridge without sugar in the morning. Francisca tries to grow food on her ½ acre plot but Siguli is a very rocky area and the yield is poor -at most 1 bag. To get money she does casual farm labour and sells firewood from cuttings from some trees that SGG gave her 6 years ago. On occasions there is no food and they all go to bed hungry

Emma Mungala cares for 7 children -her own 12-year-old and 6 total orphans, ranging from 10 to 4, who were her husband's brother's children. Her husband is mentally sick and is no longer to help on the farm -he just goes round making constant noises now. Emma works as a casual labourer early in the morning then comes back to her own ½ acre plot. She only harvest ½ bag of maize and some vegetables. The children get porridge for lunch and ugali and vegetables in the evening. If there is not enough flour to make ugali they get a second meal of porridge. She also cuts tree branches for firewood both for herself and to sell and she has sold some small trees for 1000/- each. She has 14 trees and they are a very important source of income for her. She also has some chickens from table banking which provide a little income. Emma would like to start a small business, possibly buying dried fish at the market and selling locally. The market is within walking distance and she can make 1500/- for each 1000/- that she spends. She does this whenever she has money but she feeds much of the fish to the children so doesn't have a great profit.

Christine Akinyi cares for her 4 children aged 20,16,14 and 4 plus her own parents who are HIV positive. Her 20-year-old daughter is also HIV positive and has just dropped out of high school because she became ill. They are all taking ant-retroviral drugs which are provide free of charge by the government. Christine also does casual labour and manages to produce very little maize (10kg). She has some trees which are a source of firewood for her but not enough to sell. She has harvested some trees to build a kitchen. She has a few chickens and has sold some to get money for school fees. She would like more chickens.



Agneta Achieng has 6 children aged 16,12,10,8 and 1-year old twins

(see photo of one of them)

They have maize porridge or black tea for breakfast -milk is too expensive and ugali and greens in the evening. Last year she got 1 bag of maize from her ¼ acre plot. She sells charcoal which she buys wholesale and sells in small amounts. She also has some trees which provide fuel for cooking plus she has sold some for cash. She has some fruit trees but they are still small.

Caroline Khokha has 5 children 12,10,8,4 and 4-month-old baby shown here.

She and her husband were managing with him working as a motorbike (boda boda) taxi but he had an accident and can no longer drive. He is able to do farm work and they both work on their ½ acre plot and do some casual work for other people. They only produce 30kg of maize this year. Like the others they have one meal of porridge and one of ugali and vegetables. They also have some trees and have sold some big ones for timber to pay for school fees. The trees also provide useful firewood. They have had some chickens but some died. They would like to be able to grow vegetables to sell.

Caroline Belinda has one 5-year-old child but also looks after her mother-in-law. All 3 adults are HIV positive. They have a 1-acre plot and produce food for themselves but often have neighbours coming begging for food. She has trees and has sold some for timber plus firewood for herself and for sale. She works as a hairdresser and would like to set up her own business.

Margaret Musundi cares for 9 children. Her husband died in 2010. The 3 eldest, ranging from 16 to 13, were the children of her husband's other wife who has died. 4 more form 12 down to 7 are Margaret's own children then she also has a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old who are the children of her husband's grown up son who divorced his wife. Margaret works on her 1-acre plot and does casual labour. She has tried keeping chickens but they died. She has some trees and sells a little firewood. Her ambition is to do cereal trading for maize.

7.Gladys Mary Children's Home

Gladys in the newly painted living room. This room is much improved now the boys have their own dormitory and don't need to sleep here.

Gladys has registered her home as a CBO called Mary Gladys Children's Rescue Centre and has opened a bank account for the CBO. She has 4 young women helping her now, 2 teachers and a social worker. They all work on a voluntary basis which means they will get some food and maybe a little money if Gladys has any. Gladys is using a small building on her land as a classroom and accommodates about 25 children up to 4 years and those with learning difficulties. Some of the children come from the home and others from the surrounding community. It is Glady's dream to build a proper classroom close to her home. The government have inspected her current premises and have told her she needs a playground but she has identified a piece of land under trees close to the house for this.

Gladys also has a farmer who she pays 2000/- per month, a cook and a watchman. The farmer is necessary as Gladys does not have time to farm her land which yields about 10 bags of maize per year. She also grows a small amount of soya beans and we have given her funds to set up a kitchen garden to grow vegetables close to the house. This was found to be a bit disappointing when we inspected as the farmer had made very minimal effort and this was in great contrast to other groups who were producing a similar garden

The garden plot

Indigenous vegetables

Gladys has done quite a lot of work to tidy up the living accommodation and it was looking good.

After a recent government inspection Gladys has been told that children should not be sharing beds i.e. only 2 per bunk bed. She has also accepted that she should not ever have more than 50 children which means she needs 25 bunk beds and currently she has only 18. This means some of the very small children are still sharing and some of the boys are sleeping on mats on the dormitory floor. However, this is an enormous improvement on a few years ago when up to 4 children shared each level of a bunk bed and all the boys slept on the living room floor or furniture.

One of the dormitories for bigger girls

The boy's dormitory has beds for 18 boys but Gladys has 24 boys currently. She would ideally like to have 3 more bunk beds.

The boys left drawing pictures in the sand and the girls sitting together to chat and do each other's hair. They were at home for the 2-month end of year holiday and have no toys or games but they occupy themselves peacefully and happily.

Getting regular food from SGG has made an enormous difference to Gladys and the children. The children were looking healthy and happy as they played outside the house.

Individual stories.

Some of Gladys's children have the most heart-breaking stories but she also has her success stories.

This is 12-year-old Joan, Gladys's 'miracle' child. She was the first child Gladys took in 12 years ago when she was just a few weeks old. She has a very serious heart condition which requires her to take daily medication (which needs to be paid for) and to periodically have blood removed to ease the pressure on her lungs. When Gladys took her in she was not expected to live beyond 3 years but at a recent check-up the doctor thought she could now live to her thirties. Faith is doing well in school and is now in Grade 5. Until recently she shared Gladys's bedroom as she was often sick but she has now graduated to one of the girls' rooms.

Here is Gladys with 4-year-old Johnand 2-year-old Joan -both abandoned babies taken to the children's department by the police when they were found. Quite often children in this situation will be re-united with a family member after Gladys has restored them to health, if the children's department can track them down. If no-one is found they remain with Gladys. She usually keeps the severely handicapped children as families can't deal with them. Some simply have no family and they stay with Gladys for a long time.

16-year-old Joan has been with Gladys for 6 years since both her parents died. Unfortunately, she developed a limp just over 2 years ago and when Gladys took her to the doctor it was found to be bone cancer in her knee. Her leg was amputated above the knee and she underwent chemotherapy. When she was checked 2 years ago the cancer hadn't spread but Gladys has not been able to afford to take her to Eldoret for any further check-up. She has missed quite a lot of school but is now back in Grade 7 but not doing very well. Neither Joan can walk the half mile to school so Gladys pays for them to be taken by motorbike taxi

8. Siritanyi

The children at Siritanyi look much healthier these days. These girls had come for the Saturday morning meal.

Unfortunately, we did not manage to visit Siritanyi in October. Our schedule was very tight and, on the day that we had arranged to visit, there was very heavy rain making the mud roads unsafe for motorbike travel. However, Tabitha Otieno, one of our long-term helpers, had her son and family staying with her from Nairobi and they had a car. This meant that she and Anne Fundia were able to travel to Busia town for a meeting with us and to receive their funds and some clothing. This group has been very successful with table banking and we have been happy to watch the small improvements in their lives over the years we have been working with them. They still have a Saturday morning feeding programme at Tabitha's home and Tabitha herself has put many orphans through secondary education. Tabitha herself is approaching 70 and has diabetes and high blood pressure but she took on two abandoned babies, a brother and sister, in 2017 and they are still living with her. She also has a young grandson living at the house along with his mother who was abandoned by her husband and has even added a couple more small, homeless children to her household. Tabitha and her husband John worked in Nairobi until they retired (age 55 in Kenya) and they have returned to their family farm which John now works. Tabitha has been a strong force in the community inspiring the women to come together to help themselves.

9. Lonely Orphans

Lonely Orphans is one of the groups that runs a school and it has been very successful at providing an education to very poor children. They are continually trying to improve their facilities and have used table banking to boost their funds for this. The children a fed a meal at lunchtime every day that they are in school and they vary the menu from day to day. In recent years we have tried to establish a kitchen garden to provide vegetables for the children. This was situated at the home of one of the teachers whose teacher training SGG had helped fund and she provided the land rent free as a compensation for this training. However, the land has been prone to flooding and is a long walk from the school. When we turned up for the meeting it appeared that a breakaway group had set up a different plot and were seeking funding from SGG for this as they need to pay rent to the landowner. We visited the plot and found that the vegetables were growing well. We tried to get to the bottom of the two conflicting groups and came to the conclusion that they need to sort out their internal problems before we offer any more support. We will continue to offer the monthly feeding money and this is to be collected by the chairman.

Two of the teachers demonstrating indigenous vegetables growing in the new garden

Some of the children came to see us even though it was the school holidays.