Murugi Community Trust – May newsletter and Feb trip update

Murugi Community Trust
Registered charity no. 1207991

As always a huge thank you to everyone involved in supporting the charity, in whatever ways. There continue to be many people in the Murugi area who need support, especially children, who are not getting access to consistent nutrition, education or healthcare. Inflation was a major issue in Kenya in the past year, disproportionately affecting those in rural areas on low incomes due to the increasing costs of basic foodstuffs, transport, electricity, healthcare and education. Staple foods such as maize increased by as much as 17% due to higher fertiliser and transport costs. Sadly the more recent developments in the Middle East will make matters much worse for those people most in need.

The charity has been able to continue to work with the Murugi community to assist in whatever ways we can. In February '26 another group from the UK visited the Murugi area, to experience the culture, lifestyles and see first hand the challenges faced by those that we work with and support. Below is a summary of the key ongoing and one off projects undertaken by the charity since the last update, as well as some of the activities undertaken during the group visit.

Sponsorship Update

Incredibly we now have 620 children being sponsored, an increase from 530 this time last year! These children are from difficult family backgrounds, living in poverty, who otherwise would not receive an education or consistent basic nutrition. During the February trip all of our sponsored children were visited in school (and some at home), and they wrote letters thanking their sponsors directly. These are in the process of being sent out by post along with a photo. Please get in touch if you sponsor a child but do not receive an update letter and photograph. The children and their families or carers are so thankful for the support received and if you are sponsoring you can be confident you are making a massive positive difference to a child's life both now and for their future.

As always, there continue to be many children on the waiting list who need help so if you or any of your friends or family could sponsor then please do get in touch. It can cost as little as £6 per month which doesn't buy very much here but makes a huge difference to the children there.

Food deliveries/ accommodation/ basic medicines

Thanks to contributions there continues to be regular monthly food deliveries to support 22 of the most needy families with basic foodstuffs. The charity also supported funding for schools to buy additional basic

foodstuffs for the most needy families to support them during the long winter holiday. This was necessary as the children receive two meals a day while at school, thanks to sponsorship, but many of those families struggle to buy enough food during school holidays. Sponsored children are also supported with basic medicines, other medical support and school uniforms when needed. A limited number of families are supported with rent/ accommodation costs.

HIV support group/ 200 club

Baragu Health Centre runs an HIV support group – providing education, medicine, mentoring and food for those impacted by HIV. The 200 Club, which many of you support, directly funds food for this group. For £1 per month you are entered into a monthly draw, which results in two prizes of £50, with the other half directly funding the support group. This is a great way to support so if you would like to participate please contact Karen Boyce by email kaz.boyce@hotmail.co.uk. HIV remains a significant issue in the area and, although drugs are now very effective, it is critical that the community continues to be educated, especially younger people, while supporting those who are living with the disease.

Baragu Health Centre

Work on the the new maternity ward has been ongoing for a number of months and was concluded during the group visit. Happily the unit was officially opened by the county Minister for Health at an opening ceremony during our group visit. It is now operational, which means the community has a fit for purpose maternity ward, while also being able to change the use of the previous maternity ward to other female health related benefits (cancer screening etc). Future fundraising this year will support new dental facilities at the centre as well as other lower cost equipment and refits.

School Links

Thanks to Jane Hurdiss for co-ordinating, there are now a number of links between local schools and those in the Murugi community. Current links are:

All Saints Secondary – Kiriani Secondary
Beechcroft – Kianjagi Primary
Southill – Gianchuka
Budmouth – Wiru Secondary
Prince of Wales – Kiriani Primary
Radipole – Munga Primary
Manor Park – Kalewa Primary
St Johns – Wiru Primary
Cerne Abbas Primary – Kimuchia Primary
St Nicholas & St Andrews – Mutindwa Primary
Stoborough – Thigaa
SUN school – Katharaka
Symondsbury – Gitare
St Mary's Dorchester - Mijari

Fundraising

Many fundraising events have happened so far this year and many are planned, especially selling jewellery/ bags etc at stalls during the summer season, which is an important part of fundraising as well as helping to raise awareness and secure additional sponsors. If you would be prepared to volunteer your time helping at any of the stalls please get in touch with Sara Cuff by email at sarahcuff1@me.com. Many thanks to everyone who has given their time already!

Group Trip 14th Feb – 1st March 2026

A group of 25 from the UK visited the Murugi area in Feb, including a headteacher and a number of teachers from local schools who have links with Kenyan schools. The group included a mix of veterans from previous trips and first timers. It was great fun and a fantastic success, despite the rain which was very unusual for the time of year.

Highlights included:

Distributing approximately 750kg of donated clothing, laptops/ tablets and other materials to **sponsored children** and their families, and schools, while visiting all of the sponsored children in their schools. We will be collecting appropriate school uniforms, childrens clothing and laptops/ tablets/ mobile phones in the year ahead – please donate if you can.

Julie led a project **teaching children sewing skills**, in Kianjagi Secondary school, supported by various members of the team. Vocational skills are now included on the syllabus, but there is a lack of sufficiently skilled teachers and a shortage of equipment and materials. 24 children were taught over 6 days of teaching. The intention is that some will now have the skills to pass on to others. We hope to be able to support with equipment etc in future.

Fiona led the **sanitary towel project** while in Kenya this year, distributing packs (pads/ soap etc) that had been created and donated in the UK from Julie and others. Packs were distributed to girls from our partner schools as well as discussions on usage and the challenges faced by the girls. We know that this activity increases attendance levels for the girls so is important in helping them achieve their education. A massive thank you to Julie, Fiona and everyone who contributed in the UK and in Kenya. If you can be involved in sewing the pads in the year ahead please get in touch.

Jiko projects – Dave Harris (on behalf of Dorchester Casterbridge Rotary Club) visited Thigaa Primary school to check on their newly installed jiko (funded by the club in 2025). An energy saving jiko is more fuel efficient meaning it costs less to run and is more ecologically sound as it burns less firewood. It also produces less smoke and therefore results in fewer respiratory problems. The headteacher was delighted with this addition. Almost all of our partner schools now benefit from the new jikos, thanks to all of the support from Rotary and others over many years. Dave visited Makuri school which is potentially next in line for one with Rotary's ongoing support. Special thanks to Dorchester Casterbridge Rotary again for their ongoing involvement and fundraising efforts.

Painting and Refurbishment - Some members of the group worked hard with a number of painting and refurbishment projects during the visit. Paintwork was completed at Baragu Health Centre, Mutindwa Special Educational Needs classroom, and Katharaka primary. Incredible murals were then added at Mutindwa and Katharaka (creative expertise from Sheila among others). The home of one of the sponsored families also received basic improvements to make it habitable (plywood added to walls for weather proofing, beds and mattresses provided, as well as basic homewares). There were previously the mother and three children sleeping in a single bed with no mattresses.

The charity funded refurbishing an unused classroom in order to create a **Computer lab** at Kalewa Primary school. Wiring was installed, the ceiling was reinforced for security, benches tables and curtains installed, and everything painted. Five computers have been purchased by Manor Park school and are now installed, and some donated laptops and tablets were also provided (thank you to Les Fry for organising).

School textbooks and reading books were purchased and distributed, half funded by Dorchester Casterbridge Rotary and half from other charity funds. These went to 12 partner schools and were extremely gratefully received.

A huge thank you to Sam Cuff who raised money and bought **rugby balls and tag rugby equipment**, which was distributed between a number of schools. Rugby is a growing sport, and again on the curriculum however schools have very limited equipment. The teachers and pupils were delighted to receive the rugby kit. Thank you also to Jane Tearle who donated cameras and cards from her camera club, which were again used at Wiru School for **photography sessions**. The group also ran a **fun day** at Wiru Primary School, playing various games and sports with the children. Each child received a small prize at the end, thank you to Chris Keates for donating prizes.

School Links - Last but not least, teachers from St Johns, Symondsbury, Radipole, and Prince of Wales all spent time teaching in their linked schools. They shared work, letters and projects between the schools, made fantastic friends and contacts and learnt a huge amount about teaching practices and conditions in their partner schools. I know the links will go from strength to strength and we hope representatives from UK schools will continue to visit Kenya. Some members of the group who are/ were medical professionals in the UK also visited Chogoria Hospital for a day, again learning about practices and conditions and making contacts. I know they all found the day incredibly interesting.

The group ended the trip in Nairobi, including a fantastic day on safari at Nairobi National park. Thank you to everyone involved for making the trip productive and lots of fun!