



Steady Commitment, Sustained Growth, and a Bright Future!

The news from Kibwezi, this semi-arid region of Kenya, is oftentimes mixed: the rains which started well proved woefully inadequate. The region suffered yet another crop failure for the second year in a row. Nonetheless, performance under the Walking with Africans (WAF) microfinance program remained strong. Seven groups received new loans totaling KSh682,000 (~\$6,820) in the first half of 2017. Although difficult in a bad economic time, repayments remained robust, underscoring the growing resilience of the community in general, and the microfinance program in particular. Both new funding and plowing back earned interest are building the funds for small loans. Our objective is to enable our implementing partner, Efforts of the Poor in Development (EPID-Kenya), to make loans of approximately \$22,000 or more annually. Our 2017 campaign goal is to raise \$20,000. This amount, coupled with current capital, should allow sustained loans at our objective level. WAF continues to operate without any overhead, so that all donations go directly to microfinance efforts in Kenya. We are committed to empowering the rural poor, predominantly women, to take their own personal initiatives to reduce abject poverty. In Kenya, EPID maintains only two paid employees, both costing the program slightly over \$400 a month. This compares very favorably with similar models of other microfinance organizations in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

A Bump on the Road

On December 11, 2016, the program hit a serious bump on the road when the Program Coordinator in Kenya, Linus Muyaga, was involved in a motorbike accident. The accident crushed his leg below the knee, resulting in an amputation. During his long hospitalization, the Accountant/Loan Officer, Theophilus Wambua, took on the program management duties. The program's loan disbursement process continued without major

a path out of poverty

interruptions. Additionally, other members of the EPID board stepped up to ensure the continuity of services and overall program accountability. Groups continue to be nurtured for compliance of their loan commitments and observance of the governing rules and regulations. We are happy to report that Linus is recovering well at home and began rehabilitation. He has also resumed minor duties, operating from his house and communicating with groups by phone.



A peer group meeting during the 2016 field visit.

2017 – 2018 Plans

- ❖ Staying on target to disburse loans totaling approximately Ksh2.27 million shillings (or about \$22,000 USD). It is important to note that the requirements of the program mandate that income be reinvested to boost the revolving loan facility.
- ❖ The program will be audited once again this year. WAF has committed to performing audits annually to foster accountability at all levels.

- ❖ The program has generated a lot of interest in the region. Currently, there are two groups participating in the required training phase, preparing to begin the microfinance program.
- ❖ David Norman, a WAF board member is scheduled to conduct the 2017 field visit next month. WAF is run by a committed core of volunteers who donate their time and effort, including paying travel and lodging expenses.

News from the Field: 2016 Visit

The visibility and interest in joining the WAF/EPID microfinance program is growing in the Kibwezi region. During our 2016 visit, we came across an interested group called The Huruma (Mercy) Women's group. This group has 28 active members and is being led by a very dynamic chair person. They jointly process locally grown food products, like pumpkin and mango into flower or dried food products, under the label "Huruma Asili Foods." They have exported some of these products to other countries in Africa, and Japan. The group's project requires larger funding amounts than micro-lending can offer, as a result, they are ineligible for a microfinance loan through WAF/EPID. Instead, we encouraged the group to develop a business plan, highlighting their successes and growth, to attract commercial bank funding. However, some individual members of this group have expressed interested in starting their own small businesses, which are eligible for microfinance loans from WAF/EPID. These group members are being nurtured to develop their own rules and regulations in compliance with EPID requirements.

Spotlight Story: Ikundi Tusvye Maithoku Isovyeke

The phrase Ikundi Tusvye Maithoku Isovyeke translates to Group to Take Care of Challenges and to Rectify. This is also a new group with 30 members. Several members had been running small businesses before the group formed, and they all

shared a strong desire to work themselves out of poverty. They believe that the small loans for their own businesses will help provide a path to improving their living conditions. The group has a diverse range of business activities, including: selling vegetables and cereals, using irrigated horticulture, raising fish, making and selling decorating gourds and other curios, running grocery shops, making and selling rope, and providing motorbike taxi services. We were impressed with their overall readiness, the creative range of activities, and the enthusiasm and energy of the group members. Some of the group's membership has started to receive their first round of microfinance loans.



A peer group member shows her vegetable and fruit stand at the market.

The resourcefulness and hard work of our peer group members reinforces our commitment to empowering them to transform their lives.

SHEREHE! A Night of African Dance and Drum

Sherehe, our annual benefit reception features dance, drum, and musical performances by Farafina Kan: Sounds of Africa on Friday, June 30th, 7pm at Jirani Coffeehouse in Manassas, VA! Sherehe is the Swahili word for celebration.

WAF is honored to have an address from our Special Guest Speaker, Mr. David Gacheru, Deputy Chief of Mission, Republic of Kenya. The event will

also provide brief updates on program efforts, raffle drawings, and a silent auction. Tickets will be available at the door (\$20), or may be purchased in advance online (\$15):

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sherehe-a-night-of-african-dance-and-drum-tickets-34942135869>

Please join us for an upbeat celebration of our continued growth and success! Thank you for being a vital part of our journey! Asante Sana!

