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WATER TREATMENT PLANT OFFERS A FRESH START
Water is life. In an ideal world, access to clean water should be guaranteed to every human being. Yet, this is not the case in many parts of the world, including Kenya. A 2019 report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) found that a whopping 9.4 million Kenyans drink directly from contaminated water sources.

For many years, residents of the far-flung Kitise area in Makueni County fell into these numbers, suffering the consequences of consuming water from the Athi River without taking it through proper treatment and decontamination. The green or brown pigmentation that characterized the water troubled them, but save for a few drops of water disinfectant there was nothing much they could do. Waterborne diseases became the order of the day. The health of men, women, and children was compromised, decreasing productivity levels in the community.

So used were the residents to the status quo that when Safaricom Foundation and ActionAid Kenya came into the picture promising an end to their grief, scepticism kicked in. They welcomed the visitors but reserved judgement regarding the possibility of change – they would believe it when they saw it. In 2019, the two organizations joined the people of Kitise to celebrate the official opening of a water treatment plant that would forever change the lives of the residents for the better.
It was joy and relief untold for these people who, for decades, felt like second class citizens. The idea of clear water flowing from their taps was almost inconceivable, yet now a reality. The project was primarily funded by Safaricom Foundation with additional financial and ground support for technical set up and implementation from ActionAid Kenya.

The County Government of Makueni provided the water pump that is used to pump water from the Athi River. The water is then piped to the plant where it undergoes several levels of treatment before being channelled to water kiosks in the area for easy community distribution. The Foundation also funded the construction of additional water kiosks to cater for the high demand. Upon completion, the project was handed to the community for management, a task led by the Kitise Water Project committee that had been operational but now, had an exciting new mandate.

“A resident fills up jerrycans with clean water at one of the water kiosks in Kitise, Makueni”

“Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on land.”

Luna Leopold
The Impact

To say that the Kitise Water Treatment plant has simply changed lives would be understating the impact of the collaborative project between Safaricom Foundation, ActionAid Kenya, and the community. The project has greatly enriched people’s way of life, and the transformation is evident from individuals to institutions. The ripple effects range from improved health to increased employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Rose Mwikali has been an attendant at a water kiosk managed by the Kitise Water Project committee for the last three years. Before the intervention, the water she sold to residents had a brownish hue. It sometimes had a foul smell too. Today, clean water flows from the taps. Water sales have shot up, resulting in increased revenue for the CBO charged with maintaining the treatment plant and thirteen water kiosks. On a good day the CBO will collect up to Ksh. 30,000 in water sales. During the rainy season when sales are low, the kiosks rake in about Ksh. 15,000 still much higher than the Ksh 5,000 or Ksh 10,000 they would get on a good day, before the water treatment plant began operations. This money caters for wages and salaries of workers distributed along the treatment plant value chain as well as plant maintenance costs.
William Yalo Nyamai elated at the fact that he can easily access clean water for operations at his butchery.

Many homes do not have piped water. It falls on water vendors like Samuel Mgute and Miriam Musyoki to provide water distribution services from the kiosks to homes. Miriam has been doing this for five years. At the kiosk, she buys a twenty litre jerrycan of water at five shillings. Her customers buy the same at fifteen shillings. The demand has increased from 40 jerrycans a day to 80, sometimes a 100.

During the launch of the treatment plant, students of Katangili Secondary School sang their hearts out in celebration. To them, this marked the end of an era of water rationing. The ten litres of water given to every student per day was hardly enough to achieve good hygiene especially among girls who had to deal with this shortage even during their menses. The regular supply of clean water to the school has changed that. The

“"A big portion of the money I earned before would go into treating the family when waterborne diseases struck. The clean water has kept us out of hospital. I am now able to use the money to invest in a quality life for my family. “

Miriam Musyoki
school’s proximity to the treatment plant ensures that they have clean water every day for drinking, cooking, laundry, bathing, watering trees and other tasks. Deputy Principal, Justus Mwango observes that enrolment has gone up. Parents are thankful for the improved learning conditions for their children some of whom often complained of recurring stomach aches. The student population now stands at 400, up from 180. Several other learning institutions in the area also benefitted from this project.

Health workers in the local health centres also testify of the improved health in the community. Resources that were dedicated to treating the numerous waterborne cases associated with consuming dirty water can be directed towards other causes.

“We have seen a 60% reduction in the number of children who come in with water-borne diseases such as amoeba and bilharzia.”

Ndetei Nstansy, Lab technician Kitise Health Centre
The other beneficiary of this collaborative water project is the Mukameni community. Mukameni is a remote region located in Makueni County, 10km off the Wote-Makindu road. The area records little or no rainfall for up five years at a time. So dire is the water shortage that a child can get to seven years of age without ever having seen a maize stalk mature fully to produce seed – everything dries out before time. The residents had long resigned to using whatever was available, its safety notwithstanding. A borehole sunk by the county government offered some reprieve to those who could afford to buy the clean water. The prices determined by the high cost of fuel used to pump water were however out of reach for many. This situation birthed the Makumeni II water project extension where Safaricom Foundation and ActionAid installed a solar panel to ease the burden of fuel expenses and make water more affordable to all. An additional five water kiosks were also built to facilitate access. Three primary schools, seven churches and one health centre are some of the institutional beneficiaries of the project. The community is healthier, happier and more productive. Some residents are now engaging small scale irrigation methods in their kitchen gardens. With such progress, the idea of a maize plant growing to full maturity in Mukameni may not be so far-fetched after all.

Rose Mwikali (l) with Esther Syombua, a water distributor.
Mukameni II water project extension: The solar panel reduced fuel costs by 50%. Earnings from kiosks can now be directed towards kiosk attendants’ wages.
A Form Four Chemistry lesson is taking place at St. John’s Komolorume Mixed Secondary School in Awendo, Migori County. Approximately fifty students stand behind white counters in the laboratory receiving instructions from their teacher Charles Onyango. A lab assistant is walking around, assisting students with chemical measurements and other issues they might need help with. A little of this solution here, another there, mix these three components and pause to observe. The reactions on the student’s faces go from curiosity to wide-eyed excitement at the results of their experiments. One can tell that they are enjoying the practical lesson. While a seemingly ordinary example of learning, chemistry lessons have not always been like this. Students were generally
uninterested towards Chemistry, and it is easy to see why. The school had a makeshift laboratory that could only accommodate a maximum of thirty students at a time against an overall population of about eight hundred students. It was impossible to conduct proper practical lessons that would allow every student in a class to interact with the laboratory apparatus. Lessons had to be rushed to make room for the

“I am personally very grateful to Safaricom Foundation for investing in us and our future. I love being in the laboratory. It is the perfect head start for my desired career in medicine.”

Mary Otieno, student
next group of students. Evaluation tests and major examinations would run late into the evenings. Consequently, interest in Chemistry and sciences in general took a nosedive.

As can be expected, this affected the school’s performance in Chemistry. Since the school’s inception, no student had ever registered an ‘A’ grade in the subject. This however changed in 2019 when a student scored the elusive ‘A’ in Chemistry in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. The administration and the sciences department were ecstatic. Finally! Mr. Onyango, a Chemistry teacher says that the school has Safaricom Foundation to thank for this feat.

The school administration had acknowledged the need for infrastructural reforms if the fate of sciences in the school was to be changed. Their successful application for a grant from Safaricom Foundation saw the construction of a spacious laboratory that was officially opened in April 2019. The new laboratory has improved learning dynamics and accelerated attitude change for the better. Today, the students have to be forced out of the laboratory to go for meals or extracurricular activities. The well-equipped laboratory offers an active space for aspiring scientists like Mary Otieno to receive mentorship.

A well-equipped laboratory is not only an asset to the students, but to the teachers too. The teachers at St. John’s Komolorume have also been motivated to give their best. The laboratory is one of a kind in the locale. They are hopeful that this privilege inspires their students and that there will be more highfliers in the national examination come December 2020.

““It is important that students have fully equipped learning laboratories where they can develop their science, technology and innovation skills as we gear towards making Vision 2030 a reality in Kenya.”

Charles Onyango, Chemistry teacher
The school had a makeshift laboratory that could only accommodate a maximum of thirty students at a time against an overall population of about eight hundred students.
CONSERVING THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF THE SOUTH WEST MAU

“...At the core of the conservancy’s conservation efforts are the people who share spaces with the wildlife.”

Within the Mau Conservancy in Bomet County, the largest closed-canopy forest. The South Western Mau Forest Reserve is found within this ecosystem. Measuring over 400,000 hectares, the South West Mau consists of three forest stations: Ndoinet, Mara Mara and Itare. While the green terrain has contributed to Kenya’s beauty and the rain density in the country, it has faced several threats over the past years.

In this region, domestic farming is a primary source of livelihood. The current estimated number of heads of cattle is at 20,000, and livestock keepers rely on constant access to pasture for their cows to produce milk. Because of this continuous need, several domestic farmers began encroaching the conservancy. By 2005, the larger block of the Ndoinet forest, which measures approximately 15,000 hectares, had been destroyed by human settlement and interference such as charcoal burning, farming and uncontrolled livestock grazing. Deforestation further affected the existence of wild fauna, such as the Mountain Bongo antelope that is native to Kenya; presently there are only 100 Bongo antelopes globally and all are in Kenya.

In 2009, the government stepped in to recover the forest land by re-settling communities in an effort to preserve the forests’ importance as a catchment for rivers such as Sondu, Nzoia, Yala and Ewaso Ngiro.
Despite the government’s initiative to re-settle those living in the forest, livestock keepers continued to take their cattle to the forest.

Additional effective measures were required to regenerate the forest stations. “The Initiative for Sustainable Landscapes in Kenya (ISLA) was formed in 2016 under IDH: The Sustainable Trade Initiative to conserve The South Mau Forest Reserve. The action plan was to bring together stakeholders and the community of the area to be part of a re-forestation program that was being set up”, says Dr. Kipkirui Langat, Chairman of ISLA Kenya.

The following year, ISLA Kenya brought together key stakeholders to join efforts that would enhance forest conservation, improve water flow and access, and increase sustainable energy. The decision to focus on the South West Mau area was largely due to its ecological and economical importance to the country and parts of East Africa.

The action plan included forest protection, reforestation programmes and livelihood programmes aimed at reducing communities’ overdependence on the forest for grazing. From this, the key stakeholders for a rehabilitation programme were narrowed down to the county governments of Nakuru, Bomet and Kericho, where the South Western Mau is found; tea companies such as Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), Unilever and James Finlay; the Kenya Forest Service, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Kenya Electricity Generating Company.

Daily barazas ensured the community became aware of how badly the forest had been damaged. Open forums were held to allow the community members to share their thoughts on what could be done. The stakeholders’ group supported the community in re-afforestation activities, installation of an electric fence, and carving out buffer zones for livestock grazing.

Safaricom Foundation joined the environmental conservation initiative and committed funds for the construction of the fence and the reforestation programme. However, due to the Kenya government’s ongoing efforts to reclaim illegally occupied land in the Mau Forests Complex, the South West Mau was affected and the Foundation was unable to proceed with installing the game-proof barrier. Focus then was towards the reforestation programme that has since inception supported local seedling sellers as all the tree seedlings are bought from within the community. Each year, a day is set aside as a ceremonial tree-planting day inviting all stakeholders to participate.

“In 2017, we had a tree planting day and Safaricom Foundation team from the area joined the community in the planting exercise. The Foundation really helped us uplift the programme through an audio-visual
production that gave an overview of the conservation initiative, featured interviews with the community and covered the event”, Dr. Langat adds. Through combined effort with ISLA and provision of labour from the community, a total of 22 kilometres of the forest has since been fenced.

The on-going process has is a testament to the power of collaboration as over 60,000 hectares of forest will be saved, providing a lifeline to the health of the ecosystem and beyond.
A FACELIFT FOR KERINA SPECIAL SCHOOL

A few kilometres from Suneka Center on the Kisii – Migori road sits Kerina Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) Special School for the Deaf. It is a refuge for approximately eighty-six students, who have different levels of hearing impairments. The remaining cohort consists of children with mental challenges. They come from homes in Kisii and neighboring counties where many report to have experienced rejection from their families due to their conditions. Some say they are often misunderstood at home as there is little or no interest in the community to learn sign language for effective communication. The recognition that they receive here from the deeply invested staff is vital, not only for academic growth, but also for their overall physical and psychological development. However, without proper infrastructure, the staff’s commitment can only do so much.

The Kerina community has had to endure undeserving conditions in their relentless pursuit of quality education. Learning was largely retrogressive. A room would have to be partitioned by sisal gunny bags to accommodate two classes being conducted concurrently. The school also lacked furniture, forcing students to scramble for what was available. The unlucky ones would have to find a place on the dusty floors. The staffroom was
“Most of us had to sleep on shared mattresses on the floor. We looked forward to dawn not because we were eager to learn, but because the morning offered a reprieve from the cold nights.”

Mary Ambasa, 14

not spared the furniture dilemma. At night, the dilapidated classrooms were converted into dormitories. Toilets were sinking. The school was barely staying afloat.

Infrastructure for effective learning in any learning institution cannot be overstated, more so in special schools where learners require furniture and learning materials tailored for their specific needs. Kerina’s situation moved hearts at the Safaricom Foundation and with deep empathy came action. In 2019 the Foundation funded the construction of a one-storeyed block that houses fully furnished dormitories for boys and girls as well as classes. Next to the building stands a well-constructed ablution block, also courtesy of the Safaricom Foundation.

Before the Safaricom Foundation project

Before the Safaricom Foundation project
The new block that hosts dormitories and classrooms
A good night’s sleep energizes the students who are now more alert and keen to get down to the business of learning. The risk of injuries from faulty furniture is a thing of the past as they enjoy the sturdy chairs and desks donated by the foundation. Their thoughts can now be fully directed towards their lessons. This is especially true for the five students who will be sitting for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations at the end of the year.

In an environment where learning is already so challenging, this deed by the foundation ensures that the hearing impaired students are afforded the same opportunities as their hearing counterparts.

The facelift has not only lifted the spirits of the students and teachers, but also raised confidence levels among parents in the school’s ability to adequately train and equip their children.

“I want to do well in KCPE and become a teacher. Teachers are friends of the deaf.”

Mark Osoro, 15
“We are so pleased with the dorms! We personally ensure beds are made and floors are clean.”

Mark Osoro, 15
SAFARICOM FOUNDATION JOINS LEWA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY IN EMPOWERING WOMEN ECONOMICALLY
“Safaricom Foundation’s contribution into the revolving fund has and will go a long way in training and empowering women for business.”

John Kinoti,
Lewa Conservancy Community Manager.

Low interest loans from the Lewa Micro-enterprise Fund have enabled Ngare Ndare resident Margaret Wanjau upscale from subsistence farming to agribusiness.
The idyllic Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Northern Kenya is home to the black rhino, the majestic elephant as well as unique species, such as the Grevy Zebra and a host of other flora and fauna. The 62,000 acre sanctuary cuts across three counties - Meru, Laikipia and Isiolo. At the core of the conservancy’s conservation efforts are the people who share spaces with the wildlife.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is keen on partnering with these communities that include the Meru, Maasai, Samburu, Kikuyu and Turkana, to ensure a future where people across Kenya value, protect and benefit from wildlife. This principle informed and continues to inform the approach towards designing Lewa’s community development programmes. It is important for the conservancy management that locals benefit from conservation proceeds as this increases their own environmental consciousness and drive to protect the wildlife and landscape.

The Lewa Women Microenterprise Fund is one of eight pillars drawn through community consultation that Lewa uses to invest in the livelihoods of these neighbours. The fund aims to unlock women’s potential to do business. A key deterrent for many was and still is lack of capital. Lewa’s solution to this problem was to develop a revolving fund that would provide low-interest rate loans to women seeking to jumpstart their small businesses. The idea was to grow the fund by getting partners and well-wishers to donate to the initial fund thereby allowing the low-interest rates to be enjoyed by many.

The impact has been phenomenal. The fund has supported 1,800 women since the first credit was rolled out in 2003. In 2019 alone, 906 women received funding to set up or boost businesses in agriculture, retailing, beadwork and many others. Some women are now borrowing up to Ksh. 70,000, up from the initial loan amount of Ksh. 5,000. Contributions by organizations such as Safaricom Foundation also facilitate enterprise development training and experiential learning through business exposure tours.

The conservancy works with community liaisons who encourage women to form and register groups through which members are able to access loans and keep each other accountable, not only in loan repayment, but also in personal and economic growth. It has been a learning experience for both the programme managers at Lewa and the women beneficiaries. In the coming years, Lewa envisions doubling of beneficiaries and tripling the size of the revolving fund.

“This loan programme by Lewa is God-sent. It has helped many women in Ngare Ndare earn an income to supplement what their husbands earn. Children are going to school. Families are happier. Thank you.”

Margaret Wanjau
Lilian Ngar at her retail shop in Manyangalo. She used her first loan of Ksh. 5000 from the Lewa Micro enterprise fund to buy a goat. Today, she has grown to own this retail shop as well as a boutique.
When heading towards Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, Google Maps will only get you as far as SereOlipi town. The remaining 21 km must be covered away from the highway through an uncertain drive down an extremely rocky and dusty terrain. Finally, an entry sign painted in white on a brown rock provides the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel: “Welcome to Reteti Elephant Sanctuary.”
The M-PESA Foundation funded the construction of an elephant stable that holds twenty elephants. This was a big boost to the sanctuary.
The long torturous road trip will soon be forgotten as you take in the serenity of the site tucked deep in the remote Matthew Ranges where Kenya's second largest elephant population resides. This is truly Elephant country. Reteti is the first community-owned and community-run elephant sanctuary in Kenya.

Human wildlife conflict, poaching, abandonment during drought and accidents are some of the reasons elephant calves end up in residency. An initial assessment is vital in determining whether the elephant will be taken into the sanctuary. Sometimes, the families come looking for their baby. If there are no injuries, the keepers will monitor the baby for 72 hours in the wild, keeping them company until a reunion happens.

The ones that end up at Reteti are logged in and introduced to their new environment. Being free-range animals, they mostly browse and play at nearby fields during the day. At sundown, they retreat to their cottages inside the stables. Since its opening in 2016, the sanctuary has had one stable that could only accommodate seven elephants at a time. This limited their capacity to take in more needy cases. The M-PESA Foundation funded the construction of an elephant stable that holds twenty elephants. This was a big boost to the sanctuary.

Apart from ensuring the elephants and their keepers are as comfortable as they can be; the sanctuary is now able to separate three-
year-old elephants from the rest of the herd in preparation for release back into the wild. It is not always a guarantee that the rescued elephants will be accepted by a family out in the wild, so the sanctuary helps to bond them into a family that can roam together once released.

A further 70 kilometres from the sanctuary stands the Sera Community Conservancy. It is a rhino sanctuary, but the community there welcomed the idea of Reteti using it as a release site. After the three-year-old elephants are weaned and bonded for a while, they are transferred to Sera where the process of sending them back to
their natural habitat begins. M-PESA Foundation once again came to the rescue by putting up the infrastructure needed at the facility, including living quarters for keepers charged with monitoring and co-coordinating the process. So far two groups of elephants have been successfully released into the wild where they will hopefully thrive.

The community around Reteti continues to appreciate wildlife as a resource and an important part of their existence. They report any abandoned calf they come across to the sanctuary management. The thought of ‘their’ elephants being taken to a rescue centre in Nairobi does not sit well with them, so they do everything they can to support Reteti.

Locals often visit the baby elephants as they familiarize themselves with the important work that Reteti does with the support of partners like the M-PESA Foundation. Reteti is also keen on improving the quality of life of the locals who have since benefitted from jobs at the sanctuary, education scholarships and piped water.

The Samburu people have lived in harmony with wildlife for centuries. So much so that animals like elephants are held in very high regard. Legendary folktales have been passed down from generation to generation about how the elephant was once a human being and what led to its change of form. To them, it is a moral responsibility to ensure that elephants are safe and that the spaces they share with man are protected.

“We can’t keep them forever. It is always bitter sweet for us to have to say goodbye to our babies during release, but we know it is a necessary step if the elephant population here is to be restored and grown.”

Yusuf Odupoi, Head Keeper
A Life Dedicated to Elephant Care

When Yusuf Odupoi first met Kelele, he was very aggressive, understandably so. His mother had just been killed in a poaching incident. The two-year-old elephant calf was wandering alone, unable to fend for himself and was often causing havoc in a human settlement. The Kenya Wildlife Service contacted Reteti, asking them to take in the elephant lest it also died too. Most of the rescued elephants are brought in when they are much younger, so it is easier to get them accustomed to humans and feeding from a bottle. At two years, Kelele was having a harder time adapting to the new environment. It was going to take a little more patience and love to get him settled in.

Yusuf, the head keeper at the sanctuary personally took care of the young elephant. Today, Kelele is at home with his new family. He is a calm elephant who looks forward to feeding time. Yusuf and the other keepers are committed to keeping the elephants alive as they groom them for release. It is certainly not an easy task.

A community board set up to oversee the running of the sanctuary handpicks Samburu men and women from the community to serve as keepers. They must be outstanding members of the community committed to the conservation cause. They work in shifts, feeding the elephants special formula milk three times a day. During the intervals, the babies are led outside the sanctuary to browse and play. At night the keepers sleep inside the cottages with ‘their babies.’ The bond between the keepers and the baby elephants is strong. They depend on each other to get through the day. Some days are good, others hard, but looking after them gives the keepers purpose and fulfillment.
Nancy Wamaitha

SAFARICOM EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Nancy Wamaitha, right, receiving her award.
Nancy Wamaitha grew up in a household where kindness and charity was of utmost importance. From a young age, she understood the importance of giving back to those less fortunate than her. An additional lesson was to always carry something small whenever visiting a friend or relative. “My mother loved giving. She always cautioned us to avoid visiting others empty handed.” These seeds of generosity, planted in her younger years, continued to blossom as she grew up.

Spurred by her upbringing and the tenets of her faith, Nancy decided to start a children’s feeding programme in Kibera in 2017. Knowing that this was a project that required more than her vision, she approached 20 female colleagues from Safaricom and shared the idea. “We have a community at work where we come together for those of us that are bereaved or have a project, and this inspired me to reach out to some of the ladies at work.” With her co-workers on board, Nancy valiantly led the team. A budget was set and the overall target was to raise sufficient funds to feed 2,000 children. “We agreed on an amount for all of us to raise, and everybody did their part in contributing.”

Nancy’s role went beyond leading the team; she reached out to various organizations – including Safaricom Foundation – for further support. Many came on board, donating various items such as milk, soft drinks, juice and water. Safaricom Foundation joined in to support Nancy by donating storybooks. Once the target amount was raised, the next step was to find a caterer. “We contacted the Nubian women in Kibera, they gave us a quote, and we employed them to cook food for the programme. With the funds raised we were also able to provide them with the supplies that they needed to prepare the meals.” The end result of the first feeding day was far larger than Nancy imagined, and over 5,000 children were fed through the initiative.

“We have a community at work where we come together for those of us that are bereaved or have a project, and this inspired me to reach out to some of the ladies at work.”
Nancy’s passion for social responsibility had extended beyond her work in the Enterprise Business Unit at Safaricom, and with the success of the feeding programme in Kibera, she was encouraged to continue her philanthropic initiatives.

In 2018, when one of Nancy’s friends invited her to Mlango Kubwa in Mathare to meet with a community-based organization called Joy Divine, she kept an open-minded attitude on what to expect. Joy Divine had been running for four years, supporting street children in Mathare. “After the first visit, I felt like I was part of Joy Divine. The organizers must have felt the same because they wanted to partner with me.” The Joy Divine team was familiar with the work Nancy was already doing, and thoughts on how to collaborate commenced. Nancy formed Tunaweza Empowerment Foundation and together with Joy Divine they purchased and distributed mattresses in two buildings within Mathare that would serve as dorms for the children. This was to prevent them from sleeping in the streets as had been the case prior.

Nancy, through Tunaweza, went the extra mile and supported some of the youth of Joy Divine who wanted to set up small businesses. Rather than give them the money, the items they needed such as tea urns and flour to start their businesses were purchased.

Nancy’s work goes beyond feeding; she wants to support the women and street children in getting the necessary skills that would steer them towards employment and entrepreneurship. She has taught them about solution selling, a methodology she learned from working at Safaricom Foundation. Her vision for those under her wing is evidently long term.

As any successful project requires, Nancy went ahead and put together a project report outlining the community work she had done and the overall impact. She shared this information with the Foundation through the staff portal hoping that her work would be recognized under the Safaricom Way Heroes Award category. The Safaricom Nancy’s good work was identified as the embodiment of the Safaricom Way and she was recognised with the 2018/2019 Heroes Award, an achievement she speaks of with great joy.
Way Awards, held quarterly and annually, recognize employees who engage with community initiatives. When she later received a call from Henry Kilonzo, the Foundation’s Programmes Senior Manager, asking for more information on her project, she wasn’t sure what to expect. She later found out that her community work was under consideration by the judges of the Heroes Award.

Nancy’s good work was identified as the embodiment of the Safaricom Way and she was recognised with the 2018/2019 Heroes Award, an achievement she speaks of with great joy. 

The Award opened more doors for recognition on the philanthropic initiatives under her belt. What followed was a congratulatory email from Nick Reed, the CEO of Vodafone Group. Nancy was amazed that her purportedly small project had been considered beyond her colleagues in Nairobi. It seemed to her a streak of luck when yet another email followed informing Nancy that she had been nominated for the CEO’s Award for Excellence for her efforts towards transforming lives.

The awards were held in South Africa, and an excited Nancy attended, more thrilled by the recognition of the efforts she had put in. Content with the nomination itself, she didn’t carry any expectations of winning but was exhilarated by the idea.

When her name was called as the overall winner of the Group award, it took her by surprise; beaming and full of gratitude, she walked to the front to receive the Vodacom CEO’s Award for Excellence.

The seeds of generosity planted and nurtured in Nancy Wamaitha have paid off and her story is a testimony of selflessness without expectation and the wonders it brings.
In 2013, the M-PESA Foundation Trustees, led by Michael Joseph decided to provide funding for a high school whose mission was to create a new generation of leaders for Kenya and Africa. Three years later after an extensive curriculum research, design and build process, in 2016, the first cohort of students was admitted into the school located at the heart of Thika, Kenya. It stands today as a state of the art, co-educational and residential High School whose students stand out as thinkers, doers and leaders. Every year, four economically disadvantaged students from every county are selected through a rigorous application process for a fully sponsored opportunity to study at the Academy.

At the conceptualization stage of the M-PESA Foundation Academy (MFA), the board also wanted to further create a space where the students who graduate from their Form 4 KCSE exams would be hosted for six to nine months as they prepare for the next phase of life. This next phase could be university, technical and vocational training colleges, entrepreneurship or employment. It would basically be a bridge between the institutional life of the Academy and the world that awaits them. What was once a dream now stands as the majestic Uongozi Centre. Its doors swung open on the 6th of January 2020 to receive graduates from the class of 2019, all ninety – one of them, selected after a robust application process.

“We had to think about what happens to our scholars once they graduate high school. We decided from the get go that we would set up the Uongozi Centre to help in that transition from the protective walls of the Academy to the big wide world.”

Les Baillie, CEO, M-PESA Foundation Academy
The facility comes complete with staff offices, lecture halls, hangout spaces, a dining hall and dormitories.

and interview process. They had registered impressive results in the 2019 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) with top student, Abigael Kadogo among the top 15 students nationally.

The Uongozi Centre aims to support M-PESA Foundation Academy graduates in their post-secondary journey by enhancing their leadership potential, developing independent living and thinking skills as well as assisting them to incubate business ideas and community projects. The facility comes complete with staff offices, lecture halls, hangout spaces, a dining hall and dormitories. The scholars have all they need under one roof, further discouraging unnecessary interactions with the rest of the students at the Academy. The inaugural cohort was privileged to be the pioneers who received four years of exceptional high school education which has now unfolded into a year infused with mentorship at the Uongozi Centre. The scholars were excited at the opportunity to be with their friends for another nine months as they work together in building their new competencies.

22-year-old Alexander Macharia is a gifted musician. He was a great sportsman too before an accident in 2007 left him paralyzed from the waist down. During his four years at M-PESA Foundation Academy, he worked hard to hone his musical skills, ultimately earning him a spot as a trumpeter at the Safaricom Plc Youth
Orchestra. Alexander is set on a career in biomedical or software engineering. That notwithstanding, he currently teaches the MFA brass band as he guides a Form Four candidate perfect the piece she is due to present at her finals in KCPE as his own giving to the Uongozi community.

“"My greatest desire is to start a music school and create an empire that will change the way Kenyans and Africans in general view music.”

*Alexander Macharia*
Mercy Wandia calls herself the dancing diplomat. She sees her dance gift as a ministry which she uses to give street children hope during outreaches. An ideal Africa for Mercy is one free of poverty. Uongozi Centre is helping her understand how she can play a part in actualizing that dream.

“I love attending the lectures on African Studies. I want to be the Secretary General of the United Nations so it is important for me to understand systems and how they affect governance and resource allocation.”

_Mercy Wandia_
Caleb Kipkurui’s orientation into teenage hood was somewhat tragic. His mother, who up to that point had overcome great challenges to raise him and his six siblings, was snared by alcoholism. The next two years tested the family as they helped her fight the monster that threatened to take away the family’s sole breadwinner. Coming into MFA, Caleb was uncertain about his future, but his tough upbringing has taught him a thing or two about hope and resilience. MFA has moulded him into a sensitive 18-year old leader keen on taking the world of fashion and design by storm. At the centre he enjoys learning Sociology and mentoring two students from MFA in academics.

It is expected that by September 2020 scholars will have received adequate guidance and mentorship to equip them for their next chosen steps in their academic or entrepreneurial adventures here in Kenya and beyond.

“My mother tells me she wanted to be a fashion designer. I am going to study industrial design and later on fashion design to honor her. It would have been very hard to apply to a university in the United States from my home in Gorgor, Bomet County. Being at Uongozi has created the opportunity and simplified the process somewhat.”

Caleb Kipkurui
M-PESA Foundation

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CHAMPIONING ADULT LITERACY IN COMMUNITIES
She delicately carves out each letter on a blank white sheet of paper. It looks somewhat painful, but the smile on her face as she goes through the letters dispels that assumption. She is beaming with pride as she finally displays the result for all to see. Sixty-seven years seem like a long time to wait, but that does not take away from the joy that Evangilin Kariuki feels as she stares at her name, correctly inscribed on that piece of paper.

Every Wednesday, Evangilin joins other students at the Subuiga Adult Education Centre run by the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Here, the students are first taught to write their name and develop a signature. It is the first step in a journey that will see them learn basic numeracy, the alphabet and stringing simple words together to form a sentence.

Safaricom Foundation’s commitment to education does not stop with primary, secondary or even tertiary institutions. It continues to support initiatives such as the adult literacy programme run by the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Thanks to the Foundation, all the twelve literacy centres spread across three counties received furniture and are sufficiently stocked with stationery and teaching materials for months to come. Lewa’s Adult Literacy Programme trains community members on reading and writing, basic finance, home economics, healthcare, business skills and management of natural resources.

For the older students, having a place to come and interact with women of different ages also helps them keep loneliness at bay. According to Linet Mwendwa, Lewa Adult Literacy Coordinator who also doubles up as an instructor, the school equips them with skills that make them feel less of a bother to the community. 85-year-old Miriam Isaya has been with the programme for the last nine years.

“Miriam inspires us. She is one of the most diligent and curious women I know. She often confides in us that school makes her look forward to waking up every morning. She never wants to miss out on our regular updates on emerging global issues.” Says Linet of the octogenarian.

A much younger Phyllis Nkirote stopped going to school in class four.

“I couldn’t even speak Kiswahili when I first started three years ago. Look at me now! I can communicate with people outside of my community and read my Bible too.”

Evangilin Kariuki, 67
When she learnt about the centre, she knew she owed it to herself to enrol. Being illiterate cost her a lot of money in her agribusiness. Malicious people often took advantage of the fact that she could not count. She regrets that she could not help her older children with their school work in their formative years. Her going back to school however offered her a chance at redemption with her lastborn child, now in class two.

It has been two years since she joined the programme and Phylis radiates with gratitude. Not only has she learnt to manage the finances from her business and have study sessions with her daughter, her literacy has become an asset in her community. She helps older people read messages on their mobile phones and other materials. Some of her age mates do not understand why she would forego money to be in class, but she knows no amount of money can replace the feeling she gets when she learns something new and hears her teacher say, “Well done!”

Learners are also equipped with skills in income generation activities such as tailoring. Safaricom Foundation donated 13 sewing machines for use in the tailoring class. Among other things, the tailoring apprentices are responsible for making the uniforms they and their colleagues wear to school.

In 2019, 420 adult learners from diverse cultural backgrounds enrolled for the programme across twelve learning facilities in Meru, Isiolo and Laikipia counties.
“I don’t know where I would be without these classes. I have learnt so much. My dream is to go to Maseno University.”

Phylis Nkirote, 35
Lamu County sits by the boundless ethereal salty water body that is the Indian Ocean and yet as the community-members in Ndau sub location, located on the east side of the County, have access to the ocean each day, they face perennial water problems. Accessing fresh, non-saline water suitable for drinking and domestic use was a continued challenge for area residents.

In 2007, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) set up a desalination plant that would filter water from the ocean into a 10,000 litre tank to cater to the community’s needs.

Safaricom Foundation funded solar panels that help run a desalination plant in Lamu East.
The plant was a relief to the Ndau residents and other beneficiaries in the area who were required to pay 20 Shillings for 20 litres of water. However, because it ran on diesel, requiring litres upon litres of fuel to keep the plant running. “The price of the water was expensive for most of the residents even though this was a project that was meant to be affordable for the Ndau community,” says Ali Mohamed Fumu, the chief of Ndau location. “As long as the plant continued to run on fuel, there was little we could do to make the price of water affordable.”

Twenty Shillings may have seemed like a small amount for water but given that this is a daily necessity, the price amounted to more than many members of the Ndau community could afford.

The issue of the desalination plant was made known to the Safaricom Foundation and a team was sent to the local leaders and chiefs to learn more about the challenge. Safaricom Foundation responded by approving funding to purchase and install a solar panel in 2019. In November last year, the new and improved solar powered desalination plant was completed and launched. The water system was redesigned so as to run off solar power as the alternative source of energy.

Today, for the same 20 litre jerry can, residents pay five Shillings, which means that for the initial amount, they get 80 litres of fresh water. Money saved can go into other expenses and necessities.

“In total, more than 5,000 people are benefiting from the new and improved plant,” adds the chief.
“The solar alternative has been really effective because of the climate of the area. The community has really appreciated Safaricom Foundation’s intervention in this transformation because they are not only able to save money, but they are able to get adequate water for domestic and other uses,” Mr. Fumu continues.

In one day, the plant produces 20,000 litres of fresh water that is stored. With the population of approximately 1,500 people, the water is more than sufficient for the Ndau community, it goes even further to assists others such as the Rural Border Patrol Unit (RPBU), and even people from other villages like Faza.

“In total, more than 5,000 people are benefiting from the new and improved plant,” adds the chief.

The resources from residents goes into maintenance – which doesn’t cost much, and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) members hope that as more money continues to be saved, more community-targeted initiatives can be set up. The plan moving forward is to have two more tanks of the same capacity store water to last during rainy seasons and for the few times when the plant requires maintenance. No longer do the tantalising waters of the Indian Ocean mock the people of Ndau, instead they know they will never run out of the precious resources of life that is drinkable water.
UONGOZI CENTRE
SCHOLARS:
EXCELLENCE IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

Sylvestor Omondi
Sylvestor Omondi was orphaned early in his life when both his parents tragically died within five years of each other. His eyes are reflective of the pain he still feels as he narrates how his life changed after the tragedy. He lives to make them proud, and the M-PESA Foundation Academy (MFA) has played a huge role in helping him believe that he can achieve whatever he wills.

When Sylvestor saw the advert in a comic magazine calling for scholarship applications to the academy, his gut told him that this was going to be his home for the next four years. With the help of his uncle who had taken up this guardianship role, the Migori County born teenager filled the application form and waited for the good news. Sure as day, his application was successful after undergoing the rigorous recruitment process to join the Academy. He joined ninety-one other scholars from various parts of the country as the inaugural class in January 2016.

The four years at the school were, in his words, a dream come true. Gradually, he transformed from a shy boy to a confident basketball player who held various leadership positions throughout his stay. He lauds the idea of the Uongozi Centre which among other things has continued to nurture his leadership skills as he leads a team developing an app designed to facilitate elections at the centre.

Sylvestor hopes that the career in diplomacy he has his eyes set on will ultimately lead him to State House Kenya, presiding over a thriving corruption-free nation.

“Uongozi Centre has given me an opportunity to reflect on my future and get guidance on the same. I have also been building on the menstrual cup idea that has been incubating for a while.”

Sylvestor Omondi
Across the expansive campus is Electine Akiru. She swings a golf club with enviable precision. It is like she was born with the club and ball in her hands, only, she wasn’t. There are no golf courses in Kainuk, Turkana County where the 18 year old hails from. Schools there are often battle fields between the Turkana and Pokot communities. The first born daughter of a catechist widowed in 2014 was under immense pressure to pass her Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Unfortunately, she fell short of the 350 points mark set by her mother. She feared her mother would make true the threat to take her back to class 7. Electine became suicidal at the thought of repeating.

On the eve of 2016 as the family waited for the clock to strike midnight, a text message came through for Mama Electine. It was the M-PESA Foundation delivering the good news. It took a while for Electine who had been sulking in her room to register what this meant. A month later, her hope for life renewed, she walked into the Academy to begin an adventurous academic journey that would see her also become a golf champion.

The privilege of going to one of the best high schools in Kenya is not lost on Electine. She wants the same for other girls from her community. With support from the Academy, she has organized one of a kind mentorship meets in her village to encourage parents and girls to take education seriously. Parents have hailed her as a role model for their girls.

It was during an open day at the Academy that Electine caught the eye of her mentor, mentor, the Chief Enterprise Business Officer at Safaricom Plc, Rita Okuthe. She eloquently took the guests through the display, which had some endearing designs she had made in her Home science class. “Madam Rita took me under her wings and among other things helped me build my confidence as a public speaker. I have had opportunities to co-MC different functions including one at Safaricom Plc.”
“I have never seen a school where the administration calls you back after form four for an extra nine months of leadership training and mentorship at their own expense. Uongozi Centre is a gift. I feel like I already have a taste of university life to minimize the initial shock.”

*Electine Akiru*
January - June 2020

An aerial view of the water treatment plant in Kitise