

Dear All

This Sunday, 14 March, it is the turn of Karibuni Children to be the focus of our Circuit Prayers. I know we have said it before, but this is a wonderful organisation extending the practical love of Christ to so many families that are locked solidly into poverty, and enabling real investment in the future through a good education and all the increased opportunities and benefits that this brings. Please support Karibuni Children whenever you can and remember them in your prayers this week.

Pete

John writes:

Usually at this time of year a group of Karibuni Children's trustees are in Kenya making visits to the 13 projects that we support. Due to the pandemic, for the first time in the 26 years since Karibuni was established, this year we have not been able to go. Instead we will be holding the annual meetings with project boards via Zoom. It certainly won't be the same as meeting face-to-face - and we cannot take our usual multitude of suitcases packed with clothing and other donated items for the children.

Although Kenya has been hit by COVID-19, reported cases and reported deaths are presently much lower than here in the UK.

From last March until January, when schools in Kenya were closed, we provided monthly food packages for each of our sponsored children which supplemented the whole family's needs, 6,500+ food parcels in total. The packages consisted of dried goods, maize, flour, rice, beans as well as cooking oil and soap. Social workers, teachers and local boards worked together to package and distribute the food parcels in a safe way. In Kibra, reportedly the largest slum in Africa and which can be volatile, physical distribution was not practicable and vouchers redeemable at local supermarkets were introduced.

As was the case in the UK, while Kenyan schools were closed many tried to provide "remote learning" via the internet or local radio stations. The children we support were not able to access the internet at home, but we were able to help with local educational initiatives including the provision of solar radios in arid Tharaka, where there is ample sunshine!

The good news for the projects we support is that schools in Kenya reopened on 4th January 2021 and we are told that most of the children we sponsor returned to class. It is not uncommon for two or three children to share a desk in Kenya. The government was to provide additional desks, but delivery has been patchy. In some cases, classrooms are not sufficiently large to accommodate more desks and other solutions are having to be found. The return to school has also increased costs to Karibuni as sponsored children are required to have masks and pay towards sanitiser and other anti-infection measures.

To make up for time lost in 2020, the Kenyan Government has announced that this year and next there will be an extra school term, ie four rather than three. This is likely to be a challenge and may have implications for the fees charged to parents (and Karibuni is certainly a big parent!).

On the home front, having served as a Trustee for almost ten years Paul Ingram has stood down. We are most grateful for all he has contributed and he will continue to volunteer for us. We are delighted that his place has been taken by Rev Nicola Martyn-Beck who has been a supporter for many years and is presently Superintendent Minister of the Methodist Milton Keynes Circuit.

Please pray:

- for the Kenyan children and their families, the project staff and the teachers.
- for our Board of Trustees that we may make the right decisions in these challenging times.

John Cotton

