

Charity No: 1204235



Newsletter 3. April 2026

Welcome to our newsletter for April 2026. It has been produced ahead of our next issue scheduled for June 2026. This is because we wanted to report on the recent visit to Kenya by the chairperson and secretary.

Visits to six self-help groups



Our first visit was to the village of Magareni to meet a newly created group, Self-help Group - SHG 20. Many of the caregivers struggle to afford the anti-convulsant medication for their children with epilepsy. The group are at the early stage of doing Merry-Go-Round, where each member contributes a little money every week and the total is then shared with 2-3 group members. This can then be spent on essentials for their disabled child like medicine, food and school fees. Usually the caregivers are unable to afford these items. The group also said that they found strength in meeting and working together; the group makes a little money by planting cassava and selling it at the market.

The secretary shows the group's ledger

Our second visit was to SHG 13 at Marereni. The group were very pleased to see us and greeted us with singing and dancing. Over a year ago we gave this group funds to build a water tank for selling water to the local community. It has also provided water for the members so that they avoid a long journey carrying water containers on their heads. The

group has experienced delays in having their water supply renewed by tankers so the director of our Kenyan NGO, Walezi Foundation, will look into this. The members of the group clearly gain support from being together.



The group members gathered by their water tank

The third group we visited, SHG 4, was at the village of Chasimba. They originally received capital funds from our charity to enable them to construct two covered marketplace stalls. While they wait for the market to open officially, they rent their stalls to local people to store their goods. Further down the road, the plan is to use the profits from hiring out the stalls to secure a bank loan so they can buy tents and chairs for hiring out for community events (e.g. funerals, weddings). The community chief backs this plan and we were assured their office would hire the tents and chairs for their weekly “barazas” (community meetings).



The two marketplace stalls



In the meantime the group practices “table banking” and “merry-go-round” to support individual members and their children with disabilities. This enables members to take out a small loan with a minimum interest rate if they experience an emergency. The group has also part-funded an operation for a group member’s child who was born with club foot and bought glasses for another child. One of the caregivers told us of her grandson who is blind and recently sung at a funeral.

Caregivers gather for their weekly meetings

Our fourth visit was to SHG 7 in the village of Matanomane. They have 29 members and are going from strength to strength. They used their capital funds from our charity to buy a big tent, 100 chairs and a gazebo. They earn a regular income from the tent hire, including frequent use by the area Sub-Commissioner’s office, and have bought a further tent and more chairs with the profits. The group also plan to buy a bigger tent, more chairs and a “sufuria” - a large cooking pot- and are organising a fund-raising event in June.

The members receive half the annual profits in the form of a twice-yearly dividend which they use to buy books, school uniform and medication for their disabled children. The group has been so successful that it has recently been able to inspire and guide the development of a number of sub-groups in the local area.



Members advertising their business

During our visit, the members performed a ten minute dramatic performance about a young couple not understanding how to care for a disabled child and being guided by the group into better practice. This drama is used to educate other caregivers coming together and people in the local community.



The group's dramatic performance about caring for your child with a disability

We were told many life stories by individual members. One member and her adult daughter have set up a day care service for other members' children. Currently, they look after nine children with disabilities enabling their mothers to work and spend the money they earn on their children. The group secretary, a young man who was born with only one leg and uses crutches, plays football for Mombasa's disabled side which has toured various African countries and Turkey! Another group member talked about learning how to better care for her disabled child since joining the group.

The next group we visited was SHG 8 in the village of Uyombo. This group is much smaller with seven members all of whom are women. When we arrived it was good to see the café building funded by us being used for a community meeting. This was about a government initiative to fund farming by the supply of seedlings, e.g. cashews and coconuts. This use of the facility shows how the caregivers are recognised and involved in the community where previously they were excluded. Sharing their café facility also benefits the wider community who have somewhere to meet that is sheltered from the sun and the rain.



The Chair and Secretary ready for their group's meeting



The fall in café sales due to the downturn in the economy has prompted the group to diversify. They now hire out the two lockable storage facilities in the café which provides an income. In addition, the group plan to build a small kiosk on the main road for selling detergent and “makuti”- thatched roofing tiles - that are made by the group.

Two of the members get on with making makuti

The final group we visited was SHG 14 based in the town of Malindi. As with all groups, they support each other and find strength from being together. They bring their children to their regular meetings in a real show of togetherness. All members know they can call the secretary



in an emergency, e.g. if they have no food, and the group will help. The group used our capital funding to buy a tent, gazebo, 100 chairs and a sufuria to hire out for community events. Profits have been used to buy plates to use with the food cooked in the sufuria. The extra income is also used to pay school fees, and buy medicine and food for their disabled children; to enhance small businesses run by individual group members such as selling charcoal, fish and clothes (profits are again spent on their disabled children); to divide among members at the end of the year, (which can be spent on their children).

A family picture of a mother and her two daughters

The group has far-reaching plans for their future. They aim to buy a fifty-seater tent for hiring out; to set up a Walezi Business Area in Malindi, promoting their individual businesses; and to buy and run a tuk-tuk (a three-wheeled carriage for transporting people and goods).



A young woman with learning disabilities



A father caring for his young son

Meetings

Whilst in Kenya, we had two meetings with Dr. Joseph Gona, the director of Walezi Foundation, our partner non-government funded organisation (NGO). We provide the NGO with funds to enable the self-help groups to flourish. Dr. Gona is going to retire at the end of this year. Our first meeting was also attended by Joseph Razi, his proposed successor. Joseph Razi has a background in Occupational Therapy and Community Health and Development and has worked for the local disability charity with whom the Walezi Foundation liaises, the Kuhensa for the Children Trust. He will work alongside Dr. Gona for three months, then take over the responsibilities of director with Dr. Gona's support. Our second meeting with Dr. Gona focused more on the support needs of various groups over the next few months. This will include extending the "tents and chairs for hire" businesses by including event decorations, food and cooking options as part of the hire. Some groups may need help with the next stage of their business plans: Group 8 will need help to decide what materials and labour are required to build a small kiosk; Group 7 will need support to organise their fund-raising day in June and to further integrate the sub-groups they have inspired.

Our self-help groups provide a welcoming, secure haven for caregivers who would otherwise be isolated and on the receiving end of prejudice in their local communities. Walezi Foundation Kenya continues to work hard with the groups to grow their livelihoods, and provides encouragement and support to the members as caregivers of children with disabilities.



To find out more about this important work,
visit our website:

<https://www.walezi-caregivers-kenya.org>

You can also email us at:

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Caregivers celebrate their group with singing and dancing