



We are pleased to share our latest newsletter to update you on the positive changes you have helped to achieve. We want to thank you for all of your invaluable support over the past year which has improved the lives of many patients and families through compassionate palliative care.

Wishing all of our friends and supporters a Merry Christmas with very best wishes for the New Year 2020!

## Improving life and death in rural Kenya

Our project to train an extra 129 community health volunteers across Kenya has now come to an end and we are delighted with the results. Our hospice partners have done an amazing job at training the volunteers to provide compassionate care, support family members and manage pain and symptoms. These volunteers are working in their communities to provide home-based care for people living with life-limiting illness. They are already caring for over 550 patients who would previously have gone without. This is making a huge difference to quality of life for patients and their families.



*Picture right: Newly trained community health volunteers from Oltepesi in southern Kenya.*



Home-based care from volunteers ensures that patients in poor rural communities can get the care they need for free. It reduces the burden of care on family and children so that they can work and go to school, and helps support under-resourced hospices.

The volunteers also raise awareness of cancer. In Kenya 80% of newly diagnosed cancer cases are already in the advanced stages, so helping people to recognise symptoms and seek medical advice earlier is important. Hospices have already seen an increase in people with symptoms referred for testing.

*Picture left: Volunteers often walk many miles to visit patients.*

*"As a patient, I now have hope and purpose in life".*

Mary Wairimu, Kiambu County

*"I never thought I would be alive after all the pain and agony that I experienced. Now my pain is well controlled and even if I cannot move I have true visitors who keep on visiting me to care for me and help me through this".*

Tom, Nyeri County



# News from Kenya



Managing symptoms and pain is an important aspect of palliative care. The Kenya Hospice and Palliative Care Association is making progress in distributing morphine on behalf of the government, however availability is still very patchy. Many hospices still experience difficulties in maintaining an adequate supply of morphine and patients often go without, making life unbearable for patients with advanced cancer. This year we are supporting Taita Taveta Hospice to buy essential medicines and morphine to help their patients maintain a good quality of life.

*Picture left: The Taita Taveta Hospice nurse advising her patient on medication.*

With our support Malindi Palliative Care Centre in eastern Kenya is developing their patient care in the community. The centre serves the whole of Kalifi County and its population of over one million. Community care is essential to ensure that the poorest, and those living far from the centre, are reached with palliative care when they need it. Since March the team has been providing regular home-care for 57 new patients.

*“I appreciate your visit, it is so encouraging. It is so humbling that Malindi health workers visit us in our home. Please come again”, a patient.*

They have also established a support group which now has 46 members, and meets regularly to share experiences and provide support.

***Pictures clockwise from top: A support group meeting; palliative care nurse Alice visiting the home of a patient; the challenges of visiting patients in rural Kenya.***



With our support, Laikipia Hospice is teaching its patients about the importance of good nutrition to maintain health and well-being when living with cancer. Twenty seven patients and care-givers took part in this recent session.



# Holistic Palliative Care

Supporting families and friends through bereavement is an important part of palliative care. We are helping make sure that hospices in Kenya are there to help families cope during illness and after the loss of their loved one.



When Judith lost her husband to cancer, nurses at Busia Hospice in Kenya were there for her. She told us her story.

*"My husband was ill from cancer. When he was ill I had so many problems, I struggled for a long time. I took him to many hospitals seeking treatment. I sold all my possessions to pay for his treatment until I had nothing left. It made me so sad. I had small children that I needed to take to school and feed but I wasn't able to help them. It was so painful for all the family. By the time he died we had nothing left and I didn't know what to do. Cancer was a catastrophe in my life.*

*"I was happy when I met Peris from Busia Hospice. She advised me and encouraged me to move on and see the future. She helped me have the faith to stand up once more."*

**Picture left: Busia Hospice nurse Peris (left) with Judith.**

Staff from Malindi Palliative Care centre are supporting the family of Serah after her death. Serah was just twelve years old when she died of cancer of the jaw. During a visit, palliative care nurse Sophie realised that Serah's parents had still not told the younger siblings about her death. They didn't know how to break such devastating news and had only told the children that Serah had gone away. Sophie was able to help the parents explain Serah's death to the younger children and support the whole family together to cope with their loss.

**Picture right: Palliative Care nurse Sophie with Serah's family**



## Share the story of your Hospice Care Kenya journey!

Our supporters are our future and because of you we are transforming many lives in Kenya. Many of our supporters have been with us for many years, often because they have links to Kenya or experience with palliative care, and for this we are very grateful.

We would be very interested to hear from anyone who would like to share their story on why they first became a Hospice Care Kenya supporter.

Please get in touch by writing to our address overleaf or email us at [fundraising@hospicecarekenya.com](mailto:fundraising@hospicecarekenya.com). Thank you.

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### Jane and Elizabeth's story

Jane (top left) is a community health volunteer in a small rural community in Siaya County, west Kenya. Amongst plots of maize and sugar cane, she lives on her 'shamba', a small plot of subsistence land she farms to feed her family. But she dedicates much of her time to caring for the health and wellbeing of her community. With our support, Jane was trained in basic palliative care in 2012. She has embraced her role as a community palliative care provider. Looking after around 100 households, she walks many miles to visit her patients.

For the last few years she has looked after 86 year old Elizabeth (bottom left), a survivor of cervical cancer. Elizabeth lives in a small one-room mud home with her great grandson. Jane and Elizabeth have formed a close bond.

*Jane told us, "I am grateful for the chance I've had to take care of Elizabeth. When I first met her she was very unwell. I took her into my heart and took care of her because my training taught me that you take care of someone until the last minute, until they have gone. I'm so grateful that we are here together today."*

*Elizabeth told us: "I am happy because if it wasn't for Jane who brought me to the hospice, my cancer probably wouldn't have been detected. Jane takes care of me, she helps me manage my pain with medicines and helped me through radiotherapy and my recovery. I am grateful to Jane for my life. I am grateful because I am able to go to my shamba to work and feed my grandson."*



**Community health volunteers are a cost effective way of reaching many more people with palliative care in some of the most rural and isolated locations in Kenya. A regular gift or donation could support this work and help improve the lives of many more people like Elizabeth, who are living and dying with a terminal illness in Kenya. Thank you for your support.**

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