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Date: April 2023

Desired Project Outcomes:

- *Strengthened Community based structures that promote gender equality, inclusion of vulnerable groups and protect children from harm.*
- *Community groups undertake income generating activities.*

Current Situation

The severe drought, due to the failure of four consecutive rainy seasons, has meant that our communities are facing hunger and thirst, like millions of people across the country. The most unusual thing was that the drought drastically affected some areas that have never been affected and for the first time even those sites that have never been given food donations were in dire need of food. Therefore, the project staff, Nyumba Kumi (community volunteers), religious leaders and the Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs have diverted most of their efforts to address the food shortage within the project sites. Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and Nyumba Kumi mobilised to support food donations and distribution.

The drought has impacted the communities within the project in many ways, including:

- *The migration of many men leaving behind women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, increasing their vulnerability.*
- *Due to lack of food older children have started engaging in child labour to support their families, dropping out of their studies.*
- *There have been reports of an increase in school attendance by teenage girls due to a lack of sanitary towels.*
- *The significant increased human conflict with wildlife, with men especially vulnerable as they are now forced to graze stock in high-risk areas. Several adults and children have been killed as leopards have come closer to communities in search of food. The destruction of vegetation, infrastructure and water tanks by elephants has also increased.*
- *The community has already lost approximately 80% of their livestock and those remaining are under threat from wildlife predators.*
- *Nyumba Kumi members across all project sites have reported increased incidences of house burglary, the theft of household items, livestock theft, increased incidences of drug use, alcohol and substance abuse, and anxiety, with most of this attributed to the prolonged drought.*
- *Increasing rates of gender-based violence including rape and abduction.*

While the most visible, the drought isn't our only problem. High inflation, the loss of incomes, insecurity, increased social isolation and the associated mental and physical health issues from enduring five years of drought and hunger are all contributing to a worsening crisis.

Although some core program activities have had to be postponed, others have continued in the face of increasing demand.

The Emergency Feeding Program:

The support of AOA in sending an additional \$130,000 enabled an estimated 50,248 children and vulnerable adults to receive at least one life saving meal a day for three months.

While the funds have now been fully used, the program was immensely important to the survival of community members. We continue to look for additional funding to restart this program.

Some of our current needs:

\$1,000 - Water.

Provides a 5,000-litre water tank to a school enabling water to be stored and used for both drinking and growing vegetables.

\$2,000 - Tackling gender inequality and violence and supporting vulnerable youth.

Provides men and women in a district, training on family life and gender equality to create awareness of traditional gender roles and their impact in often creating inequality and discrimination within a family. Additionally provides youth to participate in training on self-esteem, substance abuse, gender equality, and child protection.

\$4,400 - Creating food secure schools.

Provides one of the schools that can access water with the training and materials to start a school kitchen garden, educating children and providing nutritional inputs into the school feeding program, boosting student retention. Providing a nutritious meal at lunch time has proven to be a critical component in combatting malnutrition and encouraging parents to send their children to school.

\$5,600 - Protecting Children.

Child Rights Program - Establishes, trains and mentors' students at 4 secondary schools on child rights and responsibilities, building a safer school environment and providing a critical avenue for children to report concerns they see in their family or community.

\$6,000 - Building better futures.

Trains and supports 5 new Income Generation groups (150 people) to develop income opportunities. Includes disaster and risk management training together with climate change adaptation. Mentors group through development and connects with external stakeholders to create access to markets and sustainability.

\$10,000 - Provide counselling to children in need.

Hunger, insecurity, conflict, and violence all contribute to physical and emotional trauma for children. Provides critical counselling training and awareness sessions for 95 teachers and untrained counsellors, impacting 1,300 children.

\$22,000 - Supporting the most vulnerable.

Support, counselling, and training for community members including people living with a disability, trauma survivors and teenage mothers. Teenage mother's groups focus on education, building support networks, reconnection with family, and re-engagement in education. The program also provides support for carers of people living with disability, together with advocating for access and inclusivity. The program also focuses on supporting survivors of gender-based violence through their healing and trauma management process.