



## Developing Women Leaders

In our March newsletter we proudly launched our Women Leaders Programme (WLP) to support 20 girls from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds to become women leaders and role models in their communities. Thank you to everyone that has supported this initiative with a donation.

With your help we are providing educational support, comprehensive mentoring and world-class leadership training for 10 girls at university and 10 girls at a high school. They will develop skills, knowledge and confidence to become self-sustaining adults in paid employment or running their own businesses. In return the girls commit to mentoring a younger girl through their education and sharing their learning with their families and communities.



Back in March we introduced you to our first cohort of impressive young women. No sooner had the girls started their university courses, than Covid restrictions were reimposed across Kenya which meant courses went online or were postponed. Universities re-opened in September and four more girls took up their WLP places. Universities are trying to make up lost time (and revenue) by consolidating courses into fewer years. This will put more pressure on the girls so mentoring will be even more important. Sadly, they have not reduced total fees to reflect the shorter time frame!

Schools were also closed again earlier in 2021 so we had to wait until August to welcome ten girls to the high school version of the programme. Despite Covid, our team in Kenya has worked tirelessly with the girls, their families, educational institutions and mentors to induct the girls to the programme and set them up for success.

## Barriers to Higher Education

When starting boarding school or university in Kenya, there are lots of up-front first year expenses including basic items such as bedding, stationery, uniforms and personal items. All the girls come from very needy families that cannot afford to pay for these items or school/university fees. WLP support removes that up-front cost barrier and means that the girls will complete their full education - unlike most of girls from their communities.





## Getting Started

We brought the university girls together so that they could get to know each other, learn more about the programme and meet some of our UK Trustees via Zoom. On a later occasion, we invited the high school girls to meet Trustees, this time accompanied by a parent or caregiver. The Trustees were impressed by the girls' ambition and motivation to help others. The meetings were the girls' first experience of a 'business meeting' and they rose to the challenge beautifully in the way they presented themselves and their thoughtful questions. It was the first time that most of the girls had spoken with anyone from outside Kenya. It was a great day for everyone.

## Mentoring - A Vital Ingredient

Each girl has a Kenyan mentor and an international mentor. Both are professional women committed to supporting the girls over the course of the programme. We had another zoom meeting that brought all the mentors together so they could meet the Trustees, share ideas and receive a thorough briefing before they met their mentees. They were all excited to be working with the girls, supporting them and learning from them.



## A High School Case Study

Despite a very difficult start in life, being passed between different relatives whilst her parents struggled with addiction and an attempt to marry her off at age 15, this young high school student did very well at primary school finishing towards the top of her class. She was in the debate club and vice-chair of her church group.

Her ambition is to become a family lawyer. *"By joining WLP, I will be able to focus fully on my studies knowing that my family will not be struggling with my fees. I intend to be of help to others when I finish school to the best of my capabilities."*

## A University Case Study

This young woman was an influential student leader and scored highly in her secondary school exams but her family could not afford to send her to university. With KCC's help, she is now studying for a BSc in Procurement and Contract Management. Her aspiration is *"To get a good job in a reputable company and empower women to know that they can do more than their communities expect of them"*.

Her Kenyan mentor is Jane: *"I am humbled to be her mentor, I get immense satisfaction from seeing her goals and interests become reality"*

Her international mentor is Sophie: *"I have been delighted to be matched as her mentor. It has been a fascinating and uplifting insight into the world of studying in Nairobi, and a real delight to share our experiences and thoughts with each other"*.

