

red (P)

REDUCING POVERTY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

red(P) EDITION

COVER: RICHARD SR, RED(P) KENYA, GIVING A HAND DURING FOOD DISTRIBUTION.

Dear Patrons & Well - Wishers

We just completed our first six months since we started our red (p) journey. We never thought that, in six months, a village of three hundred residents would depend on us for their survival. The COVID-19 crisis has changed the lives of millions. Many, supported mainly by the travel and tourism industry, are one of the hardest hits of this pandemic. We are witnessing one such community impacted right in front of our eyes.

Our dear village of Oltome Cultural Boma is nested inside Amboseli National Park in Kenya. The nearest city with modern communications is about 35 miles away. The village is near a large resort, Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge, which attracts thousands of tourists every year from all over the world. Residents of Oltome Cultural Boma are Masai. They traditionally grazed animals and hunted for living. But, due to the conservation efforts, they limited animal grazing and hunting inside the park and integrated themselves with the tourism industry. Now, they raise livestock and sell them to the lodge. During the tourist season, they welcome tourists to visit their village with a small entry fee. The villagers set up a small village market to sell trinkets and souvenirs. They stretch their modest income during the tourist season to cover the expenses for the whole year. Unfortunately, COVID-19 abruptly stopped the tourist flow and completely left the village with no income. They are now facing uncertainty and starvation.

Luckily, COVID-19 is happening at a time when the world is interconnected with modern communications, and financial systems are integrated. Our volunteers, in a short time, evaluated many different options and were able to send your aids to the village just in time to cover for the food and essentials. Your aid saved this village through May and June. However, now the villagers are facing a new reality. The tourism industry will take years before returning to normal. They must find an alternate source of income, independent of the tourism industry.

In this edition, we will see how we helped the village during May and June and also discuss some of the options we are evaluating with the village leaders as alternate safe and sustainable sources of income. We will reach out to you for your help when we know that we have a solution.

Thank you and stay safe,

- Deb -



JAMBO!

COVID-19 has brought upon us an unprecedented dilemma, on one hand, the pandemic is choking the economy and is slowly driving it towards recession. And on the other hand, the lives of millions remain at risk as the pandemic continues to spread unabatedly. In this month's newsletter, we look at the impact of COVID-19 on Oltome Cultural Boma from an economic perspective as well as, from an educational point of view. We also have a report on the May and June food drive from our team members on the ground and actions we intend to take to make the village self-sustainable in the future.



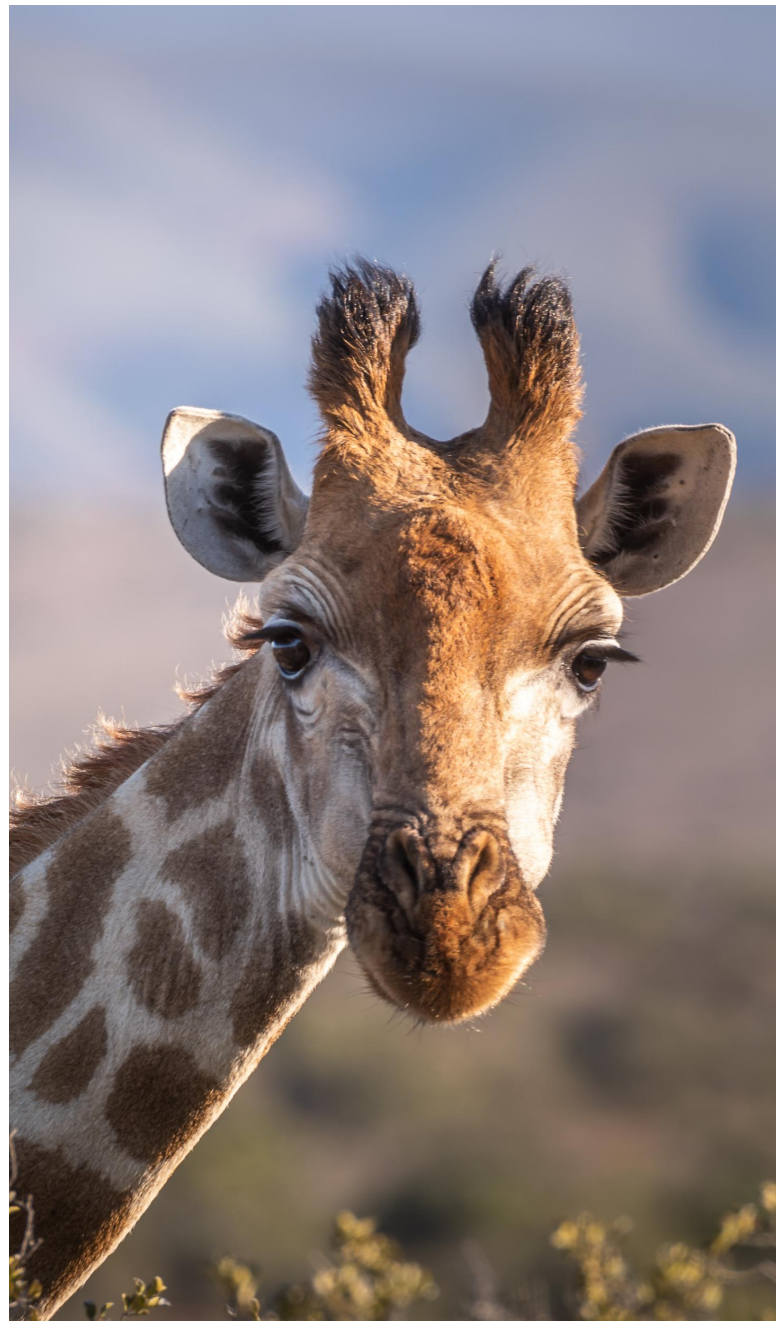
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION IN OLTOME CULTURAL BOMA

It is no doubt that the novel coronavirus has flipped the world on its back. On its wake, leaving a trail of lost revenue, job losses, shattered dreams, broken families, and uncertainty in every country's economy. The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Kenya on 13 March 2020. And two days later, on March 15, 2020, the Kenya government in liaison with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education ordered the closure of all learning institutions nationwide in response to COVID-19, disrupting close to 17 million learners countrywide.

School closures carry a high social and economic cost for people across different parts and communities in the country. The impact is more severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities like the Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, parts of the coastal region, and our very own Oltome Boma.

Since the closure of schools in Kenya, the ministry of education has championed online learning or technology-mediated learning through mediums such as TV, radio, ed-tech apps, and mobile phones. However, there is a challenge, while such learning may easily take place in urban areas, for many marginalized children in remote villages, including refugee children in camps as well as those living with various disabilities, learning during COVID-19 school closures is a deep challenge. E-learning remains out of reach for many due to several factors that exclude students in these areas from E-learning.

Additionally, smartphones are beyond the reach of most rural communities. Even when adults have smartphones, tensions around privacy and kids' unsupervised internet use render access for learning nonexistent. And where electricity and technology do exist, the cost of the internet is prohibitive. Such disadvantages present challenges for rural families and learners who must compete with their more privileged peers during national examinations.



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OLTOME CULTURAL BOMA

While there have been no cases reported within the Kimana area, the measures taken by the government, in an aim to contain the spread of the virus, have significantly impacted the livelihood of the village that heavily relied on tourism activities.

Kenya's tourism sector has been adversely affected by this pandemic seeing a cancellation rate in the higher ninety-six percentile and with its unprecedented nature, business as such had to take on drastic measures by either shutting down, sending workers on unpaid leave, or scaled-down operations in a bid to stay afloat and meet the demands of these challenging times. The travel and tourism industry is an umbrella industry with complex inter-industry linkages with many other sectors in the economy such as hotel, community-level

operations, education, financial, agriculture, medical, travel and transport, construction, real estate, and retail. Due to the heavy toll of travel and tourism in the country's economy the hospitality industry has seen an acute fall in demand of their services necessitating a reduced workforce seeing a small portion of the staff working on rotational shifts, if not a layoff of staff, for an indefinite period and creating an adverse knock-on effect on other related industries.

For instance, the Serena Chain of Hotels had temporarily ceased its operations and closed 10 of its lodges until June 15th, 2020, when they reopened. The closed hotels and lodges included the Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge, Kilaguni Serena Safari Lodge, Mara Serena Safari Lodge, Serena Mountain Lodge, and Lake Elementaita Serena Camps. Amboseli Serena being just a few meters away from Oltome Boma, the pilot village for the red(P) program.

The closure of Amboseli Serena has had a big impact on the village as it provided a place for the community to earn their daily keep from a myriad of opportunities like providing tour guide services to the park visitors, a selling point for their cultural ornamental beadwork to providing translation services to filmmakers.

The village reached out to red(P) for assistance and appreciating the gravity of the situation, immediate food aid assistance was mobilized. However, it became clear that a lasting and self-sustainable plan was needed. This led to discussions within the team as well as engaging the village elders via phone call that bore the following ideas.

SHORT TERM PLAN

- **MAY AND JUNE FOOD AID**

The grounding of flights and cessation of movement brought upon the village an acute loss of revenue. And when the village elders reached out, amid fear of the government imposing a total lockdown on the country. With schools closed, following a government directive, we thought it would be wise to divert the funds meant for school fees to meet a more immediate need for the village which was food. This saw us transfer a total of \$3,956 that enabled the villagers' stock up on dried foodstuff like flour, rice, and cooking oil, which they later divided among themselves

each receiving a good enough portion to last each family a few months. This process was successfully overseen by Richard Sn and Richard Jr, our team members on the ground. Below are a few photos from the May and June food aid distribution held at Oltome Cultural Boma.







• DECOR CURVED FROM SOAP STONE.

• **red (P) SOKO**

Soko ~ a swahili word for the market place.

Red(P) is available to assist with setting up an e-commerce platform as well as the marketing of ornamental beaded products with a tag line, from Oltome to the world. Ideally, these products are usually sold to tourists at the gate in a very informal manner. Our goal here is to expand their reach and offer them an online presence that translates to more sales and more revenue for the community. Our immediate target will be the local market to get them started. Then, once logistics are ironed out and travel restrictions lifted, we will market the products internationally and hand over the running of the store transferred to them. Be on the lookout for the next newsletter as we will post sample merchandise and see what the women of Oltome are capable of with their crafty beadwork and have some available for pre-order. We are also working on setting up a fundraiser using a fundraising platform. This will help them generate funds from well-wishers during the pandemic period.



• SAMPLE BEADWORK. RANGING FROM BRACELETS, COASTERS, BELTS, WALLETS AND SO MUCH MORE



• SAMPLE BEADWORK.



LONG TERM PLAN

KEEP CALM YOU ARE IN RED(P)'S IDEA LAB



Red(P) has initiated an idea Lab to research options that could potentially allow them to build alternate revenue streams that respect the conservation of the park and the culture of the people. The aim here is to spark idea generation from within the village that is geared towards self-sustenance. For example, we have three ideas that we are currently exploring, which are:

1. HYDROPONICS FARMING.

This is a method of growing plants in a water-based, nutrient-rich solution. Hydroponics does not use soil, instead, the root system is supported using an inert medium such as perlite, rock wool, clay pellets, peat moss, or vermiculite. We thought this would be a viable solution given that the village is inside a national game reserve on land they cannot farm and since the soil is not needed. The other reason was that Amboseli Serena being a few meters away from the village, they would buy leafy greens and vegetables from the village providing a steady stream of income to the village.



2. EDUCATION ACCESS.

The Ministry of Health, on July 7th, announced the cancellation of the 2020 academic calendar following consultations with all industry stakeholders. A move that will see all students repeat their current class next year with schools set to reopen in January 2021.

Nevertheless, colleges and universities will be able to reopen provided they adhere to strict guidelines and regulations set forth by the Ministry of Health to contain the virus spread. Despite leaning being paralyzed by the corona virus pandemic, learning in the urban areas is still taking place online while e-learning in marginalized areas like Oltome are not.

We, with help from our team on the ground, are exploring a few ideas about this problem. Something in the lines of setting up a community computer lab. Once we fine-tune the details, we will be sure to reach out for your financial support.



3. AQUAPONICS FARMING.

Aquaponics is a combination of aquaculture, which is growing fish and other aquatic animals, and hydroponics which is growing plants without soil. Aquaponics uses these two in a symbiotic combination in which plants are fed the aquatic animals' discharge or waste. In return, the vegetables clean the water that goes back to the fish.

Our main hindrance for this is the source of water for Oltome Boma. We do know the village has ground water and it will be a matter of setting up a pump, a little plumbing and setting up the fish tanks. These are some of the details we need to iron out before we can kick off the project.



THANK YOU !!

#TOGETHERASONE

EMERGING STRONGER THAN BEFORE

"Umoja ni nguvu, Utengano ni Udhaifu"

~
Swahili Proverb

"Unity is strength, division is weakness"

Undoubtedly, there are still tough times ahead and we believe with your partnership, we will be able to support the village and build channels that will have them emerge stronger than they were before.

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