



## FALL NEWSLETTER

### 2017-2018 Highlights

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Former First Lady and champion for girls' education, Michelle Obama, said "Educating girls doesn't just transform their life prospects – it transforms the prospects of their families, communities, and nations." NEF continues to be a small operation, but we are still having a big impact. Read the update of one of NEF's college students, Velma, on page 4 and you can understand how this plays out in real life. Similarly, a mother of one of NEF's beneficiaries gave a moving testimony about how she had witnessed positive change in her daughter. She attributed her daughter's happiness and "coming out of her shell" to being able to stay in school. Not only was she free from worrying about tuition fees, but she was able to do something for herself, her family and her future. The mother thanked NEF and encouraged other parents to show support and interest in their students' education.

89% of our beneficiaries have successfully completed high school. This means we are achieving our primary goal – to give young women the foundation of a solid education. You can read about all of NEF's beneficiaries on the following pages.

Just as important as celebrating the girls' accomplishments is understanding where challenges lie and how NEF can respond to help students succeed in school. Over the years, we have come to realize that it is often elements outside of school, or issues that are not purely academic, that can have the biggest impact on a student's success. For example, we realized that most families still use kerosene lamps and it is both difficult and unhealthy for students to study in the evening without adequate light. If they cannot study and do their homework, they fall behind at school. Therefore, solar

lanterns are a standard part of our scholarship package at Busijo Secondary School. Engaging parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders is also important both in addressing issues and developing interventions. Read on to learn more about how NEF is addressing early pregnancy and HIV/Aids through the student workshops that we sponsored in 2017 and 2018.

Going forward my colleagues and I are examining how we can help our beneficiaries capitalize on their education, whether they attend a college, start a business or a family. This is important because many of the young women thought they had few options before entering NEF's program. Now, several are first generation high school and college graduates. Both the students and their parents will benefit from further guidance. In addition, we are entering an exciting phase where some of our graduates will soon be in a position to reciprocate their support from NEF by sponsoring other young women. In this way, the gift of education is coming full circle.

#### NEF at a Glance

- Launched in 2012
- 15 total number of beneficiaries supported (Form 1 through Form 4)
- 6 current high school beneficiaries
- 1 current university beneficiary
- 8 high school graduates (89% success rate)
- 2 college graduates
- 4 health/wellness workshops sponsored & organized
- 7 computer training courses provided
- 1 audio/visual projector donated
- ~100 Feminine hygiene kits distributed
- Numerous books, uniforms, shoes & solar lanterns provided



This is very exciting news and I'm so happy I can share it with you. I know I can speak on behalf of the entire NEF Team and all of our beneficiaries when I say THANK YOU! We are so appreciative of all our supporters (both new and existing). We could not have achieved what we have without each and every one of your contributions.

Happy Holiday,

NEF Co-Founder and Project Director

## NEF'S 2018 SEASON OF GIVING FUNDRAISER

Show your support for girls' education by wearing a bright and bold [Nasirumbi Education Fund \(NEF\) T-shirt](#). Not only will you look cool in one of our T-shirts, but you will also be helping NEF gain exposure and raise money for our scholarship program in Kenya. Our goal is to sell 50 T-shirts.

If you prefer not to buy a T-shirt for yourself, please consider purchasing one for our students and staff in Kenya. Sizes medium and large are appreciated.

Each T-shirt is \$25. The fundraiser will run from #GivingTuesday, November 27 until December 11, 2018.

Orders can be placed here:

<https://customink.com/fundraising/nasirumbi-education-fund>



### Prefer to make a financial contribution to NEF?

Donations can be made in two ways: 1) **NEF's secure donation page**, hosted by The Zawadisha Fund: <https://www.classy.org/checkout/donation?eid=52123>, or 2) **Mail a check** to The Zawadisha Fund. Please write 'NEF donation' in the memo line and mail the check to: P.O. Box 1517, Truckee, CA 96160.

All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The tax ID number for Zawadisha, NEF's fiscal sponsor, is 46-0583426.

**Volunteer – share your skills with NEF.** We need help with social media, marketing and fundraising. Please contact Jessica at [nasirumbi.educ.fund@gmail.com](mailto:nasirumbi.educ.fund@gmail.com) if you are interested and would like more information.

## 2017-2018 was a Banner Year

2017, in many ways was one of NEF's most successful and active years since our inception. We participated in the Women as Change Makers conference for a third year in a row; participated in three holiday boutiques; organized an International Women's Day event with Barre3 San Mateo; hosted an intimate fundraising dinner; and ran a very successful #GivingTuesday campaign. All of these activities enabled us to accomplish many things in 2017 and 2018. We continue to operate our flagship program at Busijo Secondary School, which includes scholarships, uniforms and learning aids (e.g. solar lanterns) for girls and an annual health workshop and HIV/Aids testing for the entire student body. We provide college scholarships for the successful high school graduates on a case-by-case basis (read more below).



NEF beneficiaries (and a parent) show their happiness in receiving lanterns, uniforms and shoes from NEF.

NEF also sponsored all five NEF beneficiaries and one top performing, male student to receive 42 hours of computer training at a local technical college. This initial offering will be evaluated after the students complete the entire course, and if it is deemed successful NEF will include it as a regular college prep program for the NEF beneficiaries. Other Busijo students will also be encouraged to apply for the course, which currently costs \$30/student. Additionally, NEF was pleased to co-fund with Busijo Secondary School an audio-visual projector to enhance their classroom presentations.

NEF's impact is also extending to primary school students in nearby Funyula, also in Western Kenya, where Jessica hand delivered books. The beautiful Osborne books on math, geography, the human body, reading (phonics) and other topics were unlike anything these children had ever received. They were beyond excited and they danced in appreciation. Jessica accepted their thanks on behalf of all the NEF donors who contributed books. Then, she joined them in some song and dance, which always makes the kids smile even more to see a Mazungu (white person) doing a Kenyan dance.





## Congratulations Victorine!

In May 2018, one of NEF's first beneficiaries at Busijo Secondary School, Victorine, successfully graduated from Maseno College of Nursing with a diploma to practice as a Community Health Nurse. Currently, Victorine is working at a hospital in Mombasa, Kenya, and she is looking for a location to start her own pharmacy (community chemist shop). Not only will she fulfill an important community need by providing medicine and health advice, but she also plans to use some of her income to fund scholarships for young women.



Victorine outside Mission Hospital at Maseno College of Nursing, near Kisumu, Kenya.

## Velma Reflects on University Life

Velma recently finished her third year at Kibabii University in Bungoma, Kenya, where she is working toward an education and business studies. In the spring and early summer of 2018 she completed her teaching practice at Malakisi ACK Secondary School. During her attachment, she taught three classes – business studies, mathematics and PE – in addition to carrying out research and preparing lesson plans, teaching notes/aids and other professional documents. Velma received a glowing recommendation from the Senior Principal of Malakisi Secondary School, and she also reflected on her teaching experience to NEF: “My attachment was successful as it helped me improve a lot in my career. I learnt a lot from fellow teachers and improved my confidence and courage to face a multitude of learners.” At Kibabii University, Velma is also a dedicated student

and regularly earns B's and A's in her classes. She notes, however, that university life is very different from high school because “there are no bells to guide you” and living away from home is difficult.

In addition to support from NEF, Velma also received a HELB grant from the Kenyan government, which helps her cover living expenses. Velma is very appreciative of the financial support she had received from NEF. “It has been a great benefit to me and my family. It has kept me in school, and also given my other siblings the opportunity to be in school because the little money my parents could have paid for me, is now used to pay their school fee.”

After graduation next year, Velma would like to find a teaching job or start a small business so she can save money for graduate school and also help her family. Ultimately, she would like to be a university lecturer.



Velma (L), with Jessica and past beneficiary (and graduate), Judith.

### Follow Nasirumbi Education Fund on Social Media:

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/NasirumbiEducationFund](http://www.facebook.com/NasirumbiEducationFund)

Website: [www.nasirumbi.org](http://www.nasirumbi.org)



## Update on NEF's High School Beneficiaries



Current beneficiaries with Dr. Hannington Odame of CABE (left) and the Advisory Committee at Busijo Secondary School.

### **Damaris Akello (Form 1)**

Damaris is NEF's newest beneficiary. She is 19 years old. Damaris did her Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2014, but she was unable to join Form 1 because her family could not afford her tuition fees. She decided to go to visit her mother who is working in Mombasa. Once there she sought employment as house help. She saved some money that enabled her to pay for her admission in Form 1 at Busijo Secondary School. Damaris now lives with her maternal grandmother near Busijo and is excelling in high school with support from NEF.

### **Beatrice Oganah (Form 2)**

Beatrice is 15 years old. She lost her father when she was young and lives with her older sister and mother who is diabetic. Damaris' grandmother was contributing to her education, but after an accident she could not afford to provide financial assistance. So, Damaris began working for a community member eight hours a week to raise her tuition money. In 2018, she applied for NEF sponsorship and now she is able to stay in school and focus on her education. She excels in English and Chemistry.

### **Pamelah Wandera (Form 2)**

Pamelah is 15 years old. She is the oldest of seven children. Her father is a fisherman, and her mother is a farmer. To help her large family and to raise her tuition money, she works about 14 hours every weekend. She also sings in a church choir in her village. Pamelah said that she is very proud of being awarded a scholarship because it has enabled her to stay in school and not be sent home for school fees. She excels in Kiswahili and CRE.

### **Cynthia Juma (Form 3)**

Cynthia is 20 years old. She is one of six children living with her parents who are peasant farmers. Only her older sister has attended secondary school, which was paid for by a well-wisher in her extended family. Cynthia is a hard-working student; she holds second place academically in her Form 3 (Sophomore) class. She excels in Physics and CRE. She feels that having enough textbooks has also helped contribute to her performance in school.

### **Akinyi Harriett (Form 4)**

Harriett is 19 years old. Her father, a watchman, raises her and she has four siblings. Before sponsorship, Harriet was often sent home because she lacked school fees, although she was working in other people's farms to raise money for her tuition. She is the top performing student in her Senior (Form 4) class, and has maintained 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position since her Freshman year. In addition to helping her family after school, Harriett also participates in a youth group. Upon graduation in 2018, she would like to study to be a doctor, and she wants to be a "world-wide changer".

### **Phaustine Apiyo (Form 4)**

Phaustine is 18 years old. She had a high fee balance before receiving sponsorship from NEF in 2015, and was on the verge of being sent home for not having a school uniform, necessary books and other learning materials. Her parents struggle to provide for their family of six children by farming and fishing. Phaustine is smart and an independent thinker. She excels in History and English. She will be taking the national exit exam for high school along with her fellow NEF beneficiary Harriett this year. Upon graduation in 2018, she would like to study to be a judge.

### **Selpher Ojiambo and Susan Omoga (Graduates)**

Selpher and Susan graduated from Busijo Secondary School in 2017. They believe that NEF's support was instrumental in their receiving a high school education because their school fees were paid and so they were able to be in school regularly. Also, the lanterns and uniforms that NEF provided allowed them to study at home and to be clean and properly dressed for school. Although Selpher and Susan did not score high enough on their national secondary school exit exam to enter directly into a university, they can apply for a certificate or diploma program at a community college or vocational training center. NEF is keeping in touch with both ladies and counseling them on their options.

## Providing Youth with Tools to Thrive

Each year NEF sponsors and co-organizes, in collaboration with the Busijo Secondary School Advisory Committee, a student workshop designed for both female and male students to help address common issues affecting youth and to give them the tools to thrive at school, in their homes and in the community. Round-table discussions with the high school students at Busijo, and a visit to the Health Promotion Officer for Samia sub-county (a wonderful woman who also facilitates NEF-sponsored health workshops) revealed that most high school girls are still trying to find their voice and they are hesitant to ask for help, even when it could improve their performance in school. We want them to embrace responsible behavior and practices; to be accountable for their actions and to recognize their self-worth so they can define their own destinies.

The topics covered in the workshops (May 20, 2017 and June 30, 2018) include life skills, socialization, sexuality and adolescence, HIV/AIDS (what the virus is, how it spreads and methods of prevention), pregnancy and abortion, and drug and substance abuse. Students have limited access to the local clinics because they are often closed when they get out of school. Therefore, general counseling and HIV/AIDS testing are also available after the NEF student workshops.



While HIV prevalence has declined in recent years among the general population in Kenya, at least 1.5 million people in the country are living with HIV (UNAIDS Gap Report 2016). Young women are more at risk than young men because various forms of discrimination can place them in subordinate or forced relationships.

The workshops have reached ~83% of the students at Busijo Secondary School. (The workshops are not mandatory and are held on a Saturday). In the 2017 workshop, 45 students were tested for HIV/AIDS and three tested positive. In 2018, 69 youth and 4 teachers were tested. None were positive for the virus.

## Memories from Kenya

Every time I return to Kenya I am filled with both excitement and trepidation. Since my first visit as a graduate student from the University of Amsterdam, this country and many of its people have become very dear to me. I easily fall into a routine: waking with the sun and the roosters, and sleeping after the sun sets over Lake Victoria. (Many people in rural Kenya still do not have electricity and indoor plumbing.) I look forward to seeing familiar faces and eating Kenyan home-cooking made my host family. And, at the same time there is an element of excitement and anxiousness of traveling around the country side on a motor bike and worrying if the weather will allow me to complete my tight fieldwork schedule. Thankfully, I have always been able to achieve the most important mission: making a personal connection with our beneficiaries, their caregivers and teachers. Here are a few photos of the Kenyan countryside from my trip in September 2017.



(L) Life on Lake Victoria. (C) View of Lake Victoria from the road near Busijo. (R) Heavy rainfall brings work to a halt.