

# THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH PROGRAMME - CHEP

## PROVIDING HEALTHCARE TO CHILDREN IN RURAL KENYA

### BACKGROUND

Children's health is of upmost importance for us and ties in well with our mission of promoting the dignity of the family. We believe that all children deserve to be happy and healthy. Unfortunately, not all children enjoy this right and this is a stark reality for thousands of children from Tigoni Limuru area. Njoroge, is a weary 9-year-old who has lived with a debilitating leg tumour for most of his life. The tumour started as a small pimple on his upper thigh and for 6 years has been getting bigger and heavier immobilizing him. Although his parents were greatly alarmed and distressed at what was happening to their boy the family was living in abject poverty and there was nothing much they could do. They were frustratingly helpless knowing that he needed a major surgery to get the tumour removed. At 9 years old, Njoroge was so behind in his schooling that he was still in nursery school. On top of not being able to enjoy his childhood having to drag his leg around.

### CHALLENGE

In the Tigoni area of Limuru, thousands of families live in extreme poverty. For most of these families the only work available is in the tea and coffee plantations as casual labourers. The wages received from these jobs are meagre and some workers do not even receive a daily wage. The situation is so dire that we often find a family of 8 squashed in a one-room house. Many children living in such conditions lack access to running water or decent sanitation and are prone to disease. Although these children do have access to schooling due to the government instituted free primary education, access to medical care is made difficult by the circumstances at home. Because of these dogged circumstances, Njoroge was unable to receive the health care he needed when he first got sick, continuing to live with a tumour that he could have received treatment for at the onset.

### SOLUTION

The Children's Health Program (CHEP) brings medical care to children whose parents cannot afford healthcare at established health centres. By donating only \$50 you ensure that one child is enrolled in the program and taken care of medically for 10 years. The cost is only \$50 because of the large number of children enrolled in the program and while some children require very little, others require more serious treatment, operations and other procedures. We believe that if a child is healthy for all those formative years, they will have a really good health foundation. How it works: Currently 4 of the poorest primary schools in Limuru area: Kingothua Primary School, Limuru Mission Primary School, Umoja Primary School and Riara Primary School are covered under CHEP. 3,020 school going children between the ages of 4 to 14 years have their healthcare catered for. The school heads are briefed on how the program works and its intention. They then communicate the information to the parents and seek their consent. Each school then provides a room where the medical services can be delivered. Our medical staff from Kimlea Clinic

visit the schools on fixed days and conduct yearly check-ups to all the children, de-worm them at least 3 times a year, give vitamins, supplements and at times food to malnourished children (following up with the families in serve cases), treatment and tests as required.

#### LONG-TERM IMPACT

In Njoroge's case, his head teacher was able to refer the case to the CHEP medical staff. We were able to reach Njoroge at home, refer him to a major hospital in the area where he was able to receive the much needed care which involved removing the tumour. Njoroge is just one example of thousands of children who continue to enjoy the health services provided under the program. It is clear that without access to medical attention provided by CHEP, many children would continue to suffer in silence, ultimately losing their lives. With the care they receive we find that our children under CHEP are less prone to fall ill, have more energy, are more engaged at school and are generally able to be more productive. These students tend to miss school less often and are able to keep up with their studies. In addition, in the long run, the family's general medical expenses will be kept low avoiding undue financial strain on parents. Generally, healthy kids improve the quality of life of the family unit as a whole. And finally, by continuing unabated in their education, these thousands of children are able to curve out better lives for themselves in the future.