

# FRIENDS OF DAGORETTI CHILDREN

## Lucy Mwende, on her way to a new life

Lucy is 18 years old and on the edge of a whole new life. Brought up in Dagoretti village, a poor area bordering the Nairobi suburb of Karen, Lucy is the youngest of three children. Her father left the family when she was two years old, so for most of Lucy's childhood her mother was the sole breadwinner. As with many women in the Dagoretti area, Lucy's mother did daily casual work, always an unreliable income.

One of those jobs was to receive materials for recycling, which Lucy's mother weighed and calculated their worth. This proved to be her most stable income and from the money she earned she paid for Lucy's lunch, her exam fees and any further fees required for her primary education. Lucy proved to be a good student and with the highest KCPE mark in the Dagoretti sub-county she was offered a place at a national school.



Only the top students in Kenya get places in national secondary schools, but it's still not free. Lucy's mother couldn't afford the fees, so through word of mouth she contacted Catherine Muguro, the FDC social worker. As with all applicants to FDC, Catherine led a team of FDC volunteers to visit Lucy's home, a one room shack with the sleeping and living areas divided by a curtain. After an assessment, the team was satisfied that Lucy was a good candidate for FDC and she was enrolled on the programme.

### **Lucy is offered a place at university**

The next four years at the national school, located about 100 km from her home, were not easy, as Lucy had to board – common in such a big country – and she really missed her mother. Nevertheless, she persevered and after passing her secondary exams with a B+ Lucy was offered a place at a university in the west of Kenya to study physiotherapy. But having no family or friends in the area Lucy and her mother were uneasy. “So, I asked for a transfer closer to my home and was then placed at Kenyatta University to study occupational health,” she explained.

### **LUCY HELPS HER MOTHER BY WEIGHING RECYCLED PRODUCTS**

Catherine however, encouraged her to continue pursuing her dream to be a physiotherapist by applying to [Amref International University](#) (AMIU) – an offshoot of the flying doctor organisation in Kenya – which accepted her on a four-year BSc physiotherapy course. A bonus is that it is easily reached by public transport, meaning that Lucy can visit her mother often. Meanwhile, she used her gap year before university to assist her mother at work, weighing the products before the customer got paid.

For Lucy, university is just the beginning. After graduating she will have to find a job. For now, she is both excited and nervous. She'll be making new friends and starting a course in what she hopes will be her long-term profession. She also has another motive: “I will study hard”, she said, “and maybe find a good job so that my mother will not have to work so hard.” We look forward to following her progress.

*Friends of Dagoretti Children (FDC) is a Kenya registered charitable society run by volunteers. Its aim is to assist in the education of bright but disadvantaged young people, largely from the Dagoretti area, through secondary and tertiary education. It has no religious or political affiliations.*