



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES

TAG: WHD2021

Country: Kenya
Location: Nairobi
Programme: FS
Date: 04.08.21

'I have learnt to be courageous'

Faced with challenges caused by the pandemic, Judith Kathiru, 52, continues to dedicate her life to keep families together. Judith is a community volunteer, and a bridge between poor families and SOS Children's Villages family strengthening programme, which empowers parents. She works in a low-income neighbourhood christened KCC after the Kenya Cooperative Creameries, a milk processing plant that is responsible for the community's origin, on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya's capital.

"I often visit families in the community to monitor how children and their families live. People know me, and because of the trust I have built over time, they openly share their problems with me. When the call comes from the family strengthening team to identify families in need at KCC, I will already know that such and such a house is like this and that.

"Parents I connect with SOS Children's Villages receive help with start-ups, education and psychosocial support to ensure their children are well cared for within their own families. I started working with SOS Children's Villages in 2003. Without assistance, children in KCC suffer from hunger and lack of education. Many men have absconded their fatherly duties and spend time drinking alcohol; wives carry the burden of the family. With the meagre income from casual work, mothers cannot afford to put children to school and pay for other basic needs.

"I use skills from psychosocial training to advise caregivers to channel their frustration and anger away from the children. If there is violence in the home, I speak to the husband but in severe cases, I involve the authorities.

"When I heard about COVID-19 and that people were dying from the virus, I wanted to stop working completely. I was afraid of infecting my two grandchildren aged thirteen and five years old. I took them in after their mother died. At first, I stopped home visits in the community. But people kept knocking on my door asking for help; I found it hard to turn them away. Then I made a decision to keep supporting them. They depend on me and I am available to them. I get desperate calls at any time of day or night.

"To protect myself, I always wear a mask and carry a sanitizer. I try not to enter the house during home visits and prefer holding conversations outside where possible. In my work, I have seen families thrive and children enjoy better care. I have learnt that no matter what is

happening in life, I must have courage so more children in KCC can have a safe home and families can stay together.”