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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: INTRODUCTION AND REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

Both before and during my time as Governor of Narok County, I have seen many organizations pursue development work in Kenya and particularly Narok my birth place. With that extensive experience, I can confidently say that no NGO has done more to benefit Kenya than WE Charity. I have been honoured to see the difference that WE has made in Kenya firsthand. Their work is absolutely transformative, benefitting hundreds of thousands of Kenyans. WE has a unique approach in our country, that they partner directly with the community to seek advice from the elders. I applaud this technique, to bring development the community's culture agrees to and requests. As the government, we appreciate the strong partnership we have with WE. Together we are building our nation to new heights.

Impact of WE Charity

Education

WE Charity has changed the landscape and lives of Narok, Kenya. Over the last 20 years, WE Charity has built long-term partnerships with over 26 communities, engaging elders and community members in building their own sustainable solutions to lift themselves from poverty. Through construction and training several hundred classrooms, tens and tens of thousands of students have a new future through a stronger, higher quality education. 5% of our female Grade 8 graduates were going on to secondary schools until WE Charity built an all Girls Secondary School and within the first year, 50% of female Grade 8 graduates had a place within a secondary school. WE Charity then designed, built and opened the WE College to invest in the future leaders of this coming generation. Carefully designed coursework has deliberately and diligently re-invested skill into the local economy. WE College is creating local leaders in Nursing, Tourism, Agriculture, Mechanics, and a growing number of courses to re-invest in jobs locally and nationally. This is profound and sustained improvements being designed hand in hand with our community leaders and members. Children who have an education, which WE makes more accessible through their hundreds of school rooms and even entire campuses, are far less likely to be forced into child labour.

Healthcare

The healthcare work WE is doing here in Narok has been life-changing, providing a hospital, health centre and mobile clinics that often serve more than 1,300 patients per month. I remember in 2017 when I personally with donors officially opened the surgical wing. Life has not been the same again. This Baraka Hospital provide services – including emergency C-sections – that people once had to travel all the way to Nairobi to receive, and often lost both baby and Mum on the way. We appreciate WE efforts and due to this, we have offered extended support to the health programs from the government. As the government, we pay salaries to two health care givers based at Baraka Hospital. We have enrolled both Baraka Hospital and Kishon Clinic in an insurance coverage, and we also offer professional development training free of charge to WE staff.

Clean Water & Sanitation

WE's water infrastructure now gives clean drinking water to tens of thousands of parents and children. Not only does this human right improve health, but allows many young women to attend school, as they are no longer needed to walk to and from distant water sources. (Our animals do not die of thirst especially during the dry season). This is a highly important aspect to raise our children out of poverty and provide gender parity within our classrooms. Mothers are now able to meet all household water needs at a higher sanitation standard, empowering them to raise the levels of sanitation in their households and control the prevention of communicable diseases. This single fact alone has forever changed the life course of this region.

Agriculture

WE Charity's farms and agricultural lessons in schools not only provide healthy food, but also teach the next generation about nutritious diets and reliable farming practices. Our people experience drought and need to understand the life-giving, nutritious food we can grow on our land through important techniques of irrigation. All of this work links back to education, as our children are better equipped to attend school when they are healthy and well fed.

Economic Empowerment

WE empowers the community to sustain all project initiatives by building the capacity of the parents to earn an income or an alternate source of income (such as livestock keeping, a cultural practice which brings money into the home). They build upon cultural practices, such as the Maasai traditional beadwork, to create a market for women's products overseas in the Me To WE Artisan program. Over 1400 women are earning 4 times their previous incomes through a fair wage for products they make near their homesteads. For men to approve of and support these gender shifts is a true testament to the strong, trusting, and respectful relationship WE Charity builds with community members across Narok.

Integrity and Community Relationship

WE Charity follows through on their commitments. Partnerships with community leaders are full of integrity, vision and trust. Me To WE Volunteers join in WE Charity's work on the ground through small time increments supporting through volunteer work. Volunteers contribute their time to the stage of the larger construction project which WE always ensures is complete as promised.

Me To WE Trip Volunteers Effect on Community

Profound Direct Impact

So much of WE Charity's work is only possible thanks to the support of ME to WE trips, which welcome people from all over the world to develop a better understanding of life in the Maasai Mara and entire country and contribute to WE's work here. WE sends specialised doctors to work in hospitals and train local doctors in speciality fields like surgery and dermatology. Literally crowds of hundreds of community members from across Narok and beyond – even from Tanzania – cross into Kenya and Narok to receive this valued care. Optomologists bring the gift of sight to those who lost it years ago. Dermotologists diagnose skin conditions community members have lived with for years, and prescribe medication to heal. Surgeons join the local team for specialized needs which have arisen from within our people. Thanks to WE, we now have a Dental unit, Renal Unit, Eye Unit, Mother Child Healthcare Unit, and Maternity Services in permanent facilities, as well as an additional Mobile Unit serving remote communities in need with life-saving healthcare at their door.

Culturally respectful approach

We also receive several young minds of secondary school and university students from across the world. All trips are appropriately designed to support the cultural core values we have in our society. Travelers are very respectful, and the young children in the WE communities love meeting and learning from our guests. We welcome them with great enthusiasm and receive the same level of joy back from them. I have personally seen what many would refer to as 'poverty as tourism' or approaching a developing country as though it was a playground. This is not WE's approach.

WE is the antithesis to this approach, and instead is openly welcomed by the community through a deep and trusting relationship with WE team members who are committed to the projects and region. WE recognizes true community development is a long-term approach in partnership with the community toward a sustained change respectful of culture.

WE brings hundreds of volunteers to Narok each year. WE carefully and thoughtfully manages this by rotating volunteer groups through different communities. This gives each community a chance to have an authentic cultural exchange with volunteers, and also for volunteers to maintain a unique relationship with the community they interact with. This diligence and commitment to community and cultural respect is an example that lives through the volunteer program, placements, and experience.

Job Creation

In addition to supporting communities with the millions of donor dollars that each trip brings in, ME to WE trips require travel infrastructure that has brought job security to hundreds of people. As many of the communities WE works with are quite remote and isolated, there are some associated costs around safety and security. Having played a leadership role in Narok's tourism sector for decades, I can confidently say that the costs are minor compared to more typical safari trips in the region. ME to WE trips are essentially operating at cost, with just enough left over to continue growing the program. These trips, through supporting communities and the Kenyan travel industry, also protect the local environment and the Maasai Mara Reserve, often considered the 8th wonder of the world. The trips are throughout the year which provides steady job opportunity for our local communities.

Joblessness and unemployment is rampant across Kenya, and most specifically within rural areas. Our urban slums are expanding due to the lack of opportunity in rural areas. WE's presence in Narok is creating stability and therefore investment in an unprecedented way. Narok 20 years ago was a completely different place than Narok today.

WE's footprint has forever changed the future for the people within Narok. WE is creating immediate jobs right now, as well as building the foundational education for thousands of people who will be highly skilled within WE College. Not only is WE adding in hundreds of jobs through Me To WE trips, but will also be producing nurses, trained teachers, medical technicians, and more from WE College to grow Narok from within.

My Belief in WE

Work is always undertaken with the upmost transparency. WE staff not only come to Kenya, but I have also been able to personally travel to Toronto to see their global head quarters of operations and meet with WE partners.

We are fortunate to be chosen as partners with WE, and we are working together hand in hand to build our country. This is not an academic exercise, but facts that affect thousands of people every single day. WE is willing to devote their strategy to a humble approach together with the community, to research and implement lessons learned from other organizations, and to identify approaches to development driven by data and hard evidence behind them. Results of impacts are charted, graphed, and analyzed for approaches to be updated as community relationships and new techniques are evolved. WE has tried and true transition plans for an exit strategy from a community once meeting the criteria as 'sustainable', while maintaining relationships to support in challenges should they arise. There are open forums to engage in honest dialogue with community decision makers to ensure the partnership is authentic. Feedback is therefore always flowing between community members and the WE team. In response, there are always adaptations to project implementation as WE is very responsive to new ideas.

It may be easy to criticize these things when you are simply sitting at a desk in North America. If you would like to comment on the trips, we would invite you to come to Kenya and see first hand in an educated manner the real, vital work that is taking place here.

It may open your eyes to more than you think. If you are unable to speak of the work first hand, then you are not worthy of providing commentary. We welcome you to our country to see the change and hope we see.

As the Governor of Narok, I represent hundreds of thousands of people. We appreciate WE's work with us in Narok, and look forward to a long-term continued partnership. We look for more projects, more schools, more impact, and more volunteers. If WE could spread throughout the entire nation of Kenya, we would have a new and welcomed future.

Yours

Sincerely
Samuel K. Tunai

HON. SAMUEL K. TUNAI
GOVERNOR