

## SUNDERLAND AFC KEROCHE (Kenya) by Gary Lamb.

I first discovered the team on facebook in November of 2011, during a general search of Sunderland AFC. I became friends and after numerous conversations with Team manager Paul Kimani, I came to realise how he and the team were struggling to survive.

The team was started in 2007, when a few friends got together to come up with an idea to help the youngsters in the area, to help prevent them falling into crime, and vices, after many of the kids were either dying through poverty, or ending up in jail, by stealing, simply so their families had food on the table.

The football project started in their home village of Karai, in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, and over time the kids and locals had formed a team and even a kid's football academy, but without any funding at all, Manager Paul, Theuri (now team captain) and other friends were themselves going without meals, to keep the project running.

The name Sunderland AFC Keroche came about, through the number of African players who have played for our club over the last few years IE. Muntari, Mensah, Gyan, ETC and the Keroche part was added as many people in the area refer to their village of Karai, as Keroche, as the large Keroche brewery in their village.

There have been numerous times when Paul and his friends wanted to give up, and wondered if it was all worthwhile, but through hard work, dedication and numerous hurdles they persevered. In February of this year they finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the local district league, just missing out on promotion to the provincial league by a few points, and when you consider the conditions and pitfalls they faced throughout the season you'll realise what a fantastic achievement this is. Please see this list;

- 1, Without any funding the team had walk to every game, and with some away games up to 10miles away, they walk there, play the game, and walk 10 miles back to the village
- 2, Team members can be trying to earn some kind of a living by hawking water on Donkey carts, at the local market, or working in the local quarries up until 15mins before a game.
- 3, Most of the children come along to the academy and play football in their bare feet.

This is just a small example of some of the hardship they endure, but even with all of this, they carry on with smiles on their faces.

So in November last year I put out an appeal, through social networking sites, The Sunderland Echo & Sun FM to ask anyone and everyone to donate any old kit they had lying around, and immediately contacted my friend Michael Ganley to see if he could help, and as always he came up trumps

Between us, the response has been way beyond our wildest expectations, so much so that on Friday, Feb 24<sup>th</sup>, 17 full boxes of kit were collected by TNT to be shipped over to the team. In these boxes are over 600 Sunderland shirts, more than 100 pairs of football boots (all sizes), a set of goal nets, a first aid box, Over 100 pairs of shorts & socks, all the required goalkeepers equipment, IN FACT ANYTHING YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL FOOTBALL ORGANISATION, even down to little things like captains armbands, hats, scarfs, spare laces and studs. All collected in the collection boxes which local pubs and companies put in their premises.

As Michael and I realised how successful the appeal for kit was going, we turned our attention to the most important part, "trying to raise sponsorship & funding" to secure the long term future of the team and the academy, and within weeks we have managed to raise over £2,500, which will keep the whole organisation going for almost 2 years, but Michael and I are making this an on-going project to keep raising funds for the team.

So far every member of the 1<sup>st</sup> team squad has been sponsored to the tune of £50 each by local businesses and individuals. With the first team now having their main sponsors as TOMBOLA just like our own team.

Their own local KEROCHE BREWERIES have just become Main Academy sponsors, and gave team members the news that any future vacancies at the brewery, will be offered to team players who are currently unemployed.

Individual sponsorship of the academy players is still available.

Please view the pictures to realise how much our efforts are already helping this great cause, and it lets you see how every penny donated really does help.

**WE HAVE NO ADMINISTRATION CHARGES AT ALL, EVERY SINGLE PENNY RAISED GOES DIRECTLY TO THE TEAM. PLEASE REMEMBER, THIS PROJECT NOT ONLY HELPS THE TEAM AND THEIR ACADEMY, BUT IT ALSO HELPS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF A WHOLE COMMUNITY.**

## HOW THE TEAM USED TO BE



**IN THE EARLY DAYS WITH NO KIT AT ALL    THEIR FIRST DONATION OF YELLOW T-SHIRTS**



**THE KIDS AT TRAINING IN THEIR BARE FEET**



**THE ACADEMY TAKES IN YOUNGSTERS OF ALL AGES**

**HOW THE TEAM ARE LOOKING NOW**

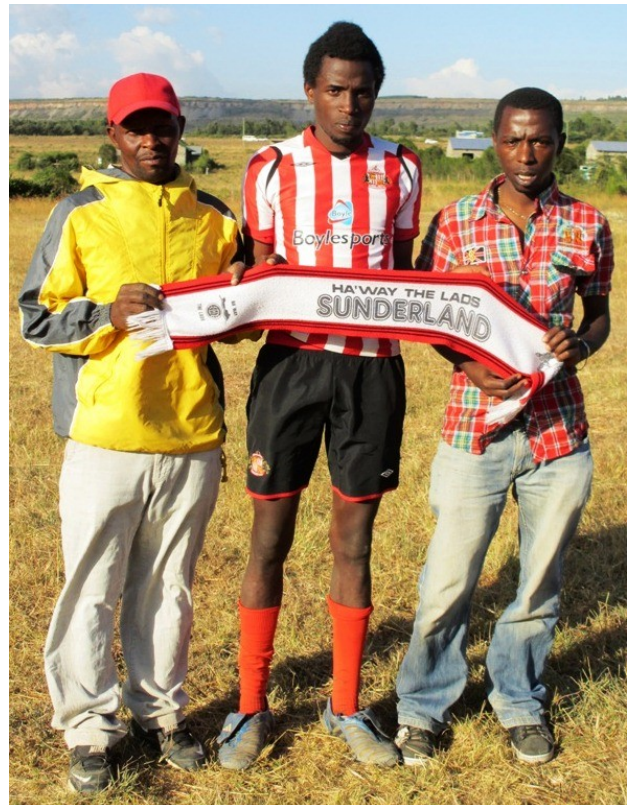
**THE FIRST SET OF KIT STARTS ARRIVING**



**LOOKING GREAT IN THE FAMOUS RED & WHITE STRPES**



**SOME OF THE ACADEMY CHILDREN NOW, WITH THEIR COACHES**



**Team manager Paul Kimani nickname "O'Neill"    Coach Alex, Captain Theuri & Manager "O'Neill"**

Since the help of Michael, myself, and numerous sponsors and contributors, the team now have their own club crest and nickname, and will start the new season in March, in a full Tombola kit, complete with matching shorts and socks,

along with shin-pads and boots. Paid travel to all games, and be able to pay all their fees, ETC.

ALL COSTS OF THE TEAM WILL NOW BE COVERED THROUGH SPONSORSHIP, NO PLAYER NOW NEEDS TO PAY ANY FEES AT ALL TO BE PART OF THE TEAM, So, they can now play without having to make the choice of paying subs, etc. or being able to put food on their tables.

With the support of yourselves and others we are helping towards a better future for the whole of their community, and will carry on doing so.

**UNLIKE MANY OTHER PROJECTS WHICH PEOPLE ASK YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TOO, YOU CAN FOLLOW THE TEAMS PROGRESS, AND GET TO SEE HOW YOUR DONATIONS ARE MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE (No matter how large or small) PLEASE CONTACT GARY IN THE UK, ON; 07880732078**

**REGARDS,**

**GARY SAFC LAMB & MICHAEL GANLEY**