

As the snow settles here in the UK and the dust settles on the festive period, we look back at Christmas celebrations in Maua for Bernard, Patrick, Faith and the children. After all their suffering, Bernard wanted to give the children a true rural Kenyan family celebration. And what better way to do it than to slaughter a goat?!

In Benard's own words: 'Our 2020 Christmas was one extra ordinary occasion that we did in a way that had not been done before. For the last years children used to take ordinary food and drinks without a sense of celebration, which did not make much impact on children social life.' In order to make this Christmas different, they started the preparation in September. Every child came up with suggestion and ideas for the celebrations and collectively they came up with a 'mega plan'. This way it would be a collective celebration.

The main thing all the children wanted was new clothes. In previous years they had not managed to buy new clothes for all the children at once at Christmas, but not this year. And of course, everyone had to wear their new clothes on the day!



*Very proud of their new clothes!*

So, kitted out in their new garments, they set to work early in the morning. 'On that day we were forever busy!' reflected CaroJune. First Benard slaughtered the goat with the boys Mark, Tony, Mwenda, Kaigongi and Benson before cutting the meat into small pieces. Then Patrick,

Roy, Pius and Mark got on with cooking it. They were to try the meat in all forms: boiled, fried and roasted. For most of the children it was their first time slaughtering a goat and getting to keep all the meat, so they really took joy in the process. However, it was not all fun. When they opened up the goat, all the children wanted to try and name the parts of the body – the lungs, liver and the kidneys. It turned out to be an educational project and Faith, Benard and Pastor Munene were impressed in the children's knowledge.



*More than a celebration, a science lesson too...*

Whilst the others were cooking the meat, the other children got on with the rest of the preparation. CaroJune, Kelvin and Charles prepared chapati whilst Damaris, Elsy and Caroline prepared the rice. Together they took pride in preparing traditional Kenyan foods – mukimo and mixed matumbo along with seasonal fruits such as green bananas. A true feast!

The meat was inspected and declared fit for human consumption. The food was ready. The challenge arose. There was no limitation in how much anyone was to eat as long as there was no wastage. A team effort in the preparation and a team effort in the consumption. Benard said of the day: 'While all this was happening we as a team could not avoid to smile upon seeing how every child was busy doing his or her part with a lot of joy and happiness'. Though it was a time of indulgence, the children's day was most certainly not one of selfishness or greed. And this is evident in their gratitude. Speaking on behalf of the group CaroJune told me with audible joy: 'it was not only a Christmas party but more than a treat, we are really grateful for your support and provision'.





*Smiles all round.*

Was the vision to make this a Christmas to remember achieved?

Carojune said: 'On behalf of my sisters and brothers I will say it was the most enjoyable Christmas that we have ever had.'

I think it might have been.



*Feasting together.*

