

## Going places thanks to FDC supporters

### *Sospeter tells us how FDC has helped him and his family*

At the age of 3, Sospeter Njoroge moved with his mother and his older sister and brother to the Dagoretti area of Nairobi County. Sospeter's parents had divorced, and his mother was left with the children, but without financial support. While the two older children attended primary school (free primary education was introduced in Kenya in January 2003) Sospeter stayed with his mother until he was old enough to start school.

“By 6 a.m. my mother was going to the farm to tend the vegetables she was growing”, explains Sospeter, “and once a week she went to the market to sell them. This was her main source of income, although sometimes her brothers helped her out.”

At five years old Sospeter started primary school. “It was not like home”, he says. “I would go to school, make some friends. I loved learning – science, history, maths – I enjoyed it.”

However, like all children Sospeter had to leave primary school at the age of 12 or 13, and as secondary education in Kenya is not free, his mother had fees to pay. By this time both his siblings had left school, but it was still a struggle for Sospeter's mother to find the money. At some stage she heard about Friends of Dagoretti Children and applied to join the programme. After the usual careful background assessments, including Sospeter's educational record, he was admitted to the programme at the age of 16, with two years left at secondary school.

Sospeter had long harboured ambitions to become a chef, following in the footsteps of his older sister who sadly died at the age of 28. Once he completed his state secondary exams, there were two options: to either follow a catering course, or to become employed in a restaurant kitchen and learn on the job. While the first would teach Sospeter the basics of cookery, it would not guarantee a job in a country with 15-34 year olds forming 35% of the population and with the highest unemployment rate of all age sectors (67%). Sospeter and FDC turned to the second option: using FDC's invaluable contacts Sospeter was introduced to the head chef of The Talisman, a popular upmarket restaurant in Karen, Nairobi.

That was in 2016 and Sospeter has never looked back. Having done his apprenticeship as a 'commis chef', he is now a 'chef de partie' – working in the section of the kitchen that produces Italian cuisine. He has also learnt pastry skills. Now into his seventh year of employment, Sospeter envisages a time when he will have enough experience to work in a larger kitchen, possibly in an international hotel. Meanwhile he has managed to build a small house for his mother, together with a grocery outlet where she sells a variety of products and no longer has to go to the farm.

“FDC has changed my life”, says Sospeter, “not only me, but even my family. Now my mother has a house. And I have started a family and have a five-year-old daughter who has already finished a year at primary school. Without FDC I couldn't have finished school and would probably have worked in the fields like my mother.”

James, The Talisman Executive Chef, echoes these sentiments as he watches Sospeter skilfully slice the mushrooms. “He's smart”, he states. “He will go places.”

