

## Transforming Orthopaedic Care in Rural Kenya

By Chuck Bigger, Photojournalist

### Samburu County Referral Hospital

When I visited in August, the SIGN Program in Samburu County had been operating for just six weeks, but word of the treatment program for fractures had already spread through the vast reaches of the Rift Valley in Kenya.

“The people here have an oral

tradition. They go back to their communities and talk between them, and now everyone in Samburu County is speaking about this new surgery and its possibilities,” says Dr. Daniele Sciuto at Samburu County Referral Hospital in Maralal. Before SIGN, the options for treating fractures consisted of pins, plaster, and crudely fashioned traction devices.

The people of Samburu County are made up of three pastoralist tribes: the Samburu, the Turkana, and the Pokot, all of whose lives intersect in this drought-stricken area of northern Kenya. Here goats, cows, and camels are the currency. Shepherds with staffs and long rifles watch over their grazing herds. Occasional armed conflict erupts between the groups over

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**“To have a SIGN Program for these marginalized people, it’s very important because there is no other option.”**

**—SIGN Surgeon,  
Dr. Daniele Sciuto**



**Most of Dr. Daniele Sciuto’s patients are pastoralists who depend on their limbs for their livelihood.**

# SIGN in Kenya: Samburu and Cottolengo

*Continued from front page.*

access to grazing and water areas. Lack of finances keep people from seeking any treatment, particularly orthopaedic treatment, which is known to be expensive in Kenya.

“To have a SIGN Program for these marginalized people, it’s very important because there is no other option,” says Dr. Sciuto.



*Dr. Gaido trained as an infectious disease specialist but has become an orthopaedic surgeon due to demand for trauma surgery.*



*Dr. Sciuto examines x-rays during follow-up appointments.*

## Chaaria Cottolengo Mission Hospital

Six hours down a bumpy dirt road from Maralal, where the arid bush country gives way to verdant green slopes along the base of Mt. Kenya, Dr. Sciuto learned the SIGN Technique from Dr. Beppe Gaido at Cottolengo Mission Hospital in Chaaria. Cottolengo is a rural hospital, serviced only by dirt roads, in the central part of the country. Dr. Gaido has completed nearly 700 SIGN Surgeries here since late 2016.

“Orthopaedic surgery is the most difficult challenge for a rural hospital like ours,” says Dr. Gaido. **“SIGN has made my small hospital a referral**

**center for orthopaedic trauma cases.”** Some cases have come to him from as far as southern Ethiopia and Somalia.

“The dream SIGN has, my dream, is a dream of unconditional love and service for the people who do not have any possibility of the treatment they deserve,” says Dr. Gaido.

## ‘Thank You’ is Not Enough

“To the donors ... just to say ‘Thank you’ is not enough because the support we are getting for these marginalized people is huge,” says Dr. Sciuto. **“When I start to think that these things are happening in so many hospitals in Kenya, multiplied by so many hospitals around the world, multiplied by so many patients, I get really astonished at the good that SIGN is doing around the world.”**



*Motorcycle use is increasing, even in rural areas, leading to more accidents that cause fractures.*



*The SIGN Squat and Smile pose demonstrates healing.*

# SIGN Stories: Samburu and Cottolengo

## Titus Muguna

Titus Muguna is a 25-year-old tailor running his own small shop in Chaaria, a small rural village in central Kenya. His business came to a crashing halt when he broke his leg in a motorcycle accident, making it impossible to operate his manual treadle sewing machine. After being treated with a donated implant by Dr. Beppe Gaido at Cottolengo Mission Hospital, Titus has fully recovered, reopened his shop, and resumed his livelihood. **“I am grateful to those who have donated my implant,” he says. “Today my leg is healed and I am able to be back at working again.”**



## Joy Lesotia

Coming back from the latrine one dark night, Joy Lesotia slipped and fell into a tree stump resulting in a severe fracture of her humerus. “When I saw her x-rays I was a bit desperate, so I shared them with some very senior orthopaedic surgeons and they told me ‘This is terrible,’” says Dr. Daniele Sciuto. “We didn’t have the SIGN Program yet, so the only thing we could do was use some pins and some plaster.” At age 57, Joy’s healing was very

slow and the weight of the plaster cast was slowly dislocating her shoulder, leaving her disabled and in pain. Three months later, Dr. Sciuto explained the new SIGN option and offered Joy a second surgery to correct her issues using a SIGN Implant. Only five weeks after her revision surgery Joy is now healing well and returning to doing some of her normal domestic activities. “She’s very happy and very thankful,” Dr. Sciuto says. “We also are very happy to see the difference in the two surgeries.”



## Joseph Maitho

A furniture maker by trade, Joseph Maitho has become a quiet supporter of one of SIGN’s newest programs by making crutches for orthopaedic patients at Samburu County Referral Hospital. Using his spare time and materials from his business, he provides SIGN Patients with crutches at a cost of only 2 US dollars. Dr. Sciuto hopes that when those patients come back for their six-month follow up appointments, they will return the crutches to the hospital to be then used free by the next patient in need.

## Giving Ideas

### IRA

Check with your CPA to see if you are eligible to give a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA account directly to SIGN.



### Stocks and Bonds

When doing your year-end tax planning, consult with your CPA about donating stocks and bonds to SIGN. Not only will your gift help heal, but you may receive some valuable tax advantages as well.



### Employer Matching

Many employers match donations to charities. Check with your Human Resources department to find out how your donation to SIGN can go further.



For all questions, please call Lori Maier at (509) 371-1107. Double your donation at [signfracturecare.org/donate](http://signfracturecare.org/donate)

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