



ConnectSwiss

Building a brighter future in rural Africa



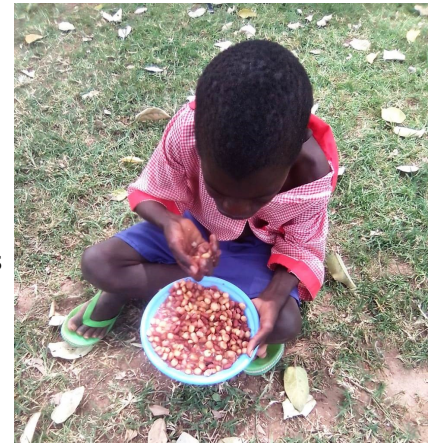
FIRST HALF OF 2023 NEWSLETTER

Struggle Amid Rising Living Costs in Kenya



The recent increase in petrol taxes by the Kenyan government has had a profound impact on ConnectSwiss projects. The rising transport and staple costs worsened living conditions for ConnectSwiss' vulnerable communities. New tax hikes have raised living costs, posing challenges for people in the region to meet daily needs and improve their livelihoods.

The war in Ukraine has also had a significant impact on food prices and farming inputs like fertilizer.



The economic challenges in the Kenyan economy, with soaring inflation, high debt burden, unemployment and post-COVID stagnation, has made the situation even more difficult for these vulnerable communities. The government's decision to cut food and fuel subsidies, end electricity subsidies and the rising cost of living have sparked protests in major cities.



The high cost of fertilizer and quality seed, together with these economic challenges mean that the communities we support are facing even greater obstacles in their journey towards better living conditions and improved livelihoods.

We have given most of our staff salary increases in order to meet their rising food costs and also initiated some new feeding programs to help those people who are living on one meal a day. Photos: Maize and beans donated by ConnectSwiss at St. Lukes School for children with special needs.

Children's Support Centre

The Children's Centre Manager, June 2023 *"Here people are suffering"*

2023 poses challenges for Kenyans as the price of maize doubled in 2022 and increased by another 50% in 2023.

To respond to these difficulties the Children's Centre:

- ⇒ Successfully rehabilitated 63 children between April and Mid-July 2023.
- ⇒ Expanded its outreach by providing daily lunches to local children at the Centre, ensuring they receive adequate nutrition.
- ⇒ Expanded its high protein porridge flour support to 62 children under age 5

In Emuhaya, in western Kenya, about two-thirds of families survive on less than USD\$2 per day. The typical children's daily diet consists of:

- ◆ A cup of black tea before school.
- ◆ Maybe a cup of maize porridge at lunchtime (no milk).
- ◆ Perhaps a plate of ugali (a staple Kenya dish made from maize flour and water) with a spoonful of kale in the evening.

From April to July every year (waiting for harvest) many children experience hunger, having just one meal a day. Protein deficiency results in widespread stunting.

We alleviate suffering by providing food aid and blankets to impoverished households. Our dedicated team maintains contact and conducts follow-up visits in the surrounding villages.



Undernutrition is an underlying cause in 45 % of childhood deaths.
USAID

Training Centre in Teso

The Kakemer Training Centre has been operating since 2008, and both Hellon and Diana (on the right) have been part of this journey as trainers for the past 15 years. It's truly amazing to see the Centre entering its 15th successful year in Kakemer, serving the youth in the Teso North district by providing free computer training.

Our students come from diverse backgrounds, including those who cannot afford secondary school fees, individuals who have completed secondary school with low mean scores but aspire to acquire new skills, and university students who need computer proficiency for their degree programs. With IT becoming a mandatory part of university education and academic work relying on laptops, we are proud to equip our students with the essential computer skills they need to succeed.

Moreover, the free training not only benefits the students but also has a positive ripple effect on the community at large. As these students acquire new skills and knowledge, they become more employable and contribute to the local workforce. Their enhanced capabilities boost local businesses and stimulate economic growth.



We offer morning and evening classes throughout the week to accommodate our students' schedules, ensuring that they can balance their other commitments while attending the training sessions. Since the beginning of 2023, we have witnessed a remarkable response, with over 100 students attending the Centre daily.

Our 3-month course covers six crucial software packages, including practical typing, basic computer knowledge, word processing, database creation, presentation skills and accounting spreadsheets. Upon successful completion of the course, students receive a well-deserved certificate, recognizing their hard work and the valuable skills they have acquired.

It's heartwarming to see the positive impact the Kakemer Training Centre has on the community, empowering youth with knowledge and expertise that unlocks doors to brighter futures. We are dedicated to continuing this mission and driving growth and development through education.



Together, we are building a brighter and more digitally proficient future for Kakemer.

Sewing School

Monicah (back row in a blue dress in photo below) has been the teacher at the sewing school since it opened in 2008.



In 2023, our Sewing School joyfully reopened for its 15th year, empowering underprivileged people with new skills. We have 5 dedicated full-time students. None of our students can afford the costly Kenyan trade exams, but that doesn't stop them from learning and growing. We make sure each student receives an attendance certificate at the end of the year, recognizing their hard work and newfound skills.

Our sewing school focuses on dressmaking, where students learn to create beautiful dresses, skirts, school uniforms, shorts, and short-sleeved shirts. Photo right: 2022 students who gave some shirts they had made to St. Lukes Special Needs students in January 2023.

Our classes mainly includes girls who didn't perform well in secondary school or young wives who want to acquire technical skills for better job opportunities.

Currently, we operate in a small room as unfortunately, our original room was destroyed when the government widened and tarred the road. Despite the challenges, our determination remains strong to provide education and empowerment to those in need.

At the Sewing School, we believe that every person, regardless of their circumstances, deserves the chance to learn and build a brighter future. By teaching valuable skills, we aim to create a positive impact on our students' lives and help them break free from the cycle of poverty.

We are committed to making a lasting difference. Together, we sew a fabric of hope and opportunity for a better tomorrow.



Helping The Needy

As many people in the community are living on one meal a day – we have been delivering maize to needy homes. As they wait for their harvests, we're helping them add to their daily meals for their families. Sometimes we also give out clothing.



Kenyan Donuts - Mandazi



In our December 2022 issue we published the Kenyan donut recipe with some photos of visitors at IVS making their very own mandazi (left photo)

We asked you to send us your mandazi creations and Laurence sent us the following response and photo (above): *After reading the ConnectSwiss year-end newsletter, I tried the "mandazis" recipe. It was a nice idea and an interesting discovery, but I didn't really know what it would lead to! Here's a photo of my mandazis. They may not be as beautiful as those made in Africa, but they're good! Thanks Laurence and well done, they look A+.*



Overcoming Challenges: IVS Resilience and Success Amid COVID-19

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for teachers and students in completing their syllabus and finding time for revision. Condensing three school years into two calendar years was no easy feat, but the dedication of teachers and students prevailed, resulting in commendable achievements.

The final year Form 4 students of 2022 faced a unique situation, starting their school year in April 2022 and taking their final exams from 1 to 23 December 2022. By January 2023, the Kenyan school calendar had returned to normal.

The 2022 final KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education) results (published in February 2023) revealed remarkable outcomes:

- ⇒ 62% (18 out of 29 students) proceeded directly to university.
- ⇒ 8 girls and 10 boys achieved automatic university qualification.
- ⇒ 62% attained university entrance, exceeding the nationwide average of 20%.
- ⇒ An impressive 0% scored below a D+, compared to the nationwide figure of 52%.
- ⇒ Despite the challenges faced, the school's mean score was slightly lower at 6.79 (C+) for KCSE 2022, as compared to 7.26 (C+) for KCSE 2021.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances brought on by the pandemic, the resilience and hard work of both educators and learners led to commendable academic achievements. As the Kenyan school system adapted and regained its footing, the success of the 2022 final year students stands as a testament to the power of determination and perseverance in overcoming obstacles.

School sports started again in 2023, The Head of Games teacher, Gideon Kemboi sent a note on the girl's netball success: On the 1st of June, the team finished second at the zonal level. The girls showed their capabilities to compete and win their matches and qualified for the Sub-County level. We were the most disciplined team. On 16th June 2023 IVS qualified as second again to participate in County championship. They did the school proud and came 4th at the County level on 11 July 2023 (team on the right).



Children's Support Centre International Village School

Over the years 1000's of children have been treated at our Children Support Centre, thank you to our donors who help toward their treatment ensuring they live a better & healthier life.



The School opened its doors in 2008, educating 100's of children. Special thanks to many private donors, including Friends of the International School (FOTIS in Geneva) and Tushirikiane (Spain).



Become a ConnectSwiss Member

Anyone who shares the objectives of our organisation can become a member of ConnectSwiss and belong to a non-profit organization that alleviates poverty and provides high quality education for some of the poorest people in East Africa. Membership fees help cover administrative costs so that 100% of donations go directly to the projects.

As a member you will be able to contribute to the development of new projects with your ideas, donations and/or sponsorship. For example, members can contribute their expertise and ideas by providing network support, writing funding proposals, helping ConnectSwiss accomplish its tasks and much more.

Other benefits of being a regular member include receiving our newsletter, as well as having access to ConnectSwiss Annual Report and Accounts.

Membership costs only:

- United States: USD 50 per year
- Switzerland: CHF 50 per year
- U.K. GBP 40 per year
- Europe: EUR 45 per year
- Rest of the World: USD 50 per year

Asante Sana —Thank you — Merci!

Thank you for your wonderful support in 2022.

2023 brings new needs and your generosity will help children in need.

If you know of anyone who would like to help a malnourished child be restored to good health (CHF 30 per month) or sponsor the education of a student at IVS (CHF 50 per month) please visit:

<http://www.connectswiss.com/get-involved#donate>

ConnectSwiss

is a registered Swiss charity
(CH-550-1067424-1)

www.connectswiss.com
E-mail: info@connectswiss.com

If you wish to make a donation, please indicate the project for which the funds are intended, and your name and address for receipt.

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