

# ConnectSwiss

Building a brighter future  
in rural Africa



## Celebrating 15 Years of Transformative Impact Children's Support Centre

In August 2024, the Children's Support Centre (CSC) proudly celebrated 15 years of dedicated service in the Emuhaya district, transforming the lives of vulnerable children and families. Over the past 15 years, CSC has provided essential services, including free medical care, food, rehabilitation, and health education. In 2024 CSC achieved a remarkable 20% increase in outpatient consultations and a 34% rise in in-patient admissions. Every two weeks, CSC monitors the health and weight of over 100 undernourished children, providing them with free high-protein porridge flour to ensure they thrive in a challenging environment.

These efforts have significantly reduced child mortality, with dramatic declines in malnutrition and jigger (sand fleas) infestations. Annual jigger treatments have plummeted from around 300 cases per year to just 122 in 2024. Before CSC opened, critical children's health issues such as malnutrition, undernutrition, jiggers, and skin infections were mostly left untreated as health facilities prioritize treating acute diseases like malaria and typhoid. Established as a beacon of hope, CSC has changed the landscape of Emuhaya with 1'800 children rehabilitated and around 50'000 outpatient consultations since its opening.



However, the good work must continue. Each year, as the crop planting season begins in April, the Centre faces a surge in malnutrition cases, recording its busiest period. This year, to address the issue, ConnectSwiss donated seeds to families, resulting in an 80% reduction in malnutrition cases during the harvest season from July to September compared to the same period last year.

As Christmas approaches, why not give the gift of hope? With just 30 CHF, you can support the rehabilitation of a malnourished child for an entire month. Your donation will provide lifesaving nutrition, health care, and a pathway to recovery for a child in need. Together, we can make a difference.

*Michelle (right), previously admitted for malnutrition has gained 6kg in 10 months .*



## Herbert's Journey to Recovery: Nourishing Hope



At the Children's Support Centre, we are committed to providing ongoing support for vulnerable children and their mothers.

After receiving in-patient treatment for severe malnutrition, Herbert, who is just 1½ years old, made remarkable progress, gaining 2kg in just two months.

Here, his mother is seen collecting high-protein porridge flour, which she will use to prepare nutritious porridge at home to continue Herbert's recovery and growth.

## Joyful Celebration of Sports and Community in Kakemer

ConnectSwiss has always believed in the power of sports and community engagement, so this November, with the closure of primary schools, we organized an interschool soccer tournament in Kakemer village in North Teso.

The match saw boys' and girls' teams from Ataba Oburi and Kakemer Primary Schools face off in a spirited competition. The event was held at Kakemer Primary School, where ConnectSwiss had donated goalposts to the school a few years ago.

On the girls' side, it was the team from Ataba Oburi that claimed victory, while for the boys, Kakemer Primary School emerged as the champions. Their reward? A well-deserved trophy and a refreshing halftime treat of oranges. A memorable highlight of the event was the vibrant red and green sports bibs worn by the players and crafted by the students of our sewing school. The crowd, an enthusiastic blend of students, parents, and community members, cheered passionately throughout the games, creating an electric atmosphere.



Moments like these remind us why we do what we do, connecting people, building skills, and bringing joy to communities.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our efforts in Kakemer. Together, we are making a difference!

## Preserving Ateso Culture and Creativity



In November, ConnectSwiss proudly supported the Ateso Language Holiday School, a vital program dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of the Ateso language, which is not taught in schools.

Over four weeks, more than 60 children gathered each morning to learn their tribal language.

To keep the young learners energized and focused, ConnectSwiss provided porridge during their classes, a small gesture that

makes a big difference to their days. We also hosted a fun art day where the children explored their creativity by crafting traditional paper huts.

The children's joy and engagement were inspiring, and we are grateful to have been part of this meaningful effort to celebrate and sustain the Ateso language and culture.

## Memorable Movie Night!

November also brought a new kind of excitement to our computer training school: our first-ever movie night! We transformed our training room into a cinema, complete with the must-have popcorn and fruit juice, a giant white sheet, and our new projector!

The featured film was none other than Spider-Man, which the children very much enjoyed. This movie night was not just about entertainment, it was a moment of connection, showcasing the potential of our centre to bring learning and leisure to the community. We look forward to hosting more events like this!



## November at International Village School: A Month of Transition and Exams

November is always a pivotal and stressful month at International Village School (IVS) for our staff and students, who take their final exams, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams. This year was no exception, and the exams were conducted with the utmost professionalism, in compliance with strict government regulations, which included hiring additional security guards and making two trips a day to the Emuhaya Sub-County Education Headquarters to collect the exam papers. (Below: students revising before exams).



Our KCSE candidates expressed overall satisfaction with the exams, though Swahili proved to be a challenge for many. Encouragingly, our lab technician reported that the students were well-prepared for the science practicals. This gives us hope for strong results in these subjects, reflecting the dedication of our students and staff.

In addition to the end-of-year exams, we are also preparing for a significant transformation in Kenya's education system. The country is transitioning to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), and by 2026, secondary schools will adopt a three-year structure (Grades 10-12), replacing the current four-year model. This change has significant implications for IVS, but we are committed to ensuring our students receive the best preparation. To support the CBC rollout, we have been engaging with government officials since significant investment is required in new textbooks, teacher training, and resources for competency-based learning.

At IVS, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide quality education while adapting to the evolving landscape of Kenya's education system. As always, we are deeply grateful to our school sponsors for their support during these pivotal times. Together, we are shaping a bright future for our students.



Left: Computer Studies students engage in last-minute revision with their teacher, Gilbert, as they prepare for the first paper of their KCSE exams.

## Supporting Families in North Teso: A Glimpse into Food Security in 2024



In November 2024, we utilized remaining funds from our 2023 special feeding program to distribute food parcels to over 40 families in North Teso. Each family received 1 kg of sugar, 1 litre of cooking oil, and 1 bar of soap, essential items for daily living, especially in households facing economic hardships.

Kenya's food security landscape has positively shifted in 2024 due to government interventions and market changes. Early in the year, the government introduced a maize importation plan, reducing maize prices by 27% in North Teso compared to 2023. Fertilizer prices were also stabilized, benefiting farmers and improving harvests. However, millet, a key ingredient for porridge, was excluded from subsidies, causing its price to rise by 23%, making it less affordable for vulnerable families.

Another positive development was the reopening of the Mumias Sugar Factory, which led to a 47% drop in sugar prices in Teso as local production replaced imports from Uganda.

Despite the improvements in maize and sugar prices, high transportation costs and the continued rise in other staple prices, like vegetable oil, remain a burden for many households.

Thanks to initiatives like our 2024 "Seeds for Hope" programme, which provided vulnerable families with seeds and fertilizer, combined with reduced maize costs, there has been less widespread hunger this year. However, pockets of severe need persist. Malnutrition and undernutrition continue to be concerning issues, with a noticeable increase in cases at the Children's Support Centre during the hungry season in April and May.

We are deeply grateful for the support. Together, we can continue working toward a future where no family has to go without the essentials they need to thrive.

Photos

Above: A lady who has had both legs amputated due to diabetes receiving a food package

Right: A grandmother proudly showing the maize she is drying after the Seeds for Hope Programme.



## Testimonies from our Youth & Training Centre Alumni

In November, we had the privilege of reconnecting with five alumni from our youth centre in Emuhaya, four young men and one young woman. Having completed courses in computer skills, entrepreneurship, first aid, and permaculture last year, they returned to share their experiences at the centre and the positive impact it had on their personal and professional lives.

When asked which course had been the most helpful, the unanimous choice was the computer course. "Everything is digital nowadays", one alumnus noted, emphasizing how these skills had not only empowered them but also allowed them to help friends and family. One shared how he earned money by applying his computer skills to assist his local church, while others highlighted the advantage of mastering tools like Microsoft Office and creating PowerPoint presentations before starting their current studies.

The entrepreneurship course was also highlighted as very beneficial, sparking innovative thinking. One alumnus described how he successfully launched a small business selling construction equipment. Meanwhile, the permaculture course provided practical skills, enabling alumni to grow vegetables on their family farms and contribute to household food security.



The centre also served a vital social role. For young people who had just finished or left school, it became a space for building friendships and avoiding isolation. "Instead of idling at home, we had a place to go and learn for free", they shared, expressing their gratitude for the opportunities provided. They told us the youth centre enjoys a good reputation in Emuhaya, with alumni learning about it through friends and older siblings, inspiring them to attend these courses. Regarding their current activities, three alumni are pursuing certificates in agro-ecology and agro-engineering, while the others are actively seeking employment. However, all remain confident that the skills acquired at the centre will continue to serve them well in the future.

We are inspired by their stories and look forward to empowering even more youth in the years to come.

## One Month Immersed in ConnectSwiss' Work: Some Personal Impressions

My name is Elona, and after nearly a year of living and working in Nairobi, I wanted to experience a different side of Kenya. I had heard about the inequalities between the urban and rural areas and was curious to see for myself the challenges people face and how NGOs work to address these issues. So, I spent a month in Busia and Vihiga Counties, immersing myself in the work of ConnectSwiss.

It was a truly memorable experience! We were constantly on the move, visiting various projects, and I was blown away by the diversity of the programmes. From food relief to water access, education to health programs, each project was addressing not just immediate needs like malnutrition or underemployment, but also contributing to strengthening ties and solidarity within the communities. The youth centres in Emuhaya and Kakamer were always packed with kids and teens learning computer skills, playing games, and just spending time together.

One of the activities I joined was the food relief distribution. We carried food packages on foot, walking long distances through villages to reach people's homes. It was tiring but incredibly rewarding. Along the way, I got to visit the traditional homes and see firsthand the living conditions and challenges of the rural areas. The families welcomed us warmly, and were deeply grateful, and proud as they told us about the maize they had harvested from seed donations provided by ConnectSwiss earlier this year.

I also helped with other projects, like organizing an art workshop for kids during the Ateso school holidays (we made paper huts and played games while waiting for porridge to cook) and hosting the first-ever movie night at a youth centre! In quieter moments, I worked on updating the [ConnectSwiss](#) website, so please go have a look!

One highlight for me was visiting the Children's Support Centre. It was inspiring to see the staff's dedication as they cared for so many under-nourished children, monitoring their weight and providing porridge every two weeks. Flipping through the records, I witness the progress in the children's weight and the significant impact this programme was having. I was also surprised to learn about the impact of malaria in the region, affecting many children and its long-term effects on cognitive development, a concern I hadn't encountered in Nairobi.

Finally, I want to thank everyone I met for their warm welcome and for sharing their work and their story with me. I also greatly enjoyed discovering homemade Kenyan cuisine: ugali, chapatis, atop (traditional Teso ugali), and, of course, the fruits of the region, which I will particularly miss.

Thank you, ConnectSwiss, for this unforgettable experience, which I'll carry with me forever.



# Seeds for Hope: Transforming Maize into a Staple Meal



Through our "Seeds for Hope" program, the journey from planting maize seeds to harvesting, drying, grinding, cooking, and eating *ugali* demonstrates the practical steps from cultivation to preparation.

Each stage reflects the transformation of the maize into a staple meal that sustains communities.





## Children's Support Centre

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.



## International Village School

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 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 45 per year
- Europe: EUR 50 per year
- Rest of the World: USD 50 per year



### Asante Sana — Thank you — Merci!

Thank you for your wonderful support.



If you wish to make a donation kindly contribute by using the QR code for a more convenient payment method or visit:

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

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