

EMPOWERMENT

Global Health Connections Quarterly Newsletter



A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

GHC's focus is on building Community Health and Empowerment Clubs (CHECs) throughout communities in Western Kenya. We are currently in 11 villages in Kisii County and 4 in Homa Bay County, and come early summer we plan to enter into 4 more villages--2 in Kisii County, 1 in Homa Bay County and 1 in Kajiado County--bringing our total to 19 villages.

People often ask, "Why focus on and work in Kenya?"

Kenya, like many developing countries, faces a variety of social, economic, and environmental challenges such as poverty, limited access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate healthcare, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and education disparities.

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We choose to work here for a combination of altruistic, strategic and practical reasons, and because we see specific needs that align with our capabilities, vision and mission.

Not only do our mission and goals align closely with the needs and priorities of Kenya, our on-the-ground Kenyan team is able to establish partnerships with local organizations, governments and communities to implement projects and initiatives more effectively. Building on these successes, we can expand our efforts and scale up interventions to reach more communities and individuals in need. It is also important for us to work in Kenya as part of our broader commitment to global citizenship, social justice, and sustainable development. Through collaboration, partnership, and solidarity, we can make meaningful contributions to addressing global challenges and building a more equitable and sustainable world for all.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Never before has the name of our organization, *Global Health Connections*, been more fitting and pertinent. In today's world, everything and everyone are interconnected. We have a global perspective at GHC and see ourselves as part of a larger community with a responsibility to address global challenges. We aim to address the pressing issues that transcend national boundaries--the ones where we can make a significant difference and the most impact. Working in Kenya allows us to contribute our expertise, resources and interventions to global development efforts. It also allows us to promote health, economic and social empowerment, and equity on an international scale. After all, if you want to build something sustainable, you need to learn how to step aside and empower others.

-- Mimi Gordon



Village & Apiary Updates

Our CHECs are all thriving and members are actively involved with one, or several, economic projects. All told, GHC has 33 ongoing income-generating opportunities spread across our 15 villages. We have an incredible 672 members involved in beekeeping and an additional 402 members involved in other projects. Our Kisii village members are primarily involved in beekeeping, with a few involved in napier grass cultivation, soap making and a tree nursery. In Homa Bay, members are participating in cereals, rice farming, quarry mining, tailoring/sewing, mat making, and more. We are so proud of these hard-working and dedicated individuals and feel fortunate to be able to empower them, and promote their development and overall well-being.

One of the things we teach members at the very beginning of a CHEC is the merry-go-round funding concept. In general, in a merry-go-round program a small group of individuals pools their money together at regular intervals. Each member contributes a fixed amount of money into the fund, and at each meeting, one member receives the total amount contributed for that period. The cycle continues until each member has received their share of the pooled funds. These funds serve as a form of informal banking, particularly for our members who may not have access to formal financial institutions. They provide a means for saving money, accessing credit, and building social capital.

PICTURED ABOVE: MEMBERS OF THE KANYAMFWA RICE FARMING GROUP WINNOW THE RICE SEEDS. WINNOWING CLEANS THE SEED, REMOVES DUST AND CHAFFS, AND PREPARES THE SEED FOR MILLING.



Food for thought...next time you eat rice, think of all the steps required to get the seed to mouth:

Growing → Harvesting --> Threshing --> Unmilled Rice --> Drying --> Winnowing --> Milling --> Cooking --> Eating!

- The tailoring/sewing group in Kanyamfwa (HB) recently received a contract to make school uniforms from a local school; they also made and sold many dresses during the December festival season.

Village & Apiary Updates

All of our clubs are participating in merry-go-funding and we see first-hand how empowering this can be. When a member receives the money, he/she often uses it to start small businesses, like selling groceries (e.g. fruits and vegetables) or second-hand clothing. Some also use it to make household repairs or additions.

All members are also contributing various amounts each week to their respective CHEC's "general fund" bank account. These funds are used for any emergencies that arise, especially related to income-generating projects, health or other infrastructure needs in the village.

A few highlights from our Kisii and Homa Bay (HB) villages...

- The rice farming group in Kanyamfwa (HB) recently completed its first harvest on a portion of their 2 acres of land. They ended up with over 4 ½ sacks of milled rice.

- The soap making group in Nyamacheo formed on their own as a result of a merry-go-round sub-group. The group learned how to make soap/detergent as part of the 24-week health curriculum and decided to form a business afterwards. They recently received a contract from the nearest high school to supply them with soap for the year.

- Kanoti, the secretary of the Kegati CHEC and the owner of the land on which the apiary sits, started a small sundry business in a local market. He started by investing the income he earned from selling the extra vegetables from his kitchen garden he learned to plant with GHC's help. He has a small family and doesn't need all the produce his garden yields, so he sells most of his harvest and uses the proceeds to expand his business...and it is taking off!



Greener Hills Honey

Our apiaries are buzzing with excitement! We currently have 10 apiaries up and running and 392 hives in them. We plan to eventually have over 450 hives in these apiaries, but bees are finicky creatures and don't always behave the way we think they will (or should)! But our beekeepers learn every day and are getting better and better at managing, inspecting, maintaining and harvesting.

Our most recent harvests in Ititi, Tabaka, Biombe and Mokubo yielded 54 1/2 liters of honey from 13 hives. The flora around each apiary is different, thus the honey extracted from each has a slightly different flavor profile, which makes all our honey unique and delicious (think melted caramel). The revenue from the honey is important for our villagers and helps them to pay for school fees, new household roofs, medical costs, etc.

We continue to use the fantastic apiary management app, HiveBloom, to share data across continents. We keep track of inspection dates and note details about the health of each and every hive in all of our apiaries. We also keep tabs on harvest dates and liters of honey collected.

Please check out www.greenerhillshoney.org to see and read about all the apiaries.

Sustainable Governance Committees (SGCs)

All six of our SGCs are running smoothly. The groups meet once or twice a month, with the GHC team, to discuss matters that arise in the villages. They are slowly but surely learning the ropes on how to manage and lead their respective CHECs. We firmly believe in this part of our CHEC model and place as much importance on this pillar as the others.



PICTURED ABOVE LEFT: A MEMBER OF THE NYASUMI BEEKEEPING GROUP STANDS IN FRONT OF THE NEW APIARY AND GARDEN. PICTURED BOTTOM RIGHT: SALOME MEETS WITH THE KANYIPIR SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE.

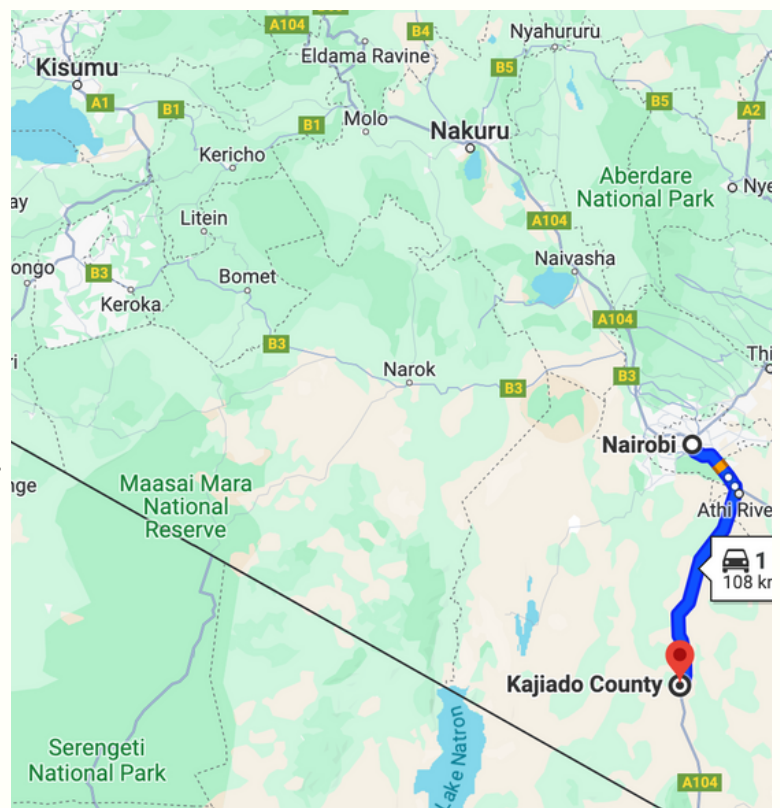


Heading into Spring

In the December newsletter, we mentioned we were just starting to write a new Rotary global grant proposal for 2024. We have since completed writing the proposal and accompanying budget, secured funding from 15 clubs in and around the Denver Metro area and will be submitting the grant proposal in early March.

Building sustainable governance is essential for promoting stability, security, prosperity, equity, justice, and environmental sustainability. SGCs build trust, confidence, and social cohesion among villagers; they promote transparency, openness, and dialogue, fostering a culture of mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility for the common good.

For an in-depth look at this piece of our model and the importance of Sustainable Government, please check out the blog on our website: <https://globalhealthconnections.org/f/the-ghc-difference-long-term-sustainability-in-our-villages>



We are excited about the new opportunities proposed in our 2024 Global Grant. It is ambitious and aspirational and proposes four initiatives:

- Initiating 2 new CHECs in Kisii County and 1 new CHEC in Homa Bay County
 - Kisii CHECs will focus on beekeeping
 - Homa Bay CHEC will focus on rice farming
- Initiating 1 pilot project CHEC in Kajiado County (see map for reference)
 - CHEC, with the Maasai tribe, involves a new GHC team and remote training
 - Will focus on poultry farming
- Reinforcing existing income-generating projects in our current CHECs; includes more beekeeping, rice farming, napier grass, and brick making
- Developing Sustainable Governance Committees in new CHEC villages (2nd – 3rd year)

We are hopeful for a brand new year full of opportunities to further our mission. We have set our sights far and wide and hope to continue accomplishing great things for the rest of 2024 and beyond.

Addressing global challenges and building a more equitable and sustainable world requires a concerted team effort, from individuals and communities, to organizations, governments, and international institutions. At GHC, we empower communities to identify their own solutions. We support community-led development initiatives and participatory decision-making processes that amplify voices, build social capital, and drive positive change from the bottom up. By prioritizing these actions and working collaboratively, we can encourage behavior change and make significant progress in addressing global challenges and building a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient world for present and future generations. Thanks for taking this journey with us!



PICTURED ABOVE: THE MIGHTY NYASUMI BEEKEEPERS AFTER THEIR TRAINING PRACTICAL

GHC Spotlight



Name: Christine Nyaboke

Title: Assistant Director of Operations - Kisii, Kenya

1. How long have you been working in this line of work?

I have been working in community development for 6 years now.

2. What motivated you to pursue a career in this sector, and what drives your passion for the GHC's mission?

I want to contribute positively to people's lives in communities by teaching and empowering them to help themselves and to improve their own lives.

3. What strategies do you use to build trust and rapport with community members in rural villages in western Kenya? How do you ensure community participation and ownership in development initiatives?

To build trust and rapport, I lead with empathy and respect, actively listen to the community members' concerns, acknowledge different perspectives and express empathy for their challenges. I ensure there is community participation and ownership by always involving members in the decision making process, which includes collectively coming up with solutions to solve problems.

GHC Spotlight

4. Can you discuss a successful project or initiative you and the GHC Team implemented in a village? What were the key factors contributing to its success?

The GHC team came up with the idea of starting a “merry-go-round” fund in all our CHECs. It has been a successful initiative, and most members have benefited from this in different ways. It’s been successful for several reasons. We divided all the members into small sub-groups, which make it easier for each member to receive their contribution faster. We have also allowed each sub-group to be autonomous and let the groups decide on the rules, such as contribution amounts, amount of time before disbursement, etc. This program empowers the members.

5. What strategies do you employ to ensure the sustainability and long-term viability of our CHEC programs and initiatives?

I think setting specific goals for the members and the club as a whole, and keeping them accountable builds sustainability. From the very beginning of the CHEC, I also encourage community participation by engaging all members and doing my best to earn their trust. This gets members involved and makes them feel valued, heard and respected.

6. What are your long-term goals and aspirations for community development in rural villages in western Kenya? How do you envision achieving sustainable impact and transformation in these communities?

My long term goal is to bring sustainable socio-economic change to people’s lives. Achieving Sustainable transformation in these communities starts by empowering the right leaders in every CHEC and keeping them all accountable.

7. What do you like to do for fun? What are some of your passions outside of work?

I love cooking and trying out new recipes. My passions include working on improving myself, by learning something new or improving a particular skill.

8. What’s the best part about working for GHC?

I have the best team around me, both the management and the team I lead on the ground. I enjoy GHC’s collaborative environment and the opportunity to work with talented and passionate People.

9. One random fact about me that most people don’t know about me is..that I am really good at interior design and decoration!



We hope you will consider partnering with us in the following areas:

1. Individual Donations to support CHECs in current villages and expansion into new villages.
2. Adopt-a-Village or Adopt-an-Apiary Sponsorship: Work with GHC to learn about everyday life in Western Kenya while supporting the health, economic empowerment and sustainability of villages. By adopting a village or apiary, an individual or club will be immersed in the CHEC transformation process and will have the opportunity to see firsthand how GHC has a direct impact on empowering individuals.

Be sure to check our website for new information and our social media accounts for weekly updates!

www.globalhealthconnections.org