

EMPOWERMENT

Global Health Connections Quarterly Newsletter



Strength in Communities: Harnessing Local Assets for Lasting Change

At Global Health Connections, we're transforming how communities approach change. Instead of focusing on what's missing, we start with what's already there: the strengths, talents, and resources within each village. This asset-based community development (ABCD) approach celebrates the power of communities to drive their own progress.

By building on local assets, not deficiencies, we're seeing sustainable solutions take root, from improved health to economic empowerment. In this issue, we'll explore how focusing on strengths is creating ripples of impact across Kenya—and how communities, equipped with their own tools, are leading the way toward lasting change.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

At Global Health Connections, we believe that the foundation of lasting change isn't what an organization brings to a community—it's what's already there. That's why our approach centers on asset-based community development (ABCD), which starts with recognizing and building on the strengths, talents, and resources of the communities we work with.

When we shift the focus from problems to potential, something remarkable happens. Communities take ownership of their futures. Local leaders emerge. And solutions are not only more sustainable but also deeply rooted in the culture and context of the people they serve.

This approach is why our Community Health and Empowerment Clubs (CHECs) are able to be replicated across villages in Kenya. By harnessing existing assets and empowering communities to build on their own foundations, we're seeing lasting impact that extends far beyond what any outside organization could achieve alone.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we're proving that the greatest strength for change lies within the communities themselves.

--Mimi Gordon



The Power of Community-Led Solutions

The success of Nyamecheo and Nyamagesa's CHEC members is a powerful testament to the impact of community-led solutions. In both villages, members have taken ownership of projects that not only generate income but also strengthen long-term resilience. By pooling their savings, Nyamecheo's 69 members leased land to invest in napier grass, recognizing its value as a high-yield fodder crop. Their first crop is thriving, and with their strong work ethic and proven reliability, they secured a small loan from GHC to lease additional land—an opportunity we were happy to support. With their first harvest expected next month, some members are already discussing using the proceeds to launch new businesses.

Similarly, in Nyamagesa, CHEC members came together to lease one acre of land for a three-year napier grass project. Through their own collective savings, they raised Ksh 10,000 and combined it with Ksh 20,000 in support from GHC, demonstrating both financial commitment and determination. Their first napier grass harvest brought in Ksh 8,000, and they will meet next week to finalize their earnings before dividing the profits. Encouraged by their early success, they continue to explore new ways to grow their impact.



Beyond economic gains, these projects highlight how communities are using their own knowledge and skills to drive long-term sustainability. By blending traditional farming methods with techniques learned through GHC's training, members have maximized their yields and strengthened their resilience to climate challenges. Napier grass directly benefits livestock health, improving milk production and household nutrition—proving that economic and health outcomes go hand in hand.

In Nyamagesa, members have also introduced a merry-go-round savings initiative, which has allowed them to start investing in poultry farming. Last week alone, they collectively purchased 200 chicks, with 21 members receiving their share. Inspired by this progress, more members are eager to participate, reinforcing the power of community-driven financial strategies. Their collective savings models have not only made these initiatives possible,

but have also fostered financial literacy and cooperative growth. As profits begin to roll in, members from both villages are exploring reinvestment strategies to sustain their progress, whether by expanding agricultural projects, purchasing more livestock, or launching small businesses. Their achievements are already inspiring neighboring communities, proving that when people lead the way, real and lasting change follows.

The stories of Nyamecheo and Nyamagesa are just two examples of how local leadership is shaping the future of sustainable health and economic development. By harnessing their own skills, resources, and determination, these members are creating a ripple effect of empowerment—one that will continue to grow for generations to come.

CHEC Model - Building on Existing Strengths

At the heart of GHC's approach is the belief that the most effective solutions build on what already works. The CHEC model doesn't replace existing community structures—it strengthens them. By tapping into strong social networks, traditional knowledge, and local governance systems, CHECs empower members to lead change from within. This approach ensures that progress is not only effective but also deeply rooted in the community's own strengths, making it far more sustainable in the long run.

One powerful example of this in action is Soklo Village on Mfangano Island, one of GHC's two remote pilot projects. From the beginning, participation in Soklo's CHEC has been remarkable, with community members embracing new health behaviors while integrating them with their existing way of life. Traditional leaders have played a key role in reinforcing the importance of these changes, while social networks have helped spread new knowledge and encourage accountability. The results so far are promising—improved handwashing practices, better nutrition awareness, and a collective commitment to healthier living.

Soklo's early success highlights the true power of the CHEC model: communities themselves are the driving force behind change. By building on their existing strengths and fostering leadership from within, GHC is not just introducing new ideas—we are amplifying the potential that was always there. As Soklo progresses, it proves that when people are given the tools to enhance what they already know and do well—while also gaining new knowledge—the impact is not just transformative, it's lasting.



PICTURED ABOVE: LAUGHTER AND LEARNING GO HAND IN HAND AS SOKLO VILLAGE MEMBERS GATHER FOR A HEALTH TRAINING SESSION.

Economic Empowerment and Sustainability

Across our CHEC villages, members are proving that economic empowerment is not just about earning income—it's about building sustainable solutions that strengthen entire communities. Through initiatives like beekeeping, soap-making, tailoring, and kitchen gardens, members are creating self-sustaining businesses that enhance both livelihoods and local economies.

In Nyasumi, members are working to strengthen their chicken hatching project, which they launched in the fall. While their initial attempt faced setbacks due to electricity outages—resulting in the unfortunate loss of chicks—they are determined to try again. To ensure greater success this time, they are planning to purchase a generator and an additional backup battery to keep the hatchery running smoothly. With these improvements, they aim to have the machine fully operational by early February, offering a renewed opportunity for income generation and food security.



PICTURED ABOVE: JANE AOKO OKUMU FROM KANYIPIR PROUDLY SELLING THE SOAP SHE LEARNED TO MAKE WITH GHC'S SUPPORT.

Meanwhile, in Kanyipir, economic growth is evident in both big and small ways. A once-overlooked detail—having enough chairs for CHEC meetings—now stands as a symbol of progress. Where members once sat on the ground, they now have enough seating to accommodate everyone, thanks to their collective efforts. This small yet meaningful change reflects how financial stability allows communities to invest in quality-of-life improvements, fostering a greater sense of dignity and inclusion.

Our apiaries continue to thrive, reinforcing the power of long-term sustainability. We are predicting an impressive 1,745 liters of honey from our six active apiaries across three harvest seasons in 2025. Meanwhile, our four other apiaries have reached a milestone—becoming fully self-sustaining and thriving on their own. These successes not only provide income but also support environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture.

Beyond community-led enterprises, individual entrepreneurship is flourishing. One inspiring example comes from a dedicated Kanyipir CHEC member who has turned her soap-making skills into a profitable business. Each week, she prepares liquid soap and brings it to CHEC meetings, where she sells every single bottle. Her success underscores the power of skill-building and local market demand—what started as a simple craft has become a dependable source of income.

These stories highlight the resilience, creativity, and determination of CHEC members. Whether through agriculture, small business ventures, or cooperative savings models, they are proving that true empowerment comes from within—driven by knowledge, resourcefulness, and a shared vision for a stronger future.



PICTURED ABOVE: KANYIPIR MEMBERS SIT ON THEIR NEW CHAIRS.



Partnerships that Support Local Strengths

At GHC, we believe that sustainable change comes from within communities themselves. Our role—and the role of our partners—is not to dictate solutions, but to amplify and support the strengths, skills, and knowledge that already exist. Rotary Clubs and organizations like AquaClara and the Ministry of Health are invaluable in this approach, acting as catalysts rather than directors of change.

A key example of this is the expansion of CHEC initiatives through the support of a new global grant, which has enabled four additional villages to launch community-driven projects. One of the first steps in these villages has been the formation of merry-go-round savings groups, a proven model where members contribute funds regularly and take turns receiving the pooled amount. This practice enhances financial stability and reinforces the cooperative spirit that drives these communities forward.

Sanitation and clean water access are also foundational to health and economic stability. Through our partnership with AquaClara, we are installing SaTo pans in all four new villages, improving sanitation while leveraging existing latrine structures whenever possible. Where new latrines are needed, AquaClara provides critical support in their construction. In addition, they continue to assist in supplying water filters, ensuring that communities have access to safe drinking water—an essential factor in preventing diseases and supporting overall well-being.

PICTURED ABOVE: MEMBERS FROM OUR NEWEST VILLAGES LEARNING AND TAKING ACTION —TEACHING EACH OTHER, UPGRADING LATRINES WITH SATO PANS, AND SETTING UP TIPPY-TAP HANDWASHING STATIONS.

Meanwhile, our collaboration with the Ministry of Health reinforces community-driven healthcare solutions. Through joint efforts, we conduct malnutrition screenings in these new villages, identifying at-risk children and connecting families with the resources they need to improve nutrition. These screenings are more than just data collection—they empower communities with knowledge, ensuring that parents and caregivers understand the vital role nutrition plays in childhood development, school performance, and long-term health.

The strength of these partnerships lies in their ability to support rather than overshadow local leadership. By investing in what communities already have—their traditions, knowledge, and social structures—these collaborations ensure that solutions are owned and sustained by the people they impact the most. As new partnerships continue to form, they do so within this framework of empowerment, ensuring that every initiative builds on the foundation of local expertise, resilience, and vision for the future.

Together, we are empowering communities and helping to create sustainable villages!



PICTURED ABOVE: MEMBERS FROM KANYAMFWA SHOW OFF THEIR RICE HARVEST.

What Does GHC Mean To Us?

At GHC, our work is driven by passion, purpose, and a deep commitment to empowering communities. In this special video, our board members, along with Executive Directors Mimi (Denver) and Faith (Kenya), share what GHC means to them, the impact they see, and the words that best describe our mission. Their perspectives reflect the heart of our work and the powerful change we are creating together.

Watch the video on our YouTube channel to see GHC through their eyes!

Link here: <https://youtu.be/TezZzdHQMSw>





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

- 1. General Donations:** Every donation to GHC helps support our 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 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