

GIFT

International

Grassroots Initiatives Funding and Training

Registered Charity CCNI 104617

Gift International Trustees Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024



Purposes of the Charity:

1. Advance education and promote the preservation of health of the people in the area of benefit by the provision of resources, training and grants with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of the area of benefit.
2. Relieve poverty and hunger in the area of benefit by any charitable means and in particular the provision of grants and training to empower economically challenged people to establish and maintain projects which will enable them to relieve their own poverty.
3. Recruit, select and send out volunteers from the UK for service within the area of benefit and any other method the committee may from time to time decide.

Gift International has considered the Commission's guidance and the criteria for public benefit:

Benefit must:

- flow from the charity's purposes
- be capable of being demonstrated
- be beneficial, not harmful.

GIFT International activities endeavour to reflect The United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

The seventeen goals aim to focus on the following:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and wellbeing
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

GIFT International is currently served by three trustees who ensure that, through strategic planning, community consultation and beneficiary feedback, Gift International's activities support and flow from our purposes, are clearly demonstrated and have been beneficial and not harmful in any way.

Gift International is a 'Grassroots Initiatives Funding and Training' provider for remote and economically challenged communities mainly in Kenya, but also retains the ability to support projects in similar developing countries. By fundraising through, for example, community events, coffee mornings, illustrated talks and lectures, and receiving general donations, Gift International raises funds in NI and beyond, for use in the areas of benefit. Funding facilitates a variety of needs including the provision of teacher training workshops, bursaries for student education, the building of schools, resourcing of classrooms and individual student support where there is demonstrable need, health and nutrition initiatives, capacity-building training workshops for local community representatives and the provision of small start-up funds for self-identified sustainable enterprises in identified communities.

Community consultations and the identification of self-managed projects have enabled development of local enterprises ranging from the planting of tree nurseries and expansion of existing woodlots to incorporate more native species, bee-keeping projects for the production of honey and wax products, a range of agricultural developments including maize mill construction and equipment,

training for and set-up of dairy cow and poultry projects, to facilitating driving qualifications, technical training, dressmaking and tailoring courses and the provision of sewing machines.

Health benefits come from initiatives such as adult education with a special focus on women's education, provision of mosquito nets, sustainable provision of milk through dairy cow projects and training in basic hygiene and access to emergency medical aid through provision of mobile phones for rapid communication in remote areas. A Mother and Baby project in the Masai Mara enables mothers-to-be in one area of GIFT International operation to avail of pre-natal support, attend a maternity clinic, if desired, for the birth of their baby and provides essential inoculations and a starter pack of requisites for the newborn babies and their mothers. Where urgent need is identified and subject to available funding, small amounts of funding can be made available to support emergency medical conditions.

Education benefits come from initiatives such as school construction and provision of equipment, teacher training, contributions to school fees, tertiary student bursaries, adult training course provision, and knowledge and skills shared by volunteers in the areas of benefit.

Impact of the Pandemic.

While the Coronavirus pandemic seems like a distant memory in some ways, the legacy of this difficult time remains and the set-back to Kenya's tourist industry (which provides a huge amount of employment), rising prices and general disruption are still being felt throughout the country.

As things normalised in Northern Ireland post-covid, the GIFT International programme of talks began to regain momentum, albeit that many of our former 'regulars' have ceased to operate. However, following talks to a number of community groups around N.Ireland, word-of-mouth had us up and running again in 2023 and invitations from new groups were most welcome. GIFT would like to acknowledge the support and friendship of all these groups, not only for the financial support they provide, but also the encouragement they give, and for their very genuine care for beneficiaries in Kenya.

On top of Kenya's difficulties with covid, continued drought, believed to be associated with climate change, has affected much of the country, with some areas reporting 4 consecutive years without significant rainfall. Access to clean drinking water, water for livestock and availability of food have been serious issues and we have on occasion stepped in to assist with food provision.

Then came unprecedented rainfall accompanied by serious, life-threatening flooding in many areas, killing vast numbers of livestock, washing away homes and taking the lives of many people. Prolonged drought leaves soil bare and exposed and, with nothing to hold back the water, rivers burst their banks, roads are washed away, and the potential benefit of much-needed rain is largely lost because there is insufficient infrastructure to manage or store it.

In the past GIFT has assisted communities with water harvesting projects, but while this is effective at a local level (and ideally should be a priority for every home, where possible) the issue of water conservation and management can only be fully addressed at government level. We have observed the installation of numerous community boreholes in the past 5 – 10 years. However, this is not without problems, especially where planning is not controlled, sometimes resulting in a fall in the local water table leading to salination and rendering more shallow boreholes useless. Informed hydrological analysis and regulated regional planning will be essential if continued installation of boreholes is to be effective into the future.

Budgeting for Projects

Once again, throughout 2023/24, we were greatly heartened to receive reports and individual messages from the communities to say that the measures we had implemented over the years were helping to sustain them through uncertain and economically challenging times.

The way in which we budget – one year in advance - means that we only take on new projects that we can comfortably budget for and have raised the funds to deliver. Some projects ideally roll on from year to year (e.g the Mother and Baby Project) but again we ensure that the funds are guaranteed before we undertake to deliver them in the communities. Despite financial concerns arising from the impact of the pandemic years, through the generous commitment of donors, we were able to maintain all existing ongoing projects, for which we are most grateful.

For budgeting purposes and for ease of reporting we manage projects under four headings:

- A) Sustainable Community Development - agricultural projects, beekeeping development, water harvesting.
- B) Education and Training – education/training bursaries for individuals, whole school development, community training courses.
- C) Community Health and Well-being - Mother and Baby Support, Cleft Palate surgery and community medical support.
- D) Humanitarian Fund for families and individuals experiencing hardship – feed the children, care and support for vulnerable elderly people in communities, medical emergencies etc

Projects under A), B) and C) are planned and budgeted for a year in advance based on available funding. Ideally, some projects will deliver goals under more than one heading e.g. the Gede Beekeeping Project which supports the expansion of honey production across the area but also provides training for individuals and groups. Where communities can demonstrate a range of benefits, these strengthen their application for funding.

Projects under D) – Humanitarian Fund for families and individuals - are reactive and subject to availability of residual funds in that funding year. In most such cases relatively small amounts of funding will be made available and not exceed single payments of £500.

Main Achievements 2023 -2024:

The achievements of GIFT International during the year 2023 - 2024 addressed all purposes of the charity as set out under the constitution. Although a very small charitable organisation, Gift International continues to make a significant and lasting impact on the lives of beneficiaries in Kenya. Bearing in mind that we had not had any representation on the ground since before the pandemic (December 2019 was the last project visit) we agreed to proceed cautiously, focusing mainly on existing project communities with known and trusted contacts.

NOTE: Back before 2020, we had planned to progress a project to support children requiring cleft palate surgery, and, during covid, fundraising for this project was initiated, kick-started by a generous donation from a long-term GIFT well-wisher. However, despite considerable long-distance communications, since we were not able to meet face-to-face, it was not possible to get this

underway with the required level of confidence, so while the project remains a goal, with the funds held in reserve, we were unable to carry out surgeries in the 2023/24 period.

A. Sustainable Community Development eg, agricultural projects, tree planting, beekeeping development, water harvesting, small business development.

Tree Planting in Kenya

Over the past two decades GIFT International has funded the planting and maintenance of several tree nurseries and supported training programmes for those engaged in developing tree nurseries.

Planting trees is a relatively simple task, yet the results can be hugely valuable to people and the environment. Once a tree is mature it can absorb 20kg of carbon every year from the atmosphere, thereby making a major contribution to mitigating climate change.

Planting trees in Kenya will provide shelter, food, timber products and an income. Trees enhance biodiversity, improve soil quality and provide the income that funds education and healthcare for some of the most challenged communities.

Building on earlier successes, GIFT International seeks to expand tree planting in selected areas.

In 2022/23 we had provided funding for further woodlot planting and maintenance at Gede in the coast region, including the maintenance of a variety of fruit and nut trees lots (cashew, coconut, neem and mango) that are not only a source of income and food, but also act a vital carbon store. We received positive reports from the project coordinator that the majority of trees had taken well, despite water shortages. Work on an indigenous tree nursery continues, and we agreed that we would visit the project as a priority on the next visit to Kenya.



Bee Keeping Enterprises

GIFT International has worked in association with Northern Ireland beekeepers who have for many years provided funding towards running beekeeping training courses, supplying bee-keeping equipment, starter hives, smokers, along with honey separators that are essential for production of quality honey.

Under the management of a former GIFT-funded university graduate, working with a fellow beekeeper from the coast area, a programme of funded training courses for 6 local bee-keeping groups with 'on the ground' coaching, mentoring and on-going support continues to operate. The

programme also includes restoration of the local environment, such as replanting depleted mangrove swamp, to ensure suitable foraging for bees. Considerable progress was made within the local communities, and honey production provided much needed revenue to group members. Comprehensive reports are submitted to GIFT in a timely manner, and we continue to be happy with the progress being made.



On arrival at the coast in November 2023, we were delighted to see how much the community has progressed, with a new honey centre almost at the point of completion, where honey will be available to purchase, training courses can be undertaken, and resources for beekeepers will be on hand. This has all come about as a result of various funders and supporters, but it demonstrates that the early training provided by GIFT volunteers, and subsequent funding support has undoubtedly fed into a very successful enterprise, and the project leaders were very quick to acknowledge the role of GIFT in their success.



Our grateful thanks go to our N.I. beekeeper supporters who initiate and host fundraising events and associated activities, in so doing spreading the word across the N.I. community.



Northern Ireland honey produced and sold in support of GIFT International enterprises in Kenya.

Plans to expand the beekeeping project in Laikipia continue to be delayed due to prolonged drought. Despite these issues, where the bees have been sustained, the existing project continues to bring in valued revenue to the community. The fundamental problem of water supply is critical to the well-being of people, livestock, and the environment in general. The provision of boreholes is currently outside the financial scale of GIFT International and, indeed, such consideration is a highly complex matter requiring rigorous technical knowledge. The recent proliferation of borehole schemes in some areas has brought additional problems with ground water, salinisation etc so must be approached with caution. It is our intention when we next visit the area, to discuss appropriate development opportunities and hope we can resume expansion of the beekeeping project in a way that meets local communities' needs.

The GIFT-funded posho mill at Gede continues to be of support to the local community. The addition of equipment enabling production of higher quality products has been a benefit.



Provision of support by GIFT International for a small duka (shop) equipped with solar powered refrigeration has been reported as a great asset to the community, providing a range of fresh foods for local people, and employment in the village.



Nashula Poultry Project, Laikipia.

GIFT International was approached by a long-standing contact from the Laikipia North district seeking support for development of a community poultry farming project.

The problem of water availability is escalating as drought and climate change impact deeply. Previously the community was able to draw water from the Nanyuki River, the source of which is Mt Kenya. In recent times, the permanent river has dried up and the community is having to bring in water in tankers. However, storage of large enough quantities of water to justify the cost of hiring tankers is inadequate and they requested funds for two new tanks. Stage one of this support, the provision of two tanks, and associated pipework, will help with forward planning to ensure they are not left without vital water supplies for the community and the poultry project.



Reports from the Nashula Project during the 2023/24 period have been encouraging and already the community is deriving benefits from the project, with those involved receiving small dividends from the sales of eggs, and a proportion of revenue being used to support the elders in the community with provision of foodstuffs and cooking oil.



Gede Tailoring Enterprise.



A major investment by GIFT in 2023/24 has been support for a small local tailoring business in support of school leavers from Kakuyuni School for the Deaf. Having supported the school for many years, and assisting individual students experiencing hardship, the big question remains 'what next?' for those students when they leave KSS. Working in conjunction with their teacher, we developed a project to set up a local tailoring business where deaf students who chose to take a course in tailoring could find employment in the business. A contract with local schools ensures that there will be a steady demand for school uniforms, besides which it was decided that the business would focus on high-quality clothing and accessories. Sewing machines and special equipment for making well-finished buttonholes, hemming garments etc were provided by GIFT and our first student, who will mentor others in time, began working for the newly opened Smart Gift Fashion Studio and Accessories. This is an important development in the community as employment for deaf people is rare, so not only is the new enterprise addressing this big issue, but it is also contributing to breaking down the barriers and building positive relationships in the community.



B. Education and Training – education/training bursaries, whole school development, community training courses.

Student Funding

During this reporting year, Gift International continued to fund education fees and school materials for students at all levels of education. Such support ensures continued attendance, tuition and boarding fees. GIFT believes that empowering young people is one of the most powerful things we can do to support individuals who in turn support their communities. Getting started is often the biggest hurdle and while our contribution is often relatively small, providing that initial funding, as in much of what we do, can be the beginning of a very different journey leading to a brighter future.

We were pleased to support the graduation of a student from one of our GIFT-supported Maasai communities in June '23.

We continue to support one young girl from the coast to pursue secondary education.

Support for a student who we funded through his Primary education at Kakuyuni School for the Deaf continues at a boarding school that has a special unit catering for the deaf. It is very pleasing to note that not only has this candidate continued to progress well academically, he is also performing well in sport. Our discussions with staff from Kakuyuni School to see how GIFT might continue to offer support for students once they leave Kakuyuni resulted in the Gede Tailoring enterprise outlined in section A, above.



We provided support for a student from the coast region to take up the offer of a place on a medical course at university. Known to us through another local project, this young man had achieved excellent grades and secured a place that, without financial support, he could not have commenced.

During this reporting period we provided further support for one of our previous candidates to enhance his driving qualifications. Upon meeting up with this young man in November 2023, we were very pleased to realise how much his job meant to him – not just financially in his ability to support his family, but that he had actively sought a driving job in support of the wider community and drives a tanker bringing fresh water to remote communities. He was keen to add a competency level to his driving skills which, in due course, we were pleased to support him in achieving.



Competition for secure jobs is so high that young people need to find ways to set themselves apart and get a foot on the ladder. To this end, we facilitated driving lessons for a student in the Maasai Mara who, having passed his driving test and acquired his licence, secured a voluntary role with a prestigious tourist camp where he is confident that, in time, he will be in a good position to become fully employed.

Similarly, in early 2024, we funded technical training for a student from the coast to attend a course in construction plant machinery operation, including Health and Safety at work. He will graduate later in the year and, if successful, should be placed in a good position to seek and gain employment in the construction industry within which demands for skills and competency are growing.

These initiatives once again demonstrate that through provision of initial training, GIFT is empowering young people, enabling better futures and helping to provide employment closer to home, thereby reducing the need to seek work elsewhere.

C. Community Health and Well-being. Mother and Baby Support, Cleft Palate surgery and community medical support.

Mother and Baby Support Project, Trans Mara district, Kenya.

Following a consultation facilitated by a local GIFT International associate in which the ladies of a Maasai village GIFT has worked with for many years in Transmara District, it was established that there are expected to be around 20 births in the village each year.

It is well documented that where a mother-to-be can attend a maternity facility, it is likely that the mother will have an opportunity to rest a little before the birth, potential complications can be detected quickly, and in the majority of cases the baby will be delivered well, with no spread of disease between mother and baby.

Of the mothers consulted, everyone opted for a clinic delivery, if possible, but the reality of the costs associated with attending a facility and the challenge of travelling to and from a clinic result in most mothers giving birth at home without professional medical intervention or support.

In partnership with GIFT International, a N.I. family of long-term supporters successfully piloted a programme of support for mothers-to-be during the calendar year 2020 where a percentage of sales of Little Love blankets, designed and marketed locally in Northern Ireland, supported mothers and new-born babies in the Masai Mara.

The project is managed and administered by a local GIFT associate who keeps records of the births. Assisted by members of the local Ladies Group, he purchases baby requisites and ensures they are delivered to the mothers prior to the birth of their babies. Additional support is provided by a GIFT representative in Nairobi and, where applicable, a generous volunteer from Northern Ireland assists with transportation of resources.

Transport to the clinic is provided either directly by the project coordinator or by organising taxis for mothers in labour/returning home. A supply of blankets and other baby items are issued to the new mothers.

Every new-born baby receives essential vaccinations throughout the first year and all return home with a new mosquito net.

In agreement with the main funding provider for the Mother and Baby project, it was agreed that where possible, funds could also be made available for emergency infant medical intervention. This has proved very helpful in several instances where we have been able to react quickly to relieve physical suffering and/or financial hardship that would have prevented intervention taking place.



At the end of 2023, the first GIFT visit to Kenya since Covid took place and with regard to the Mother and Baby project, two important consultations were arranged. The first was a visit to the local maternity clinic to discuss how GIFT support was impacting the mothers and new-born babies from 'our' village, and to establish if there is something else within our scope that we could contribute to the clinic that would support the wider community. Following wide-ranging discussions, it was concluded that provision of a modern delivery couch would benefit mothers and nursing staff alike. The clinic is undergoing considerable refurbishment, and it was hoped that the new delivery suite could be kitted out with a modern couch, replacing the locally-made traditional delivery bed, below.



A second consultation was held in the community when mothers/families who had benefitted from GIFT funding over the past 3 years were invited to attend a community gathering. In a remarkable day where over 70 men, women and children made the (often considerable) journey on foot to be there, we held an open discussion to hear what the community felt about the project, and how things might be improved in the future (subject to funding).

Without exception everyone (including the grandmothers) appreciated the access to maternal health care and recognised the benefits to the mothers and babies, with the positive knock-on benefits to family life. However, one point of note was clearly stated, that a big problem is having

money to buy nutritious food for the mother in the early days following delivery, which is essential to establish lactation and ensure the newborn children have sufficient nutritious breast milk.

Considering this vital information, it was agreed that we will adjust the package to enable more of the funds to be given directly to the mother for the purchase of food, or whatever is deemed most essential. For example, while it is a requisite of the clinic that mothers come prepared with a blanket (which GIFT was providing), the mothers felt they could use an existing blanket, or borrow one, in favour of having access to good food on return home with the child.

We are grateful for the ready participation of the community and the warmth and hospitality shown on the day of the community gathering which we will endeavour to make a regular event!



N.B. The recipient community is aware that funding is not guaranteed beyond any given year. We will, however, be in discussion with the project supporters at the end of 2024 to assess future funding opportunities, and with the recipient community to identify current needs and costs. With long-term goals in mind, we are particularly keen to establish if there are resources, or possibly training for staff and/or mothers we can fund that will benefit the entire community in addition to the mothers and babies in direct receipt of support.

Cleft Palate Support. During 2020 GIFT had initiated a project to raise funds in support of children in need of cleft lip and cleft palate surgery.

Although the condition is not fully understood, there are many factors believed to be the cause of cleft lip/palate deformity, resulting in 1 in 500 – 700 births in Kenya presenting with cleft lip and/or cleft palate. These include inherited genes, early or unhealthy pregnancy, lack of access to maternal health services, poor diet, exposure to toxic elements, including smoking and alcohol consumption in pregnancy.

Cleft lip or cleft palate need not be a disability, and yet, to be born with this condition in a community that lacks access to medical support, condemns many to a life of abandonment, bullying, and difficulties with eating or learning to speak, with negative consequences for education and life opportunities. It doesn't just affect the individual child, the whole family may be stigmatised, which can further exacerbate the tendency to hide children away.

Effective surgery to repair cleft lip and cleft palate can change all that and GIFT International, along with our Kenyan travel providers, FACT Safaris Ltd, who will assist with overseeing the project, seek to establish a project to support cleft palate surgery for children in need.

Problems encountered through the pandemic led us to put the project on hold until such times as we can meet with relevant medical teams to ensure that everything goes ahead as planned. One aspect we want to be very sure of is the aftercare of children receiving surgery as this is vital to their full recovery and wellbeing.

On return to Kenya in 2023, a meeting with a leading reconstructive surgeon at Nairobi Hospital was arranged and follow-up discussions will be held to scope out a project to ensure best use of funds in support of children in need of this surgery

Donations already raised towards cleft palate support have been reserved for this purpose and we continue to be open to funding support for this worthy cause.

D. Humanitarian Fund for families and individuals experiencing hardship – feed the children, and individual medical emergencies.

Emergency Feeding Programmes. The Committee agreed that one remote Masai community near Ngong, Kajiado County, with whom we have had a longstanding relationship, should continue to receive regular support from general funds for the provision of food and water (brought from Nairobi) for both the elderly and young children. This community is severely disadvantaged by drought and the support provided has been gratefully received.



Throughout the year we made several additional donations towards essential health and well-being in a range of communities, including funds towards critical medical operations and aftercare.

Conclusion. The activities outlined above clearly require significant funding. GIFT International has been the recipient of funds through community talks, activities and events run by the Committee and others, general donations, and the generosity of regular givers to facilitate these projects. Regrettably, the funding support we previously received through Amazon Smile has ceased due to their change of policy, but we continue to benefit from payments via Easyfundraising which brings additional and very welcome funding.

We are grateful to a broad denomination of churches and community groups who invite us to speak about the work of GIFT International, a number of whom ask us back year on year. We are also very grateful to all our individual supporters who have made substantial donations, and those who provide support in kind both in Northern Ireland and in Kenya.

GIFT International is a small, entirely voluntary, organisation and without the kind generosity of all our supporters we could not provide the range of support provided by GIFT in Kenya. The encouragement and support of all means everything to us.

Many messages of gratitude have been sent throughout the year by recipients, both individuals and community groups, and we wish to pass a general message of thanks from recipients in Kenya to each and every supporter here in Northern Ireland.

“Other than our bank account, we have no other assets or liabilities”.

Note. In keeping with our policy on project sensitivity, permissions to use photos included in the report have been granted.

Janet Wilson. Chairperson, GIFT International.

August 2024