



GIFT International Trustees Annual Report

April 2024 – March 2025

Registered Charity CCNI 104617



Grassroots Initiatives • Funding • Training • Community Empowerment

Executive Summary – the year at a glance

During the financial year April 2024 – March 2025, Gift International continued its mission of advancing education, improving health, relieving poverty, and empowering communities in remote areas of Kenya. Despite being a small, voluntary charity, the organisation made a measurable and lasting impact through a variety of community-identified grassroots projects, training, and funding provision.

Key Highlights of the Year:

- Supported sustainable community development, including tree planting, beekeeping enterprises, small business support, and the development of a tailoring enterprise employing deaf graduates.
- Expanded educational opportunities through bursaries, vocational training, and tertiary student support, assisting young people to gain skills and qualifications that enhance their employability prospects.
- Sustained vital health initiatives, notably the GIFT International Mother and Baby Project, providing pre-natal care, safe deliveries, vaccinations, transport, and nutrition support to vulnerable families. Provided emergency feeding programmes and medical support for drought-affected Maasai communities.
- Progressed the cleft palate support programme, reserving dedicated donor funds and establishing connections with surgical teams, while exploring preventative health measures.
- Provided humanitarian aid and urgent medical assistance for individuals and families, including disability support.
- Maintained a strong commitment to community consultations, with particular emphasis on including women in decision-making and planning for project sustainability over an ideal five-year timeframe.

Looking Forward

GIFT International will continue to encourage self-sustaining initiatives, while recognising the need for ongoing support in areas such as maternal and child health and cleft palate care. Preventative health measures will be further explored in collaboration with local officials.

Through the generosity of donors, churches, community groups, and individual supporters, GIFT International has been able to maintain and grow its projects, making a real difference in the lives of people in Kenya.

Introduction

GIFT International is committed to advancing education, promoting health, relieving poverty, and empowering communities in Kenya and other developing countries. Through grassroots initiatives, training, and carefully targeted funding, we work alongside local communities to foster long-term sustainability, aligning our efforts with the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

Purposes of the Charity

1. Advance education and promote health by providing resources, training, and small grants to improve quality of life.
2. Relieve poverty and hunger through grants, training, and empowerment of economically challenged individuals and families.
3. Recruit, select, and send out fully self-financed volunteers from the UK to observe and, where appropriate, serve in the areas of benefit.

Public Benefit and Alignment with Global Goals

GIFT International has considered the Charity Commission's guidance and criteria for public benefit: benefits flow directly from our purposes, are demonstrable, and are beneficial, not harmful. Our activities reflect the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, ranging from No Poverty and Zero Hunger to Gender Equality, Climate Action, and Partnerships for the Goals.

Governance and Structure

During the year, GIFT International welcomed a new Treasurer, Mr. Graham Wilson, and a new Independent Examiner, Mr. Tim Reid, following the retirement of our long-serving examiner, Mr Alec McCullagh. The organisation continues to be led by three trustees, who ensure that all activities are guided by strategic planning, community consultation, and beneficiary feedback. This ensures that our work remains impactful, transparent, and in line with our stated purposes.

Community Consultations and Sustainability

GIFT International places strong emphasis on community consultations, particularly encouraging the participation of women in decision-making. This inclusive approach allows us to identify new projects for development, some of which may be funded from existing resources while others are prioritised for the following financial year.

Our general policy is to provide start-up capital and guidance with the objective of projects becoming self-sustaining within five years. However, exceptions are made where groups cannot yet achieve financial independence, such as our maternal health initiatives and cleft palate programme. During 2024 we discussed measures to ensure sustainability of the maternal health project, and we are also exploring preventative health measures to reduce the long-term burden of disease within communities.

Budgeting for Projects

For effective management and reporting, GIFT International categorises projects under five key areas:

- A) Sustainable Community Development – agricultural projects, tree planting, beekeeping, water harvesting and small business development.
- B) Education and Training – bursaries, school development, training courses.
- C) Community Health and Well-being – maternal and infant health, community medical and food needs.
- D) Humanitarian Fund – targeted emergency support (food and medicine/medical intervention) for families and individuals in crisis.
- E) Cleft Palate support – this is a specific funding stream where groups or individual supporters request funds to go directly to cleft palate surgery and aftercare.

Main Achievements 2024 – 2025

Despite being a small voluntary charity, GIFT International has delivered significant impact across Kenya. Highlights include:

- Expansion of tree nurseries and indigenous reforestation, including participation in National Tree Day in Kenya.
- Support for a local botanical garden initiative, helping preserve biodiversity and traditional medicinal plants.
- Beekeeping training and enterprise development, leading to increased honey and wax product sales by the community.
- Establishment of the Smart Gift Fashion Studio and Accessories, providing training and employment of deaf school graduates in tailoring.
- Ongoing investment in education bursaries, vocational training, and tertiary studies, supporting long-term livelihoods.
- Sustained delivery of the Mother and Baby Project, providing prenatal care, safe deliveries, vaccinations, and nutrition support.
- Humanitarian food aid for vulnerable communities impacted by drought and hardship.
- Medical assistance for individuals with serious health issues, including disability support.
- Launch of the cleft palate support programme, connecting children with life-changing surgery and exploring preventive measures.
- Supporter trip to observe projects took place in October 2024 when the Chairperson was joined by a supporter from Canberra, Australia, and another from Ireland.

PROJECTS IN DETAIL

A. Sustainable Community Development

1. Tree Planting in Kenya.

Over the past two decades, Gift International, which firmly believes that taking care of the local environment results in taking care of people, has funded the planting and maintenance of many tree nurseries and small woodlots grown for various purposes, including ameliorating climate change, timber production, wildlife habitats, stabilizing soil and air purification.

During 2024-25, GIFT International continued to expand tree planting in areas in which we work including Embu, Laikipia, Massai Mara and Gede, investing in the purchase of tree seedlings and tools for planting. Planting initiatives were undertaken by volunteers within our communities and included planting on community land protected from grazing animals, in school grounds, involving pupils, staff and local officials, and in designated tree nurseries. Planting took place in conjunction with Kenya's National Tree Day to maximise the impact of the government's conservation messages going out to the communities.



Community Tree planting in Transmara Distric



Tree planting in Laikipia involving schools and the county official



Tools for tree planting in Gede

2. Botanical Garden.

Work on creating a botanical garden to preserve endangered species in Laikipia continues, and we agreed to provide funding to fence an area against elephant predation and grazing animals



The Herbalist and members of the Botanical Garden support Group, Laikipia.



Undertaking installation of elephant deterrent fence around Botanical Garden

3. Beekeeping Enterprises.

GIFT International has worked in association with Northern Ireland beekeepers who have for over a decade provided funding towards the running of beekeeping training courses, supplying beekeeping equipment and ongoing advice on harvesting and marketing.

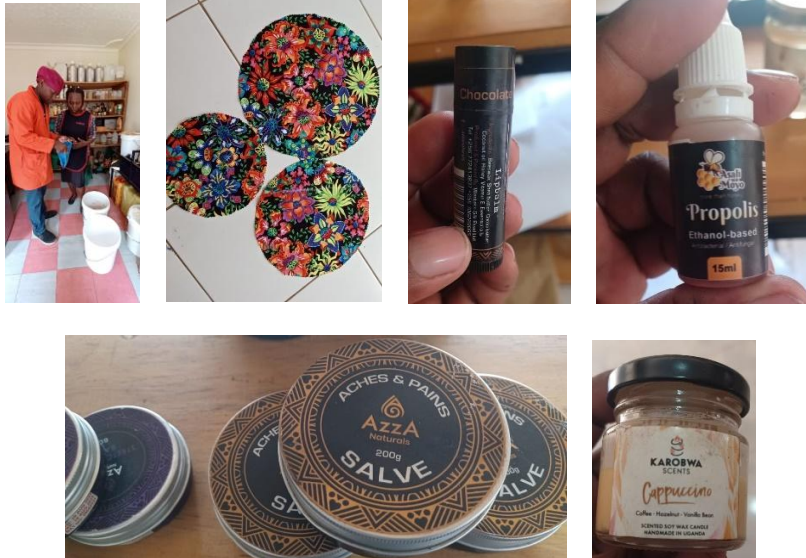
On arrival at the coast in October 2024, our party was delighted to observe further development of the Honey Centre. There is still work to be done and as this project has had a hugely beneficial impact locally, GIFT will consider further ways in which the community can be supported.



Our team visited a prime site in the mangrove forest where, with GIFT International support, the group intends to establish a new apiary which will yield top quality mangrove honey.



In January 2025, supported by GIFT International, the manager of the Honey Centre attended a week-long honey extension course wherein he learned about making new products using honey and wax, including facial scrub, shampoo, lip balm, furniture polish, and wax food covers.



Within a matter of weeks, the Honey Centre was selling a new range of products. Sales are going well, to the extent that the Centre is now able to employ new staff, demonstrating the positive impact on the local community. After reinvestment in upgrading equipment and resources, all profits from honey and wax products go back to the community, providing an important source of income for contributing families.



Empowering Communities.

During our visit to Laikipia in October 2024, a community consultation identified the need for honey training among a group of Maasai women who are keen to start beekeeping. They have been in receipt of a range of beekeeping equipment but have no bee husbandry

expertise. GIFT International offered to explore the possibility of an exchange visit to provide training and initial set-up in the following financial year.

4. GIFT International Tailoring Enterprise.

Having provided funding to set up the tailoring initiative in Gede, providing a next step for those students from Kakuyuni School for the Deaf who wished to learn tailoring, there is now a thriving tailoring business in the heart of this coastal community. During the reporting year we added more equipment, including a super-fine sewing machine that allows for quality stitching. An extensive range of clothing, including local school uniforms, is now available to order. Sales have been going well and Kakuyuni students who pass through the system are equipped with a transferable skill that can help to provide them with a livelihood in a challenging world. The intention is that the tailoring business will become fully self-sustaining within the next two years. We will, however, continue to review development and, where appropriate, add resources that will help growth and expansion of the enterprise.





We were delighted that one of our Kakuyuni students, supported through his four years of Secondary education, called at the Tailoring Shop to say hello!

B. Education and Training.

GIFT International believes that empowering young people through education and training is one of the most powerful things we can do for individuals and communities. During the reporting year, GIFT International continued to fund education fees and school materials at all levels of education across three communities in our areas of focus. Such support helps parents to ensure continuity in attendance, by contributing to tuition and boarding fees, school uniforms and educational resources.

It is always a pleasure to be invited into schools and during our trip in October 2024 we visited several schools, both primary and secondary, providing a range of basic school

resources for pupils and teachers, including writing materials, sports equipment and books. We spent time in two schools in Laikipia, hearing about immediate resource needs for the schools, and enjoying time with the pupils.





Pupils were highly engaged upon hearing about the contrasting places we came from (Australia, Ireland and UK), and the differences in climate and environment/wildlife.

Kakuyuni School for the Deaf. A meeting was held with the Kakuyuni School representative laising with GIFT International to update us on progress and challenges. During the meeting, essential First Aid kits were donated to the school.





We continue to provide contributions to educational fees, vocational training courses and practical skills such as driving lessons, where a little support for individuals within our communities can mean the difference between acquiring their driving licence, obtaining a passport or birth certificate – all things that we often take for granted, but to someone starting out in Kenya can be financially prohibitive, yet, once acquired, can unlock opportunities for a brighter future.

C. Community Health and Wellbeing

1. Mother and Baby Project

The Mother and Baby project in the Maasai Mara is now in its fourth year. Based on feedback from the 2023 community consultation, we adjusted the package given to mothers-to-be to include a small amount of cash to help them to purchase nutritious food on return from the clinic after the birth of their babies, to support their own recovery and establishment of milk.

During our 2024 visit, we were given a tour of the new facilities at the maternity clinic, including the delivery couch sponsored by GIFT International, which, by all accounts, has been a welcome addition, benefitting staff and mothers alike.



The annual community consultation proved to be the usual joyous occasion with over 70 mothers, babies, grandmothers, and a small number of fathers and elders coming along for the afternoon feast and discussions. It is encouraging to hear the stories of their experience

directly from the mothers and, without exception, the opportunity to avail of the clinic services is welcomed.

In keeping with our policy aim to encourage self-sufficiency within 5 years of commencing projects, where applicable, we held a meeting to explore how we can enable the mother and baby project to become self-financing. This challenge had been laid down to the community last year, allowing them time to consult across the community and to give it due consideration. All ideas and proposals were discussed and assessed. It is a challenging question, how to make something that has no conclusion, self-sustaining – babies will always be born and there will always be associated costs. In establishing this project, we wanted to demonstrate a safer alternative for mothers-to-be, and attendance at the maternity facility has proved favourable to the community. There was no question that the community wishes the maternal health project to continue and, while all would have been happy if we simply continued to fund the project, there was a reasonable degree of understanding that it now needs to move to a different level.



Group discussions on the future of the Mother and Baby Project

Having discussed all proposals and explored strengths and weaknesses, a unanimous decision was made to fund a community cattle-rearing project, annual profits of which are projected to be adequate to support maternity services in the community and enable new stock to be purchased for 2026, and each year thereafter. A pilot project will run through 2025, starting with the purchase of 15 steers in December 2024, and will be reviewed at the end of the 2025. In addition to the purchase price of the steers, projected costs include factors such as herder fees, grazing and feedstuff, vaccinations and veterinary fees. Purchase, sales and management of profits will be the responsibility of the community and no income will come back to GIFT International.

One concern discussed at length would be the possibility of serious drought hitting the region. We would have no control over this, and it would potentially devastate *all* areas of life, which is a risk with everything we do. However, the community is confident that with the new dam close by, unless conditions happen to be extreme, the cattle should be adequately provided for. The community understands that, assuming the cattle project proves effective, it will be handed over to them, such that ongoing management of the cattle

enterprise and associated support of the Mother and Baby project will henceforth be entirely their responsibility. This does not mean we will no longer take an interest in the maternity project, but rather that we will look at additional ways of supporting maternal and infant health. There are many other issues around maternal health, early marriage and understanding nutrition that could well be a follow on to our work in this arena.

2. General community wellbeing.

Community Feeding Programmes. It was agreed that one remote Maasai community near Ngong, Kajiado County, with whom we have had a longstanding relationship, should continue to receive support for the provision of food and water (brought from Nairobi) for both the elderly and young children, and a worming programme for school children. This community is severely disadvantaged by drought and the support provided has been gratefully received. Although need is very real, this is not sustainable for GIFT International in the long term, and we are urging the community to identify ways of becoming more self-reliant. While measures to become more sustainable may be beyond the financial capacity of GIFT International, engaging the community in discussions about long-term sustainability may help to prepare them to seek alternative funding sources.



Children receiving nutritious food support



Community elders gather to receive emergency food supplies

D. Humanitarian Fund - Support for Families and Individuals in Need.

Throughout the reporting year we made five additional donations towards essential health and well-being within the communities in which we work, including funding for critical medical treatment, operations and aftercare, and disability support. Funding helps in times of crisis and is at the discretion of the Committee. Recipients are either known to us or recommended by our project representatives on the ground. Funds, which are made available only after our main projects funding is secure, do not exceed £500 individually, and most donations are considerably smaller.

E. Cleft Palate Support.

Back in 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 assist with overseeing the project and provide on-the-ground liaison, have successfully established 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 were able to meet with relevant medical teams to ensure that everything would proceed 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 maxillofacial surgeon at Nairobi Hospital had been arranged and, over the course of several months thereafter, we scoped out a project to ensure best use of funds in support of children in need of this surgery.

We are delighted to report that in December 2024 we funded our first cleft palate surgery. The child was a little 9-month-old boy being cared for in a home for abandoned children in Nairobi. He was unable to feed due to his cleft palate and had been tube fed under the supervision of Dr Onguti until he was strong enough to undergo surgery. The procedure went well, and he was discharged on Christmas Eve. His recovery continued to be monitored for several months, and it was with great joy that we received the news in March that he had been placed with an adoptive family.

Through the care and generosity of donors to GIFT International, and the skill and kindness of Dr Onguti, the life of one little abandoned boy facing huge physical and personal challenges was changed, and, to everyone who contributed in all the ways you did, we extend our gratitude and thanks.



Cleft palate surgery – before and after

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

The success of GIFT International depends entirely on the generosity and commitment of our supporters. From community groups and churches to individual donors and volunteers, every contribution makes a tangible difference in the lives of people in Kenya. Although Amazon Smile funding has ceased, we continue to benefit from Easyfundraising, the UK's biggest charity shopping site. Our thanks to supporters who have signed up to Easyfundraising for their online purchases. Community talks and events, along with regular donations from individual well-wishers, ensure that we can continue our work in Kenya.

We are humbled by the many messages of thanks received from beneficiaries, and we pass these expressions of gratitude on to all who support our work.

GIFT International remains a small, fully voluntary organisation. Other than our bank account, we hold no assets or liabilities. Our commitment is to continue stewarding resources with transparency, compassion, and a clear focus on sustainable change.

Janet Wilson
Chairperson, GIFT International
September 2025

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