



## **Kenyan Schools of Hope/Ewuaso Osiligi Center 2023 Annual Report**

What a blessing it is has been to watch God work through the ministries of the Ewuaso Osiligi Center and School (EOC) and Kenyan Schools of Hope (KSOH) for another year. In 2023, the EOC provided safety, hope, education, and care for 63 girls fleeing female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced early marriage (FEM), an increase of 14 girls from the previous year. In addition, at the end of the year, another eight rescued girls awaited approval from the Kenyan government for placement at the EOC.

The EOC continued to hold worship services with members of the Ewuaso community throughout 2023, sharing the love of Jesus and the Gospel with the rescued girls, local students, and the surrounding communities. Community involvement at the EOC also encourages deeper relationships to form for a stronger mutual network of support. Following instruction by Deacon Joseph, 16 girls from the rescue center were baptized on November 12, 2023, and then joined two others in confirming their faith in their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In addition, 23 children from local families were baptized. Two other rescued girls could not be present on November 12. One was baptized and both confirmed the first week of January 2024.

The EOC continues to build a support system for the rescued girls to help them transition into life at the center, work through difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences, and maintain connections with their families and home communities. In 2023, the EOC had a highly qualified, certified social worker on staff and hired a deputy head teacher who is a counselor by profession. In addition, older girls who have been at the center for a while developed their own system for matching older girls with recently arrived girls to mentor them and “show them the ropes.”

### **Ewuaso Osiligi School**

At the end of 2023, 61 students attended Ewuaso Osiligi School, of which 38 were rescued girls and 23 were local students. An additional 24 rescued girls attended various high schools. All the high school girls returned to the rescue center during school breaks except for three who have been successfully reintegrated into their families and are being supported from their homes. One rescued girl received vocational training.

The EOC continues to foster positive relationships with government agencies to facilitate approvals to meet new school requirements and placement of rescued girls during a time when orphanages and rescue centers are receiving heightened scrutiny. The Ewuaso Osiligi School is a fully registered and recognized school by the Kenyan government. The Kenyan government approved Ewuaso Osiligi School

as a junior secondary school (7th-9th grade) early in 2023, a huge accomplishment and benefit to the EOC. Kenya implemented nationwide education reforms that established junior secondary schools the previous year. Since the new national standards require a separate campus or building to house the junior secondary school, many schools have had to drop 7th and 8th grade because they cannot meet the new standards. Thankfully, the EOC and KSOH boards were able to update the plans for the new multipurpose building (currently under construction) to include the separate junior secondary classrooms, including space to add 9th grade, a computer lab, and a science lab. The completion of the multipurpose building will allow the girls currently in 8th grade to stay an additional year and attend 9th grade at the EOC next year. As the Kenyan government closes non-certified schools, the EOC anticipates an increase in student enrollment from the Ewuaso area.

In March, Ewuaso Osiligi School officially received the documentation authorizing the school to become a testing center. Most schools in the surrounding area are not registered yet. The Kenyan government certified the Ewuaso Osiligi School so quickly because it is connected to a rescue center and has such good infrastructure, desks, etc. Students no longer must travel to other schools to take mandatory tests and can take them in familiar surroundings. Serving as a testing center not only benefits the students, but students from other schools now travel to the EOC and learn about our school.

On October 30, 10 eighth-grade students took the national exam required for entrance into high school. The students who had been attending the school for multiple years scored very well on the exam demonstrating the high quality of education the students have received; however, others who had arrived more recently at the EOC did not pass. Those eighth graders will have the opportunity to retake the exam following additional preparations. Many of the rescued girls from all grades gather on Saturdays to work on catching up in their studies as some of them never attended school or had been pulled out of school prior to arriving at the EOC.

Finally, the EOC continued to build its relationship with Compassion International. Compassion International supported six students—two boys from the Ewuaso area and four of the rescued girls—by providing partial scholarships. These scholarships for the rescued girls supplement the KSOH/EOC sponsors and help cover costs of caring for the girls since sponsorships no longer cover all expenses due to high inflation.

## Outreach Events

Living conditions in the Ewuaso area continued to worsen in 2023 due to prolonged, multiyear drought and continued high inflation, increasing the number of families facing hunger. In response, KSOH led a special fundraising campaign during the summer and met its goal of \$5,000 to provide food to the most vulnerable. The EOC began by asking the area chief to identify 200 families to receive food. The EOC



distributed food to these families, which included 20 families of students at the center who received a double portion. When there was still food remaining, more families were identified. As Catherine Wangari, the EOC Director, said, “It was like the five loaves and two fish. The food seemed to multiply,

and we kept having to ask the chief for more families in need.” In total, 539 families were touched by this outreach effort. The girls participated in the effort by packaging the food allotments and handing out the food.

Vision and Mission for Kenyan Society (VAMFKS), the registered mission society under which the EOC works in Kenya, hosted several interactive and community building events at the EOC. In May 2023, a group of college students from Concordia University, Austin, volunteered at the EOC and led activities for the girls and Vacation Bible School for children from the community. At the end of May, Trinity Ablaze in Kenya (a vision mission outreach from Trinity Lutheran Church of Spring, Texas, and a mentor church of VAMFKS) enjoyed the opportunity to share in fellowship and fun with girls and community children prior to kicking off four free vision clinics in different areas across Kenya.

On November 13-16, VAMFKS held a vision clinic in the Ewuaso area for the rescued girls and community members. During the event, the Kenyan doctors saw 496 people and conducted 53 surgeries. Between the Gospel presentations at the clinics and the showing of the Jesus film, about 69 people received Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

### **Completion of Staff Quarters**



In February 2023, EOC board members inspected and accepted the new staff quarters. Funded through donations made during the fall 2021 fundraising campaign, the staff quarters now provide excellent housing and help with recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and other staff in this remote location. The facility provides housing for up to nine staff and their families.

### **Groundbreaking for the Multipurpose Building**



On November 7, 2023, the contractor joined the EOC board members and staff for a blessing and groundbreaking for the multipurpose building. This facility will provide a permanent kitchen, indoor space for dining, vocational training facilities, a computer lab, and additional classrooms to meet the

new requirements to maintain accreditation as a junior secondary school (middle school). In addition, the large dining space will serve as a place for the community to hold worship services. Construction should conclude in 2025.

### **Other Improvements**

In response to the high cost of electricity and frequent outages, the EOC installed solar panels in 2023 to provide reliable, lower-cost electricity for the campus. In addition, they were in the process of installing solar hot water units at the end of the year to provide hot water for the first time for the girls' dormitory.

The EOC constructed a water tower at the highest location on the property to serve as a holding tank to provide more reliable water and to increase the water pressure to better serve the multi-story dormitory and staff quarters.



### **Community Literacy Classes**

A group of local women continued to meet at the EOC on Saturdays for literacy classes, with a group of about six who were particularly committed and active in the classes. As the drought worsened, some women were no longer able to regularly attend; however, most of the women who have participated in the classes over the past few years can now read.

### **Finances & Administration**

In 2023, more than 98% of all donations went directly to providing a safe home, hope, and education for girls at risk of FGM and FEM. Less than 2% was spent on administrative costs, such as wire transfer and credit card fees.

God blessed KSOH and EOC immensely during the 2023 fall fundraiser. We received donations and pledges totaling more than \$515,000, nearly reaching our ambitious goal of \$525,000, to continue our mission of providing safety, hope, and education to young girls fleeing female genital mutilation and forced early marriage. Funds will be used to complete the multipurpose building in one phase. To a smaller extent, funds will also be used to maintain existing facilities and offset operating expenses affected by continued high inflation and the repercussions still being felt by the historic drought.

The EOC and KSOH boards slightly modified the joint subcommittees established last year, which continued to produce fruit and facilitate positive relationships and communications. Subcommittees included:

- Christian Outreach
- Education
- Projects (includes major infrastructure development and maintenance of existing facilities)
- Work Program and Budget

## Boards of Directors

The Kenya Schools of Hope Board is based in the U.S. and composed of 13 active board members and two serving in Emeritus status:

Richard Lynch, Chair	Marilyn Lynch
Pamela Rice, Vice Chair	Rev. Dr. Richard Carl Noack
Jeanne Carmichael, Treasurer	Gloria Sauck
Luis Sanabria, Secretary	Sharon Stuhldreier – effective January 2024
Kelly Borchelt	Flora Tacquard
Bill Brunkhorst	Eric Mason Walker
Rosemary Freeman	

Emeritus: Ray Tacquard and Karen Frerking

The Kenya-based Ewuaso Osiligi Center Board is composed of seven active board members:

Catherine Wangari, Chair	Barbara Njenga
Isaac Ngala, Secretary	Edward Mureithi
Alison Achieng	Alice Mwaringa
Maureen Maya	

## Going into 2024

We invite you to pray with us that God would continue to bless this ministry in 2024 and that we would be able to provide a safe place for children, especially girls at risk of FEM and FGM, to learn and grow. Please also pray for:

- The school and rescue center—that they would be a beacon of hope for the students and the surrounding communities, with many coming to know Jesus as their Savior,
- The rescued girls and other students, especially the girls who have been ill and in need of healing,
- God to provide sponsors for the 20+ girls being rescued in early 2024,
- Favorable and speedy rulings for all rescued girls awaiting placement at the EOC,
- God to guide the EOC and KSOH boards as they make decisions for the ministry, especially as they make plans for the first girls who are graduating from high school and need to be transitioned into adulthood and independent living,
- Continued progress on the multipurpose building, sufficient rain to meet construction needs for water, and safety for all who work on the project,
- Sustainability for the ministry, including funding, establishment of an endowment, and reliable food and water,
- Catherine (Director) and the EOC Board, especially for strength and guidance to handle all the tasks and needs of the EOC , and
- Rain to continue in the Ewuaso area and for recovery from the severe drought.

To learn more about KSOH and the EOC or to donate, visit <http://kenyanschoolsofhope.org/> or <https://www.ewuaso-osiligi.com/>.