

## Newsletter – April 2025

### Visit to the School in Chikola

In February 2025, my friends and I had the privilege of spending a full week at the Marie Nursery School — an experience so moving that we still think about the school every day.



After a two-day journey and a night at a hotel in Dodoma, the new school bus brought us to Chikola. A lively group of children, along with their teachers, greeted us with singing — and just like that, we were immersed in the daily rhythm of the school. In the classrooms, we encountered active, eager children, though the youngest also needed their rest breaks. Of course, outdoor play wasn't forgotten, even though the heat seemed to challenge only us and not the children.



We first visited the new hall, which turned out to be a true blessing: thanks to windows that allow cross-ventilation, a generous ceiling height, and ceiling fans, it remained pleasantly cool. During the week, we often found ourselves retreating there to recharge.





Meanwhile, the cooks, Dina and Sofia, were preparing lunch — over an open wood fire under the blazing sun. We quickly realized that Dina is a gifted cook, able to create delicious meals for 80 children with the simplest resources. The children showed their appreciation with healthy appetites, visible satisfaction, and boundless energy after eating.

They would then play exuberantly in the hall, creating an almost deafening noise. The teachers confirmed that learning has improved greatly since the children began receiving lunch at school — a decision we made following my last visit, and one I am deeply grateful for.



Naturally, a celebration was part of our visit:

The children showcased their talents in many playful ways. They were especially proud of their English skills in speaking, counting, and singing. A local women's dance group had also been invited, presenting us with handmade gifts and filling the atmosphere with the rhythm of drums. Even the fathers took part — they had to find their children while blindfolded, causing much laughter with every mistake. To close the celebration, several community members expressed heartfelt thanks and asked that the school continue to grow.



While the visit was overwhelmingly positive, it was clear that there are still material shortages:

The quality of colored pencils and exercise books was poor, shelving and the lone cabinet were falling apart, and waste disposal was non-existent. We three Swiss visitors didn't want to leave these issues unaddressed.



Marianne and Gabriela tackled the problems with full enthusiasm:

Fortunately, there was a shopping center next to our hotel where we purchased colored pencils, sharpeners, waste bins, drawing pads, and a large roll of tape to repair damaged schoolbooks. Over the following days, we also emphasized the importance of not just collecting waste inside the school grounds but also cleaning the surrounding area — a practice that has already begun. Gabriela also initiated the construction of a simple sunshade for the cooks, which was immediately started.



My main concern was the access road to the school:

It was so full of potholes that I feared for the school bus. After detailed discussions with Lameck upon my return, I decided to fund materials to fill the road, with the young men of the village carrying out the work. Happily, this has already been done, and now the drive is not only smoother but also shorter.





Now, back in Switzerland, I am working to raise the funds needed for further school expansions. The Schmid Entrepreneurs Foundation has just made another generous donation, allowing us to begin constructing a new classroom. Our goal is to build two classrooms so that we can hopefully open a new class for the next school year.

On behalf of everyone involved in the project — especially Lameck, the teachers, and the entire village community — I offer my heartfelt thanks for all your support.

We hope to continue offering these young children a better future.



**Asante sana sana!**

- Marie-Rose Ley

### **Planned Future Projects:**

- Solar system installation on the large hall roof
- Construction of a simple kitchen with a water tank
- Installation of a gutter system on the hall roof with a large cistern to collect rainwater for watering the vegetable garden and new trees
- Playground expansion — the school now has 80 children instead of 50!

### **Important note:**

The Tanzanian shilling has depreciated significantly against the Swiss franc — making this the ideal time to support one of these projects.

