



# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



**January- December 2024**

*...Bringing Back the Smiles...*



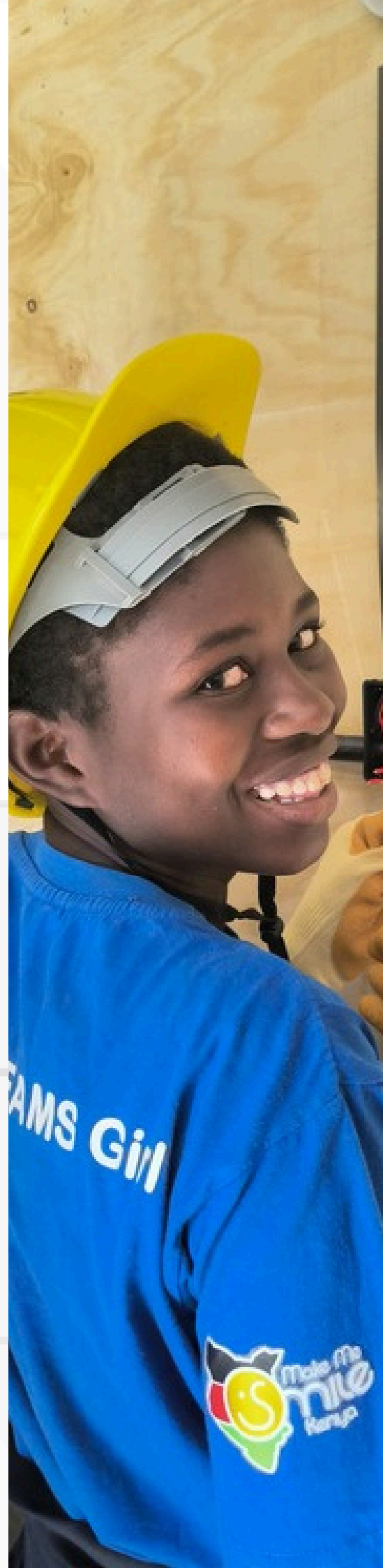
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01** | Directors' Remarks

**02** | Make Me Smile Kenya at a glance

**03** | 2024 Project Progress

**04** | Partners in 2024



# Foreword



**Simon Peter**

**Director**

Make Me Smile-Kenya

“ We reflect on our continued commitment to ensuring that girls and young women, orphans and vulnerable children and their households are safe, supported, and are equipped to lead healthy lives.”



Dear Make Me Smile Kenya Supporters,

As we close the chapter on 2024, we reflect with pride on a year marked by growth, innovation, and deepened impact on our beneficiaries; made possible through your support and solidarity. This year, we initiated the Solar Installation and Maintenance Project, a three-year initiative designed to equip youth with hands-on skills in solar technology. This program promotes sustainable energy solutions and opens new pathways for youth employability and self-reliance.

We empowered 14,501 adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) with services and interventions through the DREAMS Project and 15,367 OVC; reflecting on our continued commitment to ensuring that girls and young women, orphans and vulnerable children and their households are safe, supported, and are equipped to lead healthy lives.

Another highlight for the year was hosting the Judiciary Kisumu Law Courts Children’s Court Users Committee (CCUC) as part of Children Service Month and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. This event reaffirmed our commitment to child protection and advocacy, strengthening our collaborative efforts to ensure justice and dignity for vulnerable children. We proudly expanded environmental sustainability initiatives to Kajiado County, building on our commitment to climate action and community-led conservation efforts.

Each of these achievements reminds us of what is possible when we work together with a vision, and a purpose. We are grateful to our partners, supporters, and collaborators who continue to walk this journey with us. Your support inspires us to dream bigger and reach further.

Thank you for standing with Make Me Smile Kenya.



# Foreword



**Roger Winandy**

**Managing Director**

**Make Me Smile-International**

‘With trust, solidarity, and vision, real change is possible. We thank you; our friends, partners, and supporters, for walking this journey with us. Together, let’s keep smiling and keep moving forward.’



Dear friends of Make Me Smile International,

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we look back on the year 2024 — a year filled with meaningful progress, strong collaborations, and continued dedication to our vision of empowering communities. One of the highlights this year was the expansion of the Smiles Hub, including the opening of the town shop. This step marks an important milestone on the path toward self-sufficiency and community based entrepreneurship. Our commitment to renewable energy and youth empowerment has also grown.

With the support of our partners Iruwa, Sofi’s World and Urbis Foundation, Mwanga Mpya (New Light), our renewable energy solar project, now includes four trained master trainers and a new solar workshop onsite, allowing even more young people to gain valuable skills in sustainable technologies. Together with dedicated local partners, we’ve strengthened our permaculture and reforestation efforts as a direct response to the climate crisis. In Kajiado, Kenya, we support local Maasai communities in adopting sustainable farming practices in a region already heavily affected by drought and land degradation.

We were thrilled by the success of our photo exhibition in Luxembourg, which offered a unique glimpse into life in Kenya through the lenses of both Austrian and Kenyan photographers. By capturing everyday realities from different cultural perspectives, the exhibition beautifully highlighted the power of mutual understanding and exchange. We are excited to share that this powerful collaboration will travel to Vienna in 2025, continuing to build bridges and spark conversations across borders.

Looking forward, we are preparing for several new initiatives. A library in the Safepark will soon offer children and youth a peaceful and inspiring place to learn and dream. At the same time, the construction of new washroom facilities will ensure improved hygiene and dignity for the community and our students. 2024 has shown us once again that with trust, solidarity, and vision, real change is possible. We thank you — our friends, partners, and supporters — for walking this journey with us. Together, let’s keep smiling and keep moving forward. With deepest appreciation.

Thank you for making us smile!

*...Bringing Back The Smiles...*



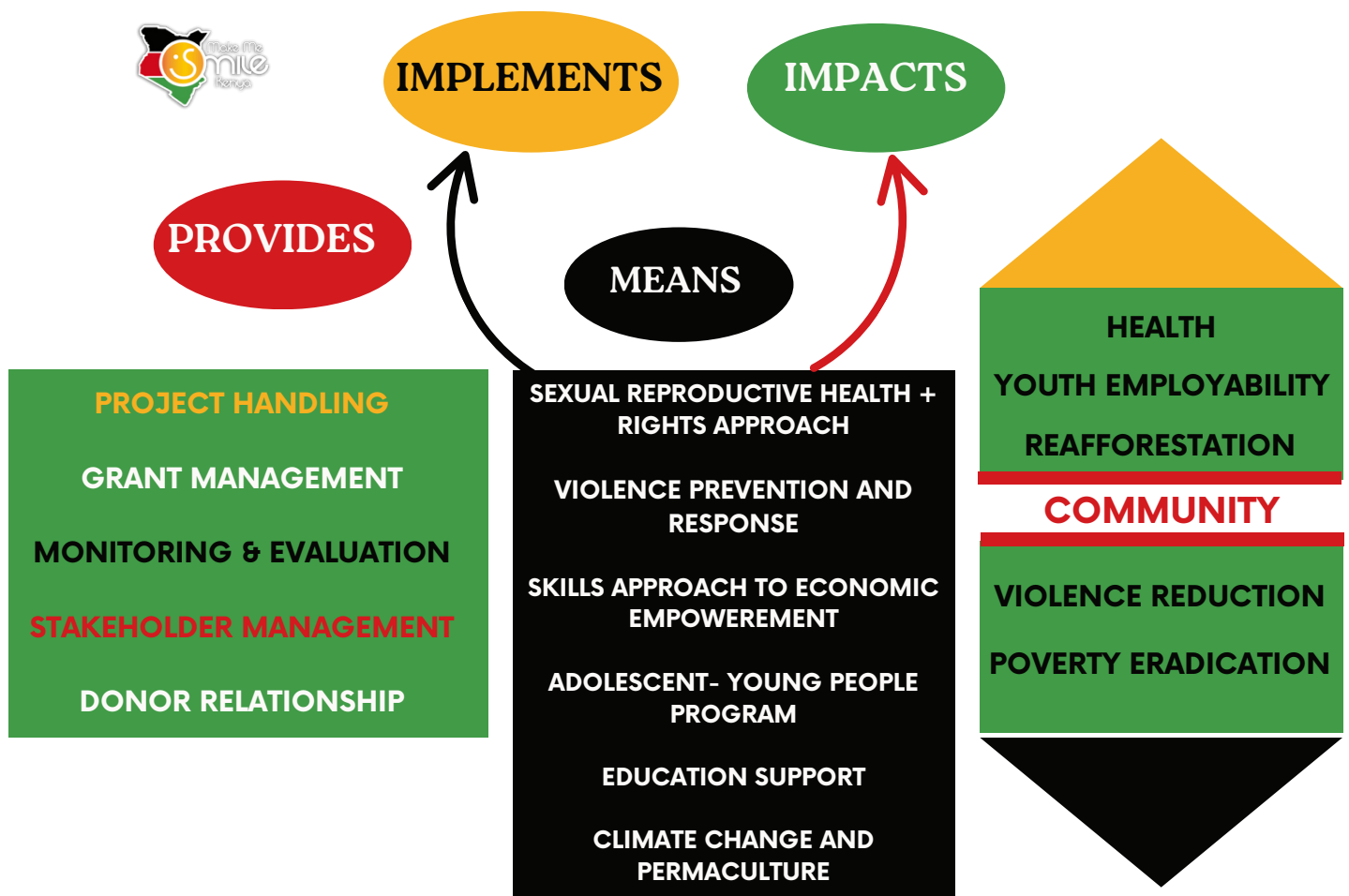
# MAKE ME SMILE KENYA AT A GLANCE

## BACKGROUND

Make Me Smile Kenya (MMS-K) is a Kenyan non-profit organization established in 2009 with a holistic approach to sustainable development cooperation. The organization focuses on promoting the health and development of adolescents and young people through programming, policy advocacy, and capacity building. Since its inception, MMS-K has collaborated with government structures and relevant stakeholders to significantly improve adolescent reproductive health, establishing itself as a key implementer in adolescent youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH) rights programming and advocacy in Kisumu County.

MMS-K is dedicated to the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) ensuring they are supported to address challenges in relation to the Triple threat of HIV, Teen pregnancies and gender-based violence (GBV). The organization implements measures in the community addressing the impacts of global climate change including reforestation, smart agriculture and permaculture.

MMS-K further provides critical support for children at risk, ensuring they have the resources and protection needed for a brighter future. Over the years, MMS-K has developed a strong background in behaviour change communication, utilizing innovative tools and approaches in line with the Ministry of Health and NASCOP guidelines. To ensure the sustainability of their efforts, MMS-K involves government structures and all relevant actors, enabling beneficiaries to support themselves and their children in the future and advocate for their rights.



“MMS-K envisions a world where every child has the opportunity to achieve his or her potential and participate in and contribute to all aspects of life.”

...Bringing Back The Smiles...

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Future Hub ICT Project

119 students were enrolled and trained throughout the year at the Future Hub Mayenya, distributed across three distinct rounds of intake. The first round saw 39 students (33 girls and 6 boys) join the class, while the second round welcomed 40 students (33 girls and 7 boys). The final round included 40 students, comprising 30 girls and 10 boys.

This number brings the cumulative number of students trained since the program's inception to 440 individuals, reflecting our sustained commitment to empowering adolescents and young adults with ICT education and skills.



## Expansion of Future Hub ICT classes to Nyalenda and Nyakach



The Make Me Smile Future Hub ICT project expanded to Nyalenda, Nyakach Central, and Nyakach North wards to reach adolescent girls and young women, as well as adolescent boys and young men, with essential ICT skills.

These hubs were specifically designed to offer safe and inclusive spaces where adolescents can learn, grow, and develop valuable digital skills that enhance their future opportunities.

	Get Started	Get Experience	Get Ready	Go Coding	TOTAL
Future Hub Mayenya	119	46	32	46	119
Future Hub Central Nyakach	35				35
Future Hub Nyalenda	30				30
Future Hub North Nyakach	9				9

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Future Hub ICT Project

### Public Speaking Boot Camp

In 2024, a Public Speaking Boot Camp was conducted for Make Me Smile Future Hub students, facilitated by volunteer Gabriel Teach. Over the course of three weeks, Gabriel supported the Future Hub ICT class by equipping students with essential skills in presentation and public speaking. The interactive boot camp boosted students' confidence, improved their communication abilities, and created a fun and engaging learning experience.



### International Computer Driving License (ICDL) certification



Fifteen students successfully enrolled in and funded their participation in the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) program, enhancing their digital literacy and employability in today's competitive job market.

Staff development was prioritized as well, with 16 team members undergoing specialized digital literacy training. This effort aims to strengthen our capacity to deliver impactful education and promote technological fluency across the community.

### Introduction of Starlink Internet

Finally, technological advancement played a key role in enhancing the program's delivery. In August, the Future Hub installed Starlink internet technology to improve connectivity, providing better access to online resources and enabling more effective remote learning opportunities for both students and staff.

### Video Conferencing support for Waluka & Miwani Schools



Through a partnership between Make Me Smile and Danube International School in Vienna, Austria; pupils from Waluka and Miwani Section 3 schools benefit from a school lunch program.

In 2024, students from Danube International School connected with pupils from the two schools through a video conference session made possible by the Future Hub team, fostering cross-cultural exchange and strengthening the partnership.

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Solar Installation & Maintenance Project

### Solar Training Inception

Incepted in 2024, this 3-year initiative aims to empower the youth with practical skills in solar maintenance, repair, photovoltaic panel installation, and entrepreneurship.

The project is supported by the URBIS Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to promoting the use of renewable energies and protecting the climate and environment.

In February, the program welcomed 15 students; 10 adolescents and 5 young men, who began their journey with foundational classes in solar technology and installation. During this time, the program also made strides in installations, with a 200-liter solar water heater being successfully installed at Angola Health Center to support its operations. Additionally, a Systema 8 biogas system was installed in Make Me Smile's Newland farm on Kajulu; enhancing sustainable energy practices within the region.



March brought further progress with the installation of a 150W photovoltaic (PV) system at Newland Permaculture Farm. This transformative project modernized the homestead, providing an excellent demonstration of how solar technology can revolutionize rural livelihoods. In April, the students participated in entrepreneurship classes designed to equip them with essential marketing skills, empowering them to leverage their solar training for economic growth.



In May, practical sessions took center stage as students applied their knowledge to repair broken lamps distributed by the Dreams program to caregivers. This hands-on activity not only honed their technical skills but also contributed to community development by ensuring that vital lighting solutions were restored.



*...Bringing Back The Smiles...*

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Solar Installation & Maintenance Project

June marked a significant milestone with the construction and equipping of a dedicated solar work facility. This newly established workspace provided an enriched environment for practical training, enhancing the students' learning experience. In July, both theoretical and practical sessions continued, led by Evans from the Iruwa Project, whose expertise and guidance proved invaluable in advancing the students' skills.



From August to October, the students embarked on industrial attachments, gaining hands-on training through real-world fieldwork. This phase of the program was crucial in bridging the gap between classroom learning and practical application. November was marked by impactful projects, including the installation of 2,000W LED streetlights at the Mayenya Community Centre, significantly improving safety and accessibility within the community. The students also engaged in intensive revision sessions in preparation for their examinations.

Twelve students sat for their NITA examinations, a critical step toward professional certification. Additionally, a major installation project was completed at Angola Health Center, where students, under the supervision of the Iruwa Partnership Project, successfully installed a 5kW solar system. This installation now provides 24/7 access to medical services, demonstrating the impact of renewable energy on essential services.

To conclude the year, the program facilitated 4 trainees now master trainers for learning visit to the Iruwa Project in Wundanyi, Taita Taveta County; further enriching their educational journey.



# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## USAID 4TheChild DREAMS Project

### 14,501 AGYW empowered through assorted Social Asset Building interventions

MMS-K through the USAID 4TheChild DREAMS grant provided social asset building interventions to 14,501 Adolescents Girls and Young Women through the FY 24. The services followed the Adolescents Girls Kenya (AGIK) curriculum to provide empowerment. The project sustained the safe space model across the 20 wards including unique innovations of hairdressing, ICT skills, basketry, tailoring, library services integrating HIV prevention messaging. Through sustenance of the safe spaces model strategy the program saw a sustained surge on attendance for older AGYW.



### DREAMS ambassador in South Africa for learning visit



Michel Maria, DREAMS ambassador, represented the program during a DREAMS exchange and learning visit to South Africa in December 2024 dubbed South-to-South Learning. Key takeaways from the visit included the effective use of ambassadors not only as champions but also as advocates for the entire community.

Proper capacity building for all ambassadors in their specific strengths, such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and PrEP, was highlighted as crucial; and the integration of services that enhanced their overall service delivery in DREAMS South Africa.

“The visit to South Africa was an enriching experience that deeply impacted my perspective on community support and empowerment. Accompanied by project staff and other inspired leaders, we explored the Thuthuzela centers, where we learned about their efforts to provide comprehensive care for survivors of gender-based violence.”

I enjoyed participating in workshops that showcased the supportive environment these centers create and emphasized the importance of education and advocacy in creating awareness.

This experience highlighted the significance of community engagement and mentorship, which are cultural elements we could adapt to enhance our initiatives in Kisumu. By fostering a similar network of support, we can empower our girls to overcome challenges and thrive in their pursuits.’

-Michel



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# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## USAID 4TheChild DREAMS PROJECT

### Judiciary Kisumu Law Courts in Shaurimoyo ward for Children Service Month

DREAMS Shaurimoyo/Kaloleni ward hosted the Judiciary Kisumu Law Courts Children Courts User's Committee (CCUC) to mark **Children Service Month and the 16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**.

Led by Hon. Lady Justice M. Shariff, Kisumu Law Courts Chief Magistrate Hon. Dickson Onyango, Children's Magistrate Hon. B. Ileri, CCUC members spearheaded awareness and sensitization efforts at the forum that focused on addressing gaps and empowering girls through education, retention and reintegration; with special emphasis on supporting Muslim girls.

Key stakeholders present included representatives from the judiciary, Kenya National Commission for Human Rights (KNCHR), National Police Service, Directorate of Children Services and National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA).



### PBFAs Mental Health Sensitization

Pregnant and Breastfeeding Adolescents (PBFAs) received targeted sensitization on mental health, aimed at promoting emotional well-being and resilience during a critical period of their lives. The sessions were facilitated by the Biomedical Programs Officer and focused on raising awareness about common mental health challenges, coping strategies, and the importance of seeking support.

This initiative played a key role in equipping the adolescents with knowledge and tools to better manage stress, anxiety, and the emotional demands of pregnancy and early motherhood.



### Business Start up Kits distribution

Business start-up kits were distributed to Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) as part of the program's economic empowerment component. The kits are intended to support the development of sustainable livelihoods and promote financial independence, thereby reducing the AGYW's vulnerability to HIV and other related risks.



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# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Permaculture & Reforestation Project

The project continued integrating permaculture principles with reforestation efforts, to create resilient landscapes that not only absorb atmospheric carbon but also support diverse ecosystems and sustainable human livelihoods, in order to help combat the global climate crisis.

The project coverage areas include Kolwa East, Kajulu & Miwani wards in Kisumu County, Kisaina block-Iloro Bit in Kakamega Rainforest in Kakamega County, North Maragoli ward in Vihiga County and Kajiado County.



## Reforestation & Afforestation Efforts

In 2024 the project planted

- Planting of **1,000** indigenous trees at Iloro Bit within the Kakamega Forest. This initiative has seen over **4,500 trees established** on the adopted land over the past three years under the Permaculture and Reforestation project.
- Establishment of Tree Nurseries at the New Land Permaculture Demo Site (**2,000 seedlings**) and Kajiado site (**10,000 seedlings**) with indigenous, fruit, and fast-growing tree species.
- Planting of **300 fruit trees** at the New Land Demo Site, aiming to enhance on-site food production, biodiversity, and income-generation potential through agroforestry.



- The project contributed **700 tree seedlings** that were planted during World Environment Day activities in Kisumu.
- Planting of **1,000 trees** within the Kakamega Forest on National Tree Planting Day.

## Make Me Smile and TeS Network collaborate for permaculture in Kajiado



The project expanded its environmental sustainability efforts to Kajiado County in collaboration with the Transformative, Empowerment, and Sustainable Network (TeS Network) organization.

As part of the project's initial phase, a comprehensive workshop on organic farming and an Introduction to Permaculture was conducted, reaching **40 community members** in Oloropi Village. The training emphasized regenerative agriculture practices, kitchen gardening, soil fertility management, and ecological restoration.

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# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Permaculture & Reforestation Project

### Key Achievements in Kajiado project

- Establishment of a community tree nursery with a capacity of 10,000 seedlings, comprising a mix of indigenous, fruit, and drought-tolerant species in Kajiado.
- Planting of 1,000 tree seedlings as part of the project's initial reforestation activities, in collaboration with community members and local stakeholders.
- Provision of fencing materials to secure the designated reforestation site, ensuring protection from livestock encroachment.
- Procurement and deployment of a water bowser to support regular watering of young tree seedlings, enhancing survival rates during the dry season.



### Other project achievements in 2024

1. Facilitation of knowledge exchange and learning visits to the 3000 Friends Farm in Ngong, Kajiado County and Laikipia Permaculture Centre in Laikipia County.
2. The visits offered insights into regenerative agriculture—including permaculture, natural pest management, and economic sustainability strategies—while inspiring locally applicable approaches.

3. Training **273 caregivers** and community members on Agroecology, Indigenous farming techniques, Seed collection, and Permaculture food security.

4. Establishment of a biogas system in Newland by the Make Me Smile Solar trainees to promote sustainable and ecological cooking.

### Marco supports Make Me Smile Permaculture initiatives

Make Me Smile Kenya's partnership with Comundo has significantly strengthened the organization's technical capacity, particularly in permaculture, environmental conservation, and gender-based violence prevention.

Through this collaboration, Comundo expert Marco supported the Permaculture and Reforestation Project by co-developing an Environmental Protection Policy, conducting a waste management assessment, and facilitating MMS-K's involvement in the Kisumu County Solid Waste Management Policy.

He also built partnerships with like-minded organizations, led permaculture training and a 1,000-tree planting in Kajiado County, engaged in gender dialogue sessions, co-developed an Environmental Education Curriculum, introduced digital teaching tools to the Future Hub team, and conducted an environmental workshop for staff; bringing sustainability and innovation across programs.



# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Safe Park Project

The Gender Equality Safe Park provides a wide range of activities that support the holistic development of children and adolescents from the community, as well as those in the OVC and DREAMS programs. Each week, the Safe Park reaches approximately 200–500 children and 300–400 young people.

Weekly activities include drawing and coloring, debate sessions, ball games, storytelling, swings and slides, chart reading and learning, life skills sessions, music and dance, role-playing activities, home visits by social workers, health assessments at the health center, community service, and art-based awareness campaigns.

## Children Clubs

The Safe Park successfully organized 12 monthly children's clubs. These were rich in activities aimed at engaging young minds and surpassed the annual target, reaching over **5,000 children**.

In November 2024, during the children's club, Safe Park hired a bouncing castle and trampoline to make the activities more fun and engaging. The children responded with excitement, and the trampoline, in particular, encouraged physical activity and social interaction. Seeing its positive impact, the Safe Park purchased a trampoline. Since then, it has helped promote regular physical activity, improve balance and coordination, and support inclusive play for children of all ages and genders.

## Community awareness forums

In 2024, 40 community forums were conducted targeting boys and youth in Kolwa East and Central wards. Each forum featured two key components: a two-hour session covering various topics and a six-hour men's engagement activity focused on consent and toxic masculinity. Attendance averaged 20–30 participants per session, with the sessions facilitated by one coordinator and eight trained facilitators. The initiative aimed to raise awareness on the principles of consent, promote gender equality and respectful relationships, and reduce incidents of gender-based violence, new HIV infections, and teenage pregnancies.



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# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Safe Park Project

### Sports Tournaments

The grand sports tournament held at the Safe Park in December was the highlight of the year. It was an under-15 tournament conducted for three days. The event featured soccer matches and recognized the most inclusive teams with awards. A total of 12 teams participated; 10 boys' teams and 2 girls' teams, each made up of 25 players. The tournament reached 1251 children.



During the year, a mini sports tournament was held targeting children under 14, with the aim of fostering teamwork, sportsmanship, and community spirit. The event reached 357 children and was led by Make Me Smile volunteers Noah and Gabriel, along with the Safe Park coordinator.



### Volunteer contributions at the Safe Park

In January 2024, volunteer Canelle painted a section of the Safe Park wall, adding color and creativity that made the space more engaging and stimulating for children.

In November, volunteer Noah funded a three-day School Health and Hygiene Campaign in Mayenya, reaching 348 children through workshops at Angola Safe Park, Mayenya Primary, and Omungi Primary Schools. The sessions covered handwashing, dental hygiene, and general cleanliness, and hygiene kits; including soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, towels, underwear, and sanitary pads; were distributed to support the children's well-being.



In February, April, and November, volunteers also donated toys, stationery, clothes, and shoes, helping to meet the children's basic needs while creating a sense of care and community.

### Integration with other MMS-K Projects

The Safe Park worked closely with the Future Hub ICT Center and Smiles Hub to support young parents in school by allowing them to bring their babies to the Safe Park, ensuring a safe space for childcare while they studied. Weekly recreational activities gave students a chance to relax and connect. Health professionals from the Make Me Smile Angola Health Center provided children with health education, vaccinations, and malnutrition screening.

The Safe Park also partnered with the Permaculture and Reforestation Project to raise environmental awareness, leading to the formation of an environmental club that promotes community engagement and sustainability.

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Volunteer Project

The Volunteer exchange program engages both local and international volunteers—ranging from students to experienced professionals—experienced field workers in child and youth care, psychology, dentistry, teaching, social work, and pedagogy. They are introduced to social issues, educational work, building projects, art and craft workshops, agriculture, fundraising and social media; while also gaining valuable learning experiences.

In 2024 MMS-K received **14 volunteers** from Germany and Austria- Simon Schrettle, Katharina, Magdalena, Gabriel, Eva, Stefanie, Noah Haller, Victoria, Kasper, Noah Khouadja, Philip, Cicilia, and Simone Spatig. The organization also had **43 local student volunteers** in the year.

### Volunteer highlights in 2024

The volunteers were engaged in Make Me Smile Kenya field project activities including permaculture and safe park; households and school visits approach.

8 Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) and 1 OVC received educational support through school fee payments totaling **KES 399,378** from volunteer Eva Burmeister.

Volunteer Gabriel organized a Public Speaking Boot Camp for **67 Future Hub students** to empower them with essential communication and presentation skills, equipping them for personal and professional growth.

Volunteer Noah Khouadja funded a three-day School Health and Hygiene Campaign aimed to address critical hygiene challenges among children in Kisumu by providing education and essential hygiene kits. This activity reached **348 children**, teaching them the importance of handwashing, dental hygiene, and general cleanliness. Hygiene kits were also distributed to the children.

Volunteer Roberta- Make Me Smile long-term volunteer and donor- ensured that **215 community home volunteers** received rain boots from her support to enhance their home visiting work.



*"Receiving a pair of rain boots from one of the volunteers has been a great boost to my work. I can now visit the OVCs with ease, without worrying about mud or water. Thank you, Roberta, for your support."*

*Caren- CHV, Kojwa East ward*

*"I can now work toward realizing my dream of becoming a Nurse, thanks to volunteer Eva for my education support."*

*Beneficiary, Kajulu ward*

# PARTNERS IN 2024

Thank you to all our donors, partners and collaborators in 2024



 Federal Ministry  
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