

Canadian Harambee Education Society

We can't do everything . . . but we can do something

Winter 2025 Newsletter #84



Changes in Kenyan School Configuration and Sponsorships

The Kenyan school curriculum has changed country wide to a Competence Based Curriculum (C.B.C.) which means that there is a totally new configuration of schools in Kenya starting in January 2025 as follows:

- 2 Years pre-primary
- 6 years Primary
- 3 years Junior Secondary
- 3 years Senior Secondary and
- 3 years University

Formerly, primary schools were 8 years and secondary schools were 4 years in duration.

What does this mean for CHES and scholarships for students in Kenya?

Junior secondary students are to be housed with primary in day schools. Consequently, CHES scholarships for senior secondary students in Kenya will start to be three years rather than four years. All CHES scholarship girls will continue to attend boarding schools. As has been past practice, we would ask that you, on your Kenyan girl's completion of senior secondary, commit to sponsoring another CHES student.

Although, in the past, CHES has asked that you commit to sponsoring for four years, there have actually been differences for some time in length of sponsorships due to the differing school systems in Africa.

The Tanzanian school system is four years of secondary school with an additional two years of high school (or specialized colleges) if a student qualifies academically. These additional years put Tanzanian girls in an equivalent position to those in Kenya for entry into university. CHES deals with each girl's situation differently there; sponsors are asked if they wish to continue to sponsor their girl for the additional two years or wish to have a new student in Form 1. If sponsors choose not to support their former student, we use extra funds donated by generous donors to pay for these girls to continue.

All this is handled by myself and Julia in the office so there is no need for you to be concerned! We definitely have the best interests of all CHES students as our concern.

by Joy Ruffeski

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CHES AGM October 26th, 2024

The AGM was held on October 26, 2024, with 43 members attending via Zoom from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. The agenda, 2023 AGM minutes and the 2024 reports had been emailed to all members before the AGM.

Joy went over the income and expenses of the Financial Report. Although it looks like CHES has a great deal of money in our accounts at the time of the AGM most of that money is for school fees that have not been paid. When money is needed, CHES sends what is required—we do not keep this money in Kenya or Tanzania. In addition, should something occur and we are no longer permitted to operate in Kenya or Tanzania, sufficient funds are kept so that scholarship monies would continue to be paid for those students until they complete their education.

CHES currently has 552 girls being sponsored. All Kenyan CHES students attend 13 boarding schools while most Tanzanian CHES students live at home while attending school.

Four agents returned to Africa in 2023/2024: Chris and Catriona Harker, Naomi Andriessen, and Barbara Melara.

All the CHES Kenyan students are doing well in their academics. Joy went over the changes the Kenyan government is making to the school organizational structure.

In Tanzania, the students continue to be successful academically. Almost 80% of the girls who wrote their Form IV exams in November were offered places in either Form V or post-secondary training institutions.

If you sponsored a Tanzanian student who has now finished her schooling and would like to contact her, you can write a letter and mail it to her care of the Tanzanian office in Katesh. They will see that the former student receives your letter.

Thanks to the many sponsors who are able to give extra funds; this helps keep the Canadian, Kenyan, and Tanzanian offices operating. Joy also thanked former and current agents, Board members, the office staff in Canada, Kenya and Tanzania, and all the many others who contribute to making CHES so successful. Over the past years, several bequests have been given, invested, and the interest is being used to sponsor more girls.

Anne Norman chaired the election for the 2024/2025 Board of Directors. The following were elected to be members of the CHES Board for 2024-2025:

Orrie Babiuk
Catriona Harker
Mandy Klepic
Robb Taylor

Dwight Dracek
Chris Harker
Nancy Mann
Lorrie Williams

Becky Finley
Wendy Horan
Joy Ruffeski

Bev Ford
Karen Kilbride
Jeanette Taylor

Joy thanked Maureen Polard and Lorrie Sarah Tobin who were retiring from the CHES Board.

At the end of the AGM, Joy showed a PowerPoint presentation of the Kenyan activities that our agents were involved in. Photos included the workshops, the girls enjoying free time while at the workshops, interviews, the Form IV Graduation Ceremony, and the girls listening to several encouraging pep talks about what to they could expect and what was expected of them.

by Orrie Babiuk



REMINDER

Sponsorship fees were raised to \$650 for the 2024 school year in order to cover additional school expenses. If you haven't sent your sponsorship fees in yet, please do so as we need to wire the monies to Kenya and Tanzania before the end of January to cover the school fees.

In Loving Memory

Lorrie Rowena Mukirazi, a former CHES student and daughter of the very first CHES girl Margaret, came to Canada in the fall of 2010 on a special post-secondary scholarship arranged by Lorrie Williams. She was supported by several long-time CHES sponsors while she studied accounting. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees in that field. She served on the CHES board in Canada for several years. Lorrie Rowena passed away suddenly on November 10, 2024.



She lived in Vancouver for many years and had just recently moved to Nanaimo. Lorrie Rowena created a life for herself in Canada that was more enriched than possible in Kenya as she had more freedom to explore and spend time with

people she loved, both friends and family. She was a vibrant soul, known for her ability to connect with people from all walks of life. Her warm spirit and willingness to help those around her left a lasting impact on everyone she met.

She is missed deeply by all who had the privilege of knowing her. The family wishes to express their sincere gratitude to all those who were supportive during their time of loss.

by Joy Ruffeski



How CHES Girls are Selected in Tanzania

Many girls and of course their parents and guardians wish to have the cost of their education covered by a CHES sponsor. There is therefore a rigorous screening process.

The criteria for being selected is:

- You must be a girl.
- You must have passed Standard (Grade) 7 with sufficient marks to warrant a position in secondary school.
- You must come from a family situation that is unable to cover the cost of secondary school; that is, you must need a sponsorship to continue school.
- Your basic skills and, most importantly, your English comprehension and writing must be at a level sufficient for you to cope in secondary school.

To explain further, there are many reasons why CHES supports only girls but there are two main ones.

1. When subsistence families in Tanzania have limited resources, the boys are generally given preference as they are traditionally seen as the breadwinners, and girls are seen as mothers and housekeepers.



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2. Statistics have proven that girls who are educated and earn wages support their parents, siblings and home community to a far greater extent than boys.

The government sets national exams in all subjects for standard 7 students throughout the country. These exams are in Swahili (except for the English exam). All students in the district ultimately receive a mark out of 200. Each district has a set number of places available in secondary schools. In Hanang, with 30 secondary schools, the number of places is approximately 1200. The top 1200 students are then offered places. Each year the cut-off, or pass mark, can therefore vary.

Students above or below the cut-off mark can attend private schools but only if their parents can afford to send them. Other students who make the cut may choose not to continue their education, or their parents may make this decision. Therefore, students below the cut-off mark may later receive an offer to attend secondary schools as places will have been vacated by those electing not to attend.

There are always many students who make the cut in this subsistence community who cannot consider attending because their families don't have the money to send them. Often these students come from single-parent families, families with six to eight children, orphans living with extended family members, etc. These are the students CHES aims to help. To ensure that claims of poverty are legitimate, CHES board members visit their homes and interview former teachers and religious and community leaders to ensure that all such claims are correct.

Initial interviews reduce the number of applicants by almost 75 percent. CHES then requires that those remaining sit an exam designed by CHES. It is a fairly simple exam that covers multiple subjects but it is in English. When students begin secondary school, every subject, other than Swahili, is taught in English. Therefore, a student who can't cope even at a very simple level in this language is going to be completely lost in her Form I class. Some primary school teachers have been known to inflate marks in an effort to help their students. CHES wants students who are going to succeed as it is painful for all concerned if a student can't cope and has to drop out.

At the end of this process CHES, having determined the total number it is able to select that year (let's say 80), will take the top 80 girls and offer them CHES scholarships.

Those not selected still have the option to attend secondary school but are not able to do so under the auspices of CHES.

Our selection process is rigorous but not perfect as we lose a few girls every year. This can be due to illness or perhaps pregnancy. Sometimes it is just a mystery; a girl fails to return to school after the holidays and we are told she "went away." Additionally, all students write government exams at the end of Form II. By government mandate, we are not permitted to sponsor a girl with very low marks. ("Very low" may differ from year to year.) On the rare occasions when this occurs, our CHES staff in Tanzania seek out a successful but needy student who is struggling to remain at school and transfer the sponsorship to her.

by Chris Harker

Looking for a Tax Break!

One of the most tax-efficient ways you can support CHES is if you have publicly listed securities that have gained in value and you pay your scholarship fees that way!

When you donate publicly listed securities that have gained value like stocks, bonds and mutual funds directly to a registered charity such as CHES, you can eliminate capital gains tax on the appreciated investment while also receiving a charitable tax receipt for your generous gift. This can also be done for leaving securities to CHES in your will.

Please email the CHES office ches@canadianharambee.ca or phone the office 778-565-5261 for information regarding this and to have the appropriate forms sent to your broker so you can do this.



Interviewing to Select New Students in Kenya

With the new school configurations in Kenya for 2025, interviews were held from November 6 – 15 for needy, qualified students finishing Form 1 in the old system and going into Form 1 in the new one. Form 4 leavers were trained to help in the verification and interview process. The interviews lasted for 10 working days. There were 105 students who turned up for the interviews and 72 of this number were verified but only 35 qualified for the scholarships.



This number was too low for the number of scholarships we had so after the workshops we planned and organized for a second round of interviews which lasted for 3 days. We did vigorous announcements in several places. The second-round interviews were from December 16-18.

The interviews held this year were just like replacement interviews which most of the years had a history of low turnout. There were usually fewer than ten spots to replace students and that is why CHES Kenya did not get the required number at the first interview. CHES will not compromise its reputation by taking students who are not fit enough to be

beneficiaries just because there were more chances this year for places.

The students who already had been selected for the scholarships came in for the orientation process on December 20. The ones recently interviewed phoned on the same day to find out if they got the scholarship or not and were given a date for scholarship orientation before schools would open.

Should CHES still not get enough qualified candidates, Rebecca Odiahambo (our Kenyan office manager) will go round to the schools to ask the principals and patrons to recommend to us students from their schools who have difficulty paying fees and are needy so that we can interview them to fill up any spots that will be remaining.

from information supplied by Rebecca Odiahambo

Neema Paulo

My name is Neema Paulo and I am 21 years old. I was born in 2003 at Gabadaw village. I am the third child among four children. Our mother passed away in 2017 due to family conflict with our father. Our father beat our mother until death and our father was jailed as a punishment for killing our mother.

I would like to tell you about my life before joining at CHES. I started a nursery education in 2010 and joined class one in 2011. In my primary education went through difficult life--sometimes I go to school with no uniform or without eating anything. Our father didn't care us with anything as he didn't stay with us for some times. But our mother keeps insisting us to continue with school together with my siblings. For sure my school life at a primary education was so difficult and I am thanking God for helping us getting through.

Also I would like to tell you my life after finishing primary level. In 2017 I completed my primary education. For sure I did not believe if I would continue to the secondary level of



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education due to the poor living standard, because at that time I already lost my mother and my father was in prison. After our mother's death, the four of us were taken to different relatives to have some people to look after us. My teacher helped me to apply for CHES sponsorship. I started my secondary level of education at Bassotu secondary school and stayed at local hostel where CHES paid for my stay.

My sponsor's name is John Neate. For sure my life after being sponsored was very helpful. I got good life in secondary level. CHES provided us with everything we need. I did my Form four examination and passed well and was given a place to continue with advanced level of secondary at Sumaye High School for two years, which ended May 2024. For now I am waiting for my Form 6 results, which I hope I will do better for me to go to university.

I would like to thank CHES for sponsoring me until now as I am about to accomplish my dream of being a banker when I finish university. CHES also helped my sister who is now a teacher after completing a college. Her name is Janeth Paulo. My young sister is now a Form six girl at Babati Day High School. Her name is Dorkas Paulo.

Our family is very proud of CHES as you can see all three girls are helped by CHES. We will never forget this in our life.

CHES is very important key of my life. I see the advantage of this organization as it helped me and many of women of Hanang. We thank the organization for bringing new hope and lighten the women of Hanang.

I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for CHES generosity. CHES have truly made a difference in my life. CHES willingness to go above and beyond to help me during difficult situation means more to me than words can express. Please know that I will always remember CHES kindness and generosity and I hope one day have the opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life just as you have done for me.

Once again thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me, your kindness has truly touched my life in a meaningful way.

by Neema Paulo

(Since submitting her article, Neema's marks have arrived. She did extremely well in her combination of Geography, Advanced Math and Economics, coming 7th in the group of 40 CHES girls who qualified for higher education. She is assured a place in university.)

Kenyan Workshops

The CHES Kenya workshops were held at the Multipurpose Development Training Institute in Kakamega from November 4 to 6. The workshops were for all the forms since Form 4s had finished exams the previous week.

A total of 247 individuals attended: 219 of 234 students, 16 facilitators, 6 student helpers, 2 guest speakers, 2 office staff, 1 sign language Interpreter, and 1 kitchen facilitator.



The workshop started at 11:30 with an opening ceremony, prayers, songs from students, introductions, and a talk from Rebecca on events and expectations. After lunch there was a large group session on *Managing My Destiny* and then outdoor games. This year, thanks to a neighbouring school, we were able to use their grounds and classrooms. After supper there was a talent show.



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After breakfast on the 2nd day, workshops were held with the same topics as last year.

FORM ONE

Course Choices
Reproductive Health
Self-Awareness
Math Tricks

FORM TWO

Teenage Hood Management
Study Skills I
Youth and Technology
Conflict Resolution

FORM THREE

Stress Management
Study Skills II
Assertiveness
Career Options

FORM FOUR

Critical Thinking
Way Forward After Form Four
Financial Literacy & Income Generation
Smart Transition to Adulthood



In late afternoon, a final plenary session was held with the topic of *You Can Be What You Desire to Be*. Entertainment from students filled the evening.

The workshop ended the next morning with a closing ceremony conducted by Kenyan Board Chair, Anthony Napali. Students sang some hymns before short concluding speeches by Rebecca, the Kenyan board, facilitators, and student leaders.

The venue was found to be suitable for our needs; there was a large, clean hostel which could accommodate all the students as well as the staff who stayed overnight. The institution organized two police as security at the front gate as well as their own security guards.

by Rebecca Odiahambo



Sofia Hamisi

I was born in Katesh in 2007. I live with my mother and my two younger sisters. I completed ordinary level at Katesh Secondary School and I am so happy because I have been selected to continue to advanced level at Daudi High School. All this achievement is because of the sponsorship I got from CHES.

My mother can't afford to pay my school needs so I send many thanks to CHES because it has paid for my schooling since I was a Form one student up to now when I am going to Form five. With this achievement I am very proud to be sponsored by CHES. My dreams are going to be true. After finishing college I hope to become a teacher so I can teach my students to help my community and to be a good mother.

I would like to tell you that before I was selected at CHES, when I was studying in primary school, I had difficult life. I went to school with improper uniform; I didn't have uniform like sweater, shoes and socks. Sometimes I went to school with no exercise books or pen. Also, I went to school without eating anything because there is no food at home. I stayed at school from morning to evening with empty stomach but all in all I studied hard and at the end I performed well in Standard seven and was selected to join Form one. Before joining Form one I got the chance to be sponsored by CHES. I am very happy because now I study well with no challenges and I am very proud to be a CHES student.



by Sofia Hamisi

Paying Your Sponsorship Fees Monthly?

If you are one of the individuals who likes to pay monthly (either by cheque, e-transfer, or Canada Helps) please note that **you need to pay \$55 monthly** to cover the fee increase that took effect in 2024. Please change your monthly donation amount accordingly.

NOTE: Paying just \$50 monthly only gives \$600 for the year. With the steep inflation in both Kenya and Tanzania, scholarship monies were increased to \$650.

Tanzania's Parks

Tanzania's area is 947,300 square kilometres, which is slightly larger than the area of British Columbia (944,735 square kilometres). Fourteen percent of British Columbia is made up of parks, conservation areas, ecological reserves and recreation areas. Did you know that nearly 30 percent of Tanzania is dedicated to national parks, reserves, or conservation areas?

Probably the best known of them are:

- Gombe Stream on Lake Tanganika, where Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees has fascinated much of the world's population for decades.
- Ngorongoro Crater, the world's largest caldera above sea level. On the floor of the volcanic crater, one is almost guaranteed to see the Big Five (elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard and rhinoceros) amid the nearly 30,000 animals contained in this natural bowl that's approximately 16 to 19 km in diameter. No one lives on the floor of the crater but it's visited by countless tourists every day.



- Serengeti is a Maasai word that means “endless plains,” which describes the southern part of this huge park well. The northern area is more undulating. The southern part was once uneven as well but when huge amounts of debris erupted from Ngorongoro eons ago, the prevailing wind blew it westward to fill in the hollows. Now only the ancient granite hilltops, known as kopjes, interrupt the horizon. The Serengeti is huge, almost half the size of Vancouver Island. Approximately 2 million wildebeest (gnu) and almost half as many zebras move in a huge oval shape around the Serengeti throughout the year. It’s known as the Great Migration. The short grass plains in the south are the birthing areas for both species as the volcanic soil produces a nutritious grass – akin to a power bar – that benefit both mothers and calves. Interestingly, the wildebeest mothers are among the few animals that can control their birthing time. When the grass is green, a water source is nearby and the herd is at a temporary standstill, thousands of mothers will birth at almost the same time. Lurking predators relish the moment and gorge on this easy prey. But there is safety in numbers. Most calves survive as the nutritious grass empowers them to run within half an hour of birth.

by Chris Harker

Working for Student Success

Thanks to funds initially provided by the Harambee Golf Classic, an English Immersion program for Tanzanian CHES students was started in January 2012. In November 2011, ten Tanzanian teachers (all former CHES students) were instructed in how to teach oral language skills (rote learning is the norm in most African schools). It took 4 years to develop the entire program as each year the next form level was added and each level built on the previous one. Teachers needed to fully understand the value of teaching in that manner and be trained to use the interactive skills necessary for student success. The curricular content for each form level was important also. Over subsequent years, new teachers have been trained in this program by the original cohort of educators. It is no longer necessary for me to travel there twice yearly as the Tanzanian teachers have taken ownership of the program and are very committed to the success of the CHES girls. (NOTE: All CHES directors travel at their own expense and receive no remuneration for their work.)

The English Immersion, Math Immersion, and annual tutorials have been instrumental in giving our Tanzanian girls the tools with which to be successful in their studies. The academic achievement rate of 80% of Tanzanian Form 4 students qualifying for further studies speaks for itself.



Although it has traditionally be held right after Christmas in the two weeks before school recommences there, this year there was a change. The English Immersion session for students going into Forms 2 through 4 was held from December 9 – 23 as schools were to reopen on January 5, 2025; much earlier than in past years.

Before the current CHES students left the Sara Williams Hostel where they were all billeted for the English Immersion session,

they took time out from their studies to thank all our sponsors and supporters. If you are a Facebook user, search Facebook for the *Canadian Harambee Education Society* page and you will find a 15 second video there of the Tanzanian students wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

by Joy Ruffeski



Stelly's Students - They're Going Again

If you were reading this newsletter way back in 2019, you will remember that a group of Grade 12 students from Stelly's Secondary School in Central Saanich flew to Tanzania on their March break and helped to initiate construction of a girl's hostel (dormitory) at the remote Mwahu school. When they left after two weeks of hard work, the walls were up to chest level. Three weeks later the walls were completed and the roof was on. The entire visit and project was coordinated through our local CHES office in Katesh.

The project then languished; there was no more money. However, in December 2022, two generous donors provided what was needed. The hostel was completed and 150 girls began sleeping there in April 2023.

Catriona and I visited the "Stelly's Hostel" this year in January. As one might expect, the girls are happy and delighted. We then looked at where the boys had to sleep. It was appalling/disgusting/vile. We decided that we should try to raise funds so that the boys had the opportunity to sleep in comfortable, healthy conditions as well.

We cannot fundraise through CHES, as our mandate limits us to the support of girls. So we found another NGO (the Royal Commonwealth Society, Vancouver Island Branch) through whom we could channel the funds. Their head office is in Brentwood Bay, the community serviced by Stelly's school. Hence it was not long before the school learned of this new initiative and has decided to visit Mwahu once again in March 2025 to help with the construction of the boy's dorm.



The local community wanted to contribute and now has paid for and completed the foundation. We have raised enough money to cover the cost of the actual construction, so, at this writing, the fundis (tradesmen) are hard at work. If the timing works out, the Stelly's crew will be there in time to add some of the finishing touches such as plastering, painting, hanging doors, and landscaping. We will then need to find the funds

to purchase 75 double bunks before these (soon-to-be) fortunate boys can move in.

We congratulate these 16 Stelly's students and their three teachers for their time commitment, hard work and generosity of spirit.

by Chris Harker

Please ensure that you put the CHES email address in your CONTACTS so that emails we send out in large mail-outs to donors don't go into your "Junk" mail

