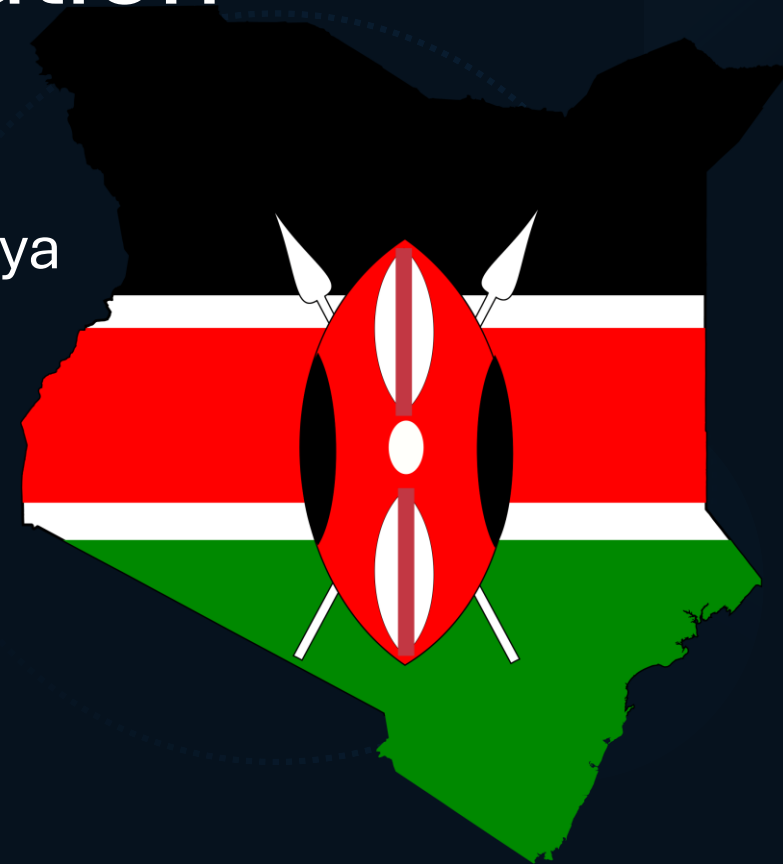




Empowerment, Education
and Economics

Partnership with Africa HEART- Kenya

HEART



HEART Africa Projects

- In March, 2024, we travelled to Kenya to explore opportunities to partner with HEART Africa to bring our expertise in organizational effectiveness, business development, micro financing and vocational training. Over an 18 day trip, the reality of life changing potential has emerged for shared work in helping advance the interests of women, children and youth development.



Health Education Africa Resource Team- “HEART”

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, HEART Africa, is a Christian faith-based humanitarian organization, who with affiliated partners work together to empower women, children, and youth in Kenya by strategically intervening to promote sustainable health, education, and economic strengthening.

Our focus was exploring opportunities to advance the key missions of HEART with future assistance and expertise to expand current programming.

Here is their website: [HOME | Africa Heart](#)

Key Programs of HEART include:

- **WEEP-** Women Equality Empowerment Project which focuses on assisting HIV positive mothers in health and life stabilization to prevent orphans and improve their lives.
- **Freedom for Girls (FFG)** Project which helps girls stay in school.
- **Kids for Schools (KFS)** which sponsors the children of HIV mothers to stay in school and become educated.
- **Income Generating Activities (IGA)** which promotes business training and development to help the women gain financial security.
- **NEX Gen-** Vocational training for young people to gain marketable skills and abilities.



Women Equality Empowerment Project- WEEP

- WEEP sits at the heart of all the programs conducted by HEART Africa. The focus on the HIV single mothers sits rooted in maintaining the health of the mothers to prevent the children from becoming orphans. HEART operates 5 WEEP Centers throughout Kenya.
- WEEP is based in the Health and Wellness focus for HEART. Here is a complete overview of these programs: [HEALTH AND WELLNESS | Africa Heart](#)
- On our trip, we visited centers in the Kibera Slum of Nairobi and centers located in northern Kenya in Kisumu and Kisii. We met with the women, visited their homes in the Kibera Slum, talked business development and helped coordinate the graduation of a class of 25 women from the WEEP Program.



Visiting Kibera Slum

- Residents of the Kibera Slum typically live on 100 Kenyan Shillings a day which is about 74 cents in US dollars. Living in the slum is expensive because you pay for literally everything including rent, water, power, toilet and food.
- The typical “home” is a 10x10 space with one outlet, no water or utilities, a bed, a table and a coal grill for cooking (inside). They bathe in the corridor outside the unit, use a bucket for toilet and no means of food storage or cooking.
- Almost 500,000 people live in Kibera which cuts through the heart of a very modern Nairobi.



Kids for Schools/Freedom for Girls

- Culturally, Kenya is a patriarchal family structure with women and girls having lower stature. Girls have a difficult position, marrying at very early ages (based on a dowry system), difficulties in maintaining education once menstruation begins and early pregnancy being a significant issue.
- HEART has worked throughout the country in sponsoring dormitories to take girls out of volatile situation, to keep them in schools, provide sanitary hygiene for menstrual periods. HEART has worked proactively in the Maasai villages to help advance the interests of girls.
- Check out the education programs here: [EDUCATION | Africa Heart](https://www.africaheart.com/education)



Oldonyonyokie School Visit

- We spent an entire day in the Maasai tribal area called Oldonyonyokie which was 3 hours east of Nairobi. We visited the school there, a girls dormitory, met with the tribal leadership to discuss girls issues and had a full day of exposure into Maasai life.
- Yes, I brought a load of soccer balls so Winters Soccer is on the Mara!



Income Generating Activities (IGA's)

- The WEEP program helps stabilize the health and wellness of the mothers. The WEEP Resource Center helps graduates work toward becoming businesswomen with business development classes and micro lending programs to assist with operating capital to get started.
- The business development programs were and are a key focus. With the HEART Team, we hope to enhance and expand the programs to the benefit of WEEP graduates and the entire WEEP "brand". The potential for the creation of revolving loan funds and micro lending solutions can segue into important financial independence for these women and real economic advancements.
- In Nairobi, WEEP mothers are taught to sew. They are making dresses, mosquito nets and stuffed animals which bring them 10X their normal income which is life changing.
- Here is a link to the current economic programs with HEART [ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING | Africa Heart](#)



Nex Gen Vocational Training



- The latest HEART venture is the development of vocational training opportunities for the children of WEEP mothers. This includes vocational training in wood and metal crafts which will transition them into trade jobs and income generating opportunities.
- We visited the dedication of a recently constructed NexGen Building in Kisumu and the original location in Kisii. We met participants who are eagerly taking to the training and positioning themselves for future success.
- The key opportunities here are bringing both equipment and vocational training resources to the HEART Team. They have specific equipment needs and can benefit immensely from experts in trade and vocational training which can enhance both the quality of training and certification for participants.



Home Building

- During our visit, we had an opportunity to help finance and build two traditional mud houses for WEEP mothers. The projects were absolutely magical with our team partnering with other WEEP mothers and villagers to pack mud into the creation of a new home for the mothers.
- The approximate cost for a house is \$3,000 which was paid for by our team. A pre-formed metal roof and stick walls were prepped for our arrival and we helped move and pack mud into the walls. It was an incredible and life changing experience for the mother receiving the house and for those of us helping build it.



Mud House Homebuilding

- The gentleman in the tan hat is Issac Mzee, the leader of HEART Teams in Kenya. He will be in the US in May.
- Next to him on the bottom left in the red dress is Bilah, a mother of 6 who was living on the floor of her former mother in laws house and was being kicked out to live in the forest.
- On the bottom left is Gladys, a WEEP mother of 5. The smiling boy helped build “his” new house and was just out of his mind.
- The majority of the women working with us were WEEP mothers, working hard in support of each other. All have HIV and are outcasts from their families. True survivors, strong women and kind.



Next Steps

- Working with the HEART Africa Team on their upcoming visit to the US. We will be sponsoring and hosting two dinners to invite donors to experience a real African dinner and hear the HEART story first hand.
- Collaborating on equipment and vocational training needs for the NexGen Program. They are at a critical start up phase and we will work to bring needed resources and expertise to help them in the formation of this program.
- We will work on their business training, development and structuring of their micro lending programs for WEEP mothers.
- Development of a future “Team” to work on programs and travel to Kenya to help in overall implementation in the advancement of their programs.
- Take more soccer balls!



My Takeaway and Commitment

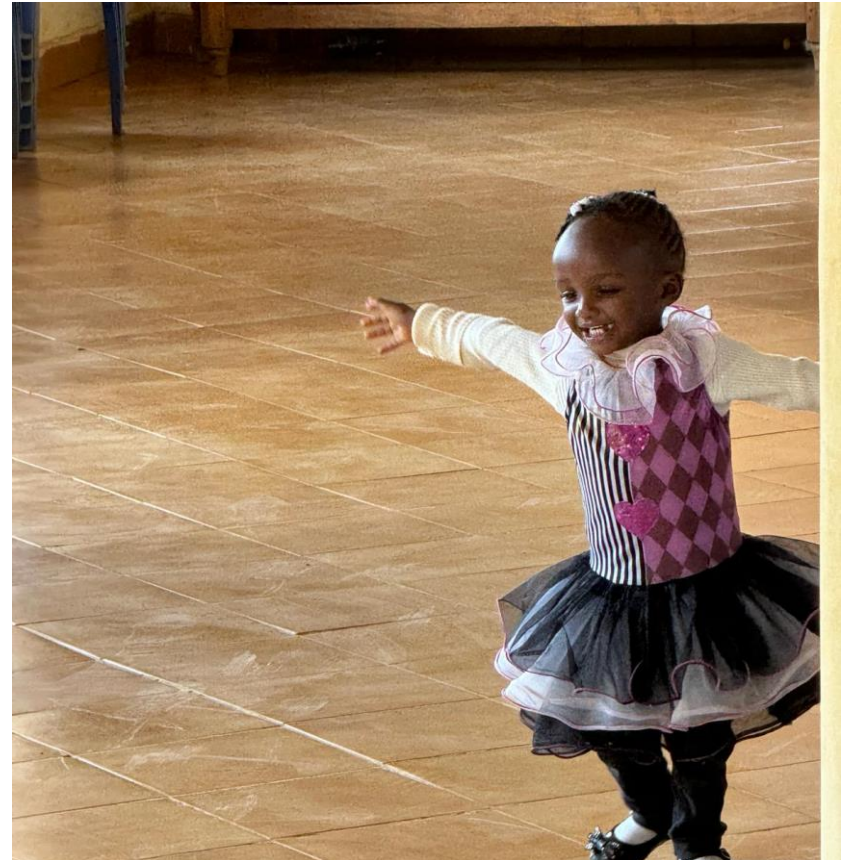
This trip was a 100% emersion into the African culture and a reality check for which I have not experienced. The patriarchal system and the position of women and girls was difficult but gave me appreciation for the HEART Programs but mostly amazement at the strength of the African woman.

These women sit at a critical place in the family and community structure. Subservient yet dominant in their role of running the households, raising the children and in many cases supporting the entire family. The African women are powerful, confident and kind. The WEEP mothers have dealt with catastrophic health diagnosis, becoming outcasts from their families, on the verge of death, while raising children and dealing with a stigma of all stigmas. They are the phoenix' of their continent, raising from the ashes, gaining health and strength and navigating a future for themselves and their children.

The children are born into incredible situations. Sometimes born with HIV, they carry the fate of outcasts, terminal mothers and a lifelong affliction. They are beautiful and you want to help them.

We all have skills and mine is know-how and organization. We can and will help these programs and the advancement of HEART Africa. These women are beautiful and kind, they sing and dance deep into your soul and reflect a willpower beyond measure.

I am inspired by them and we will help the mothers and children along with the HEART Team get to the next level.



John's Song and Dance Video Mix

African women LOVE to sing and dance!! Here is a compilation of some short videos and singing from some of the events along our journey to give you an essence of these amazing women.

- [Women at the Kibera WEEP Center](#) with special dance performance from John
- [Dedication of the WEEP House in Kisii](#)
- [WEEP Mothers Graduation Song](#)
- [WEEP Mothers Hillside Singing and Dance Party](#)

Thanks to “Team Jambo”

- A very heartfelt thanks to my travelling companions who became loving known as Team Jambo! Moving around a developing country for 18 days with these folks was wonderful. We accomplished much and laid a framework for so much to be done in the future. My gratitude to the entire team!

