



Florence Nightingale International Foundation
Officially supported by the International Council of Nurses

Girl Child Education Fund (GCEF)

Activity Report

2023



Meeting GCEF Alumnae in Kenya: In March 2023, ICN representatives had the opportunity to meet with some of the GCEF Alumnae and the GCEF Coordinator in Kenya.

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Executive summary

Once again, the present and future lives of orphaned daughters of nurses were transformed by the Girl Child Education Fund (GCEF) and its partners in 2023. We supported the primary or secondary education of 80 girls in Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. Worth noting, of the 80, there were no teenage pregnancies or dropouts and all beneficiaries received secure payments.

This success highlights the academic and social benefits of participation in our programme. Collaborative efforts with our long-standing partners, Eswatini National Nurses Association, National Nurses Association of Kenya, Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union, and Zambia Union of Nurses Organization, made it possible for these girls to receive an education despite the economic and cultural barriers they face.

GCEF's funding and fundraising efforts were advanced through several financial milestones. The 2023 ICN Congress in Montreal, Canada, was a generous and pivotal demonstration of GCEF's financial resilience. During the year, we successfully raised CHF 74'000 through our fundraising campaign, and we raised awareness and attracted new donors by hosting a sponsored breakfast symposium during Congress with the generous support of our partner, Jhpiego. The launch of the new digital fundraising platform, RaiseNow, provides an avenue for increased financial support, which will be helpful in fulfilling our GCEF 2024 programme ambitions and funding needs.

Our renewed commitment to transparency has improved our oversight and transparency efforts regarding annual expenditures, making disbursements totalling CHF 92'500 and emphasizing the importance of accountability and responsible fund management.

Our aim to refine beneficiary selection processes, enhance data collection for transparency, and strengthen impact measurement is in line with the organization's goals for 2024.

We extend our gratitude to each of our generous donors, National Nurses Associations (NNA), and individual contributors for their crucial role in the programme's ongoing success. Major contributions were made by donors from the United States, Taiwan, Sweden, Canada, Japan, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia, the Bahamas, Congo and Uganda.

Eighty girls and their families also thank you.

1. GCEF implementation and key educational highlights

In the countries where GCEF is present, when a girl loses a parent, she becomes one of the most vulnerable members of society. Her financial source disappears, along with her chance to be educated. Other means of support must be found quickly, which typically means child labour, street life, or early marriage. In many countries, education and becoming a contributing member of the community is left to the brothers.

GCEF changes all of this for girls selected to participate in our programme.

The spotlight of our 2023 programme activities remained on delivering the core mission of GCEF: Provide financial support to enable orphaned daughters of nurses to access education, develop their knowledge and skills, and further achieve their full potential as empowered citizens of their communities.

GCEF proactive approach:

- ✓ **Supports initiatives aimed at increasing girls' access to education**, addressing schools' fees related and other **economic barriers**
- ✓ Provides **mentorship to beneficiaries through NNA** members' local network of nurses
- ✓ **Advocates for policy changes to protect girls' rights to education**
- ✓ **Empowers the daughters of nurses, breaking barriers and transforming lives through education**

In 2023, 10 new girls, aged between 7 and 13, were enrolled in the programme. Ten girls completed secondary school, leaving the opportunity for **9** new girls selected by the NNAs to start their education journey in 2024.

GCEF 2023 key programme highlights:

- **Total of 80 girls** supported in 4 countries
- **10 new girls enrolled** between ages 7 and 15
- **10 beneficiaries completed** secondary education
- **Age range of the beneficiaries between 6 and 18 years old**
- **34% enrolled in primary and 66% in secondary** school in all 4 countries
- **Regular attendance of the academic year with 3 school terms**
- **Zero forced marriages**
- **Zero teenage pregnancies** for the reported period (2023)
- **Zero drop-outs**
- **Secured payment of school fees and supplies** to all beneficiaries
- **Regular meetings with the beneficiaries and their guardians** with proper follow-up
- **Psychosocial support** to girls through site visits by local coordinators
- **Graduation success** of girls completing secondary school

GCEF impact on girls' lives

The continuing enrollments and graduations each year proves GCEF's commitment to empowering girls in the programme. We help break down the financial barriers that would deny

them access to education. The Coordinators' active engagement and follow-up beyond academics provides the girls the moral encouragement to remain in school despite national trends of high dropout rates.

Our girls stand out as success stories, a tribute to their own drive to complete their education and to the commitment of our coordinators and volunteers to support them to achieve this aim. Despite challenges, we find stories like this of resilience and positive impact:

Aureria, secondary school student, Kenya. Life took a turn in 2018 when Aureria's nurse father passed away in a road accident. As the eldest of four children, she became responsible for the care of her two younger brothers and an eight-month old sister. They live in a semi-permanent house with her mother who is a resilient farmer selling farm products. GCEF stepped in to assist the family and as a result of the nursing community's commitment, Aureria completed her studies and is now awaiting enrolment in a technical college in Kenya.

Irene, secondary school student, Kenya. Following the loss of her father who, as a nurse, was the primary income provider for her family, Irene faced ending her academic studies due to financial constraints. Her mother was engaged in manual labour in a rural setting, and Irene's two older sisters were pursuing education. Thanks to GCEF's consistent support, Irene was able to stay at school and excelled in her primary education. Due to her outstanding academic achievements, she is now enrolled in Mumbini Girls High School, a prestigious institution in Kenya. GCEF's continued support has had a positive impact beyond Irene's personal success. It has also relieved the financial burden on her entire family, enabling all of her sisters to pursue their education without hindrance.

Nicole, primary school student, Kenya. When Nicole's nurse father passed away, her mother, a farmer, was left to raise three children. Due to the considerable distance of 20 kilometres to the nearest government school, the family requested a motorcycle for Nicole's transportation. GCEF assessed the risk to Nicole of accidents, gender-based violence, and bandit attacks and offered an alternative private school closer to home. GCEF Kenya covers the school fees, and in addition to the financial commitment, Nicole's family can provide beans and maize for the school's feeding programme. Nicole's mother is pleased with the decision, appreciating the practicality and safety considerations.

Ms Amukusana Mutandi, GCEF Zambia coordinator, believes the following unique stories mirror the realities faced by many families dealing with loss and financial constraints, which underscores the importance of the support of the nursing community in overcoming adversities, particularly in the pursuit of education:

Gracious, secondary school student, Zambia, was faced with speech difficulties. GCEF provided financial support to enable her to transition to a better school that allows her to optimize her learning environment.



Agartha, secondary school, student, Zambia, facing below-average performance due to challenging living conditions, has been able to access additional tuition support that helps her to stay focused on her school work.



Ms Tiny Dlamini, GCEF Eswatini coordinator, notes the GCEF project has provided employment opportunities for those girls who did not pursue tertiary education, leveraging their secondary school certificates to support their families. Many beneficiaries come from impoverished backgrounds, and the project serves as a lifeline, offering hope and uplifting their self-esteem.

By focusing on education, the GCEF project not only ensures academic progression and attendance but also contributes to the beneficiaries' psychological, psychosocial and emotional well-being. The project's impact is evident in the absence of teen pregnancies, highlighting the positive socio-economic transformation it brings to the families and broader community.

2. Collaboration and partnership in 2023

In 2023, the support from longstanding contributors and members of the American, Danish, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Swedish nurses associations was pivotal for the fundraising success of the Girl Child Education Fund (GCEF).

Additionally, a productive partnership with Jhpiego enabled GCEF to host a breakfast symposium, "*After Your Parent is Gone: Stories from the Girl Child Education Fund,*" during the ICN Congress on 2 July 2023.



The event, attended by over 120 participants and led by ICN leaders such as Annette Kennedy and Dr Pamela Cipriano, aimed to raise funds, enhance the programme's sustainability, and promote gender equality in education. Key outcomes included showcasing GCEF's success, raising CHF 14'600 through live donations, sharing donor experiences, and producing a new promotional video with the generous support of Jhpiego. The session also fostered emotional connections through live testimonials and opened opportunities for new potential funders.

3. Fundraising and donations

In 2023, a face-to-face ICN Congress year, GCEF successfully employed various fundraising strategies, including the introduction of RaiseNow, a new online fundraising platform that facilitated easy and quick donations. ICN leadership utilized the Council of National Nursing Association Representatives and Congress Plenary sessions to promote GCEF’s mission and encourage donations.

Key fundraising activities included integrating donation options into the Congress registration process, raising CHF 11’900 from registrants between September 2022 and July 2023, and hosting a GCEF sponsored breakfast symposium in partnership with Jhpiego, which raised CHF 14’600. In total, Congress-related donations amounted to CHF 36’100 during this period, with continued engagement from ICN Member NNAs contributing an additional CHF 47’000 by December 2023.

Furthermore, strategic social media campaigns aligned with international dates from the United Nations calendar increased GCEF’s visibility and support, highlighted by **the International Day of the Girl Child campaign** featuring student testimonials from Zambia and Kenya.

While the initial objective of raising **CHF 60’000 in 2023 was successfully attained, and CHF 74’000 has been currently achieved**. Looking ahead, we are optimistic and enthused to explore new and diverse fundraising opportunities to support the life-changing GCEF mission.

Figure 1: Main type of contributions to GCEF in 2023

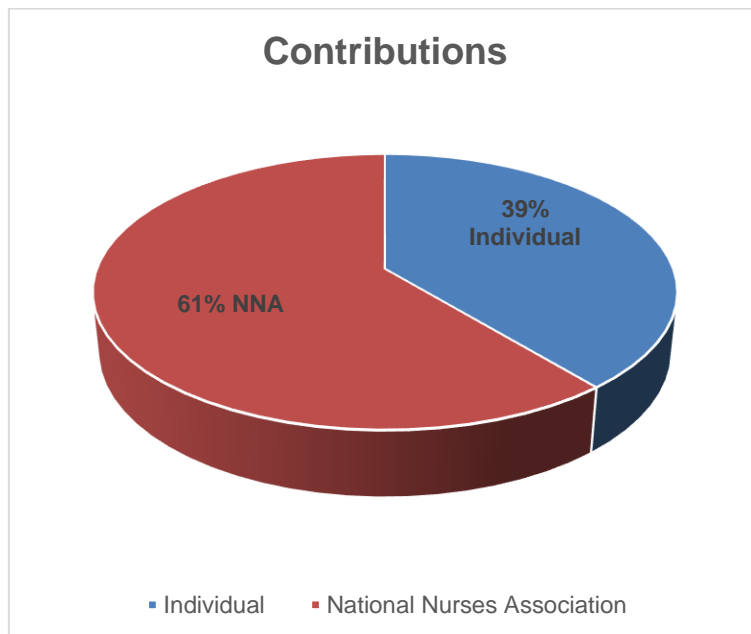
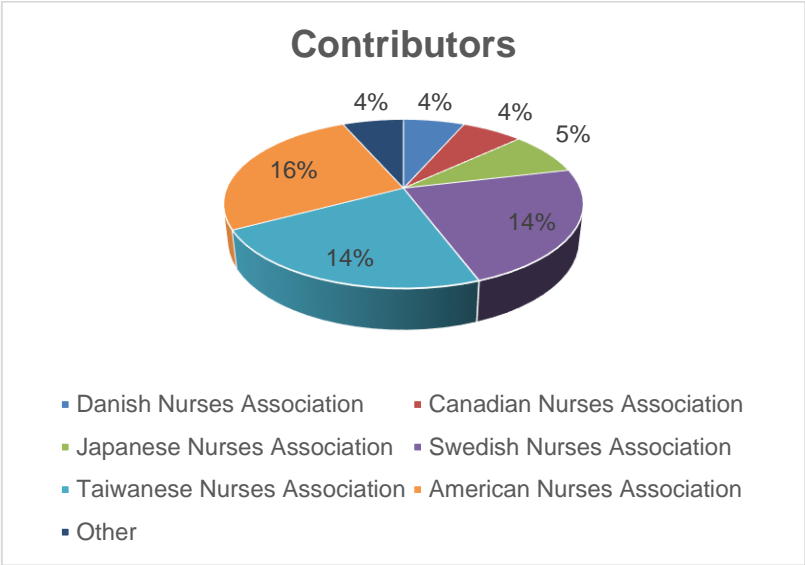


Figure 2: Leading organizations contributing to GCEF in 2023



4. Financial overview

Disbursements in 2023 totalled **CHF 92'500**.

Funds were transferred to NNAs following a detailed request and were sent three times a year, corresponding to the costs required to cover each academic term, except in Eswatini, where the funds were requested in two tranches.

Figure 3: Allocation of funds by country vs total disbursement CHF (2023)

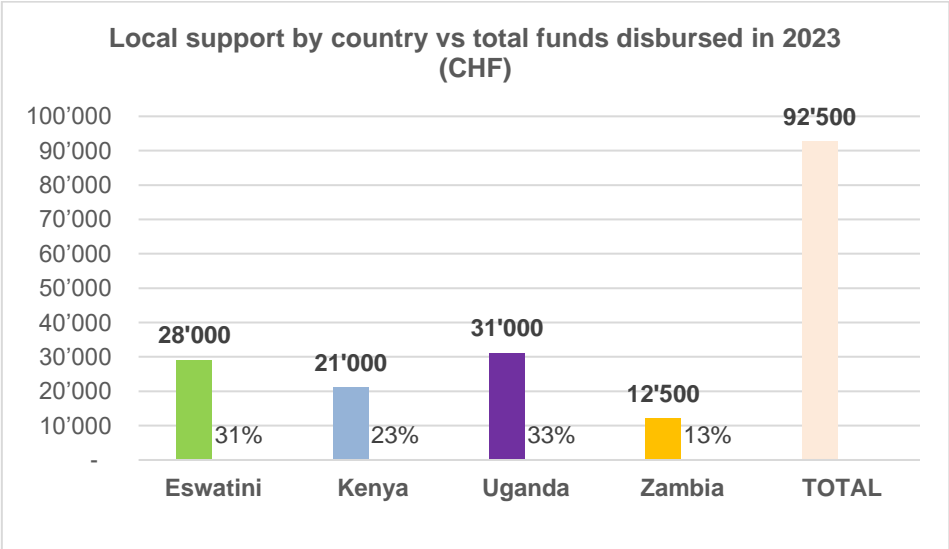
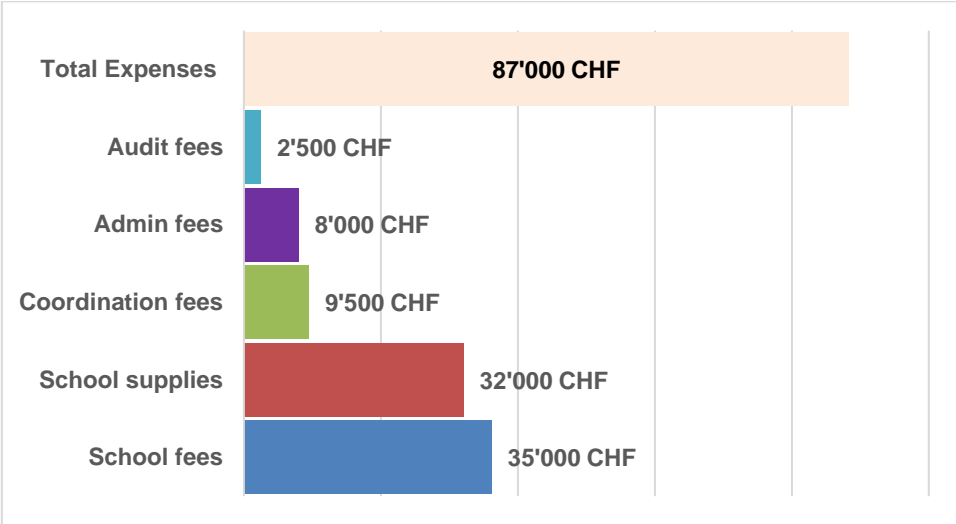


Figure 4: Countries total expenditure reported by type of cost CHF (2023):



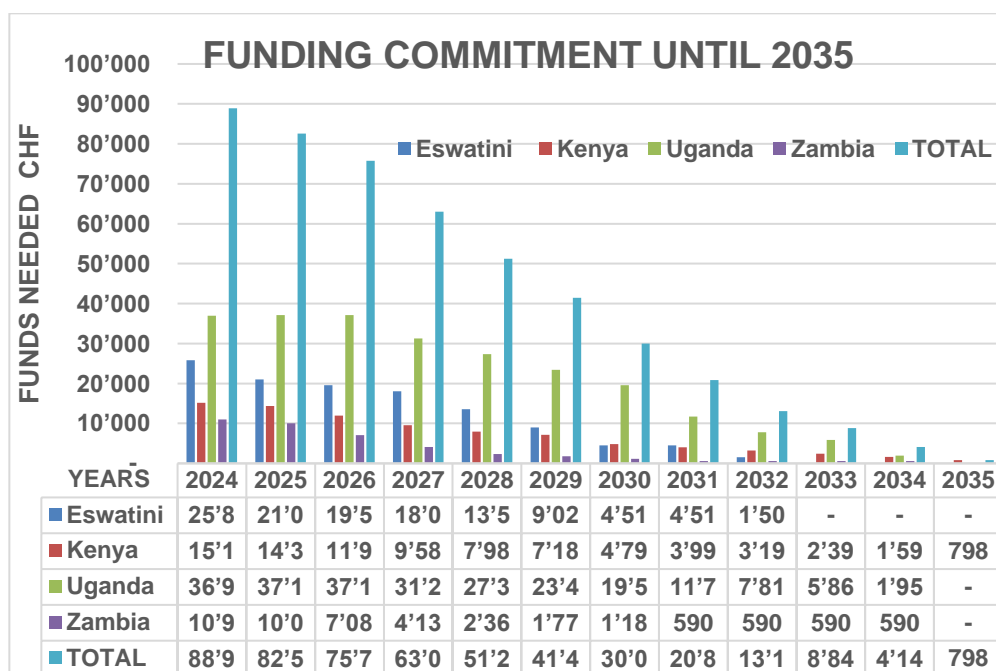
The above data provides insights into the allocation of funds, highlighting the significant proportions devoted to **school fees and related materials**.

In 2023, an investment of approximately **CHF 1'130** on average was necessary to fund one year of education for our students across four countries. Our call for donations of CHF1'300 or USD 1'500 is to ensure we can cover any unforeseen expenses or cost fluctuations, thus maintaining the project's sustainability on an annual basis.

GCEF Financial commitment until 2035

A cost projection was carried out in December 2023 to determine the funding required to ensure that 78 girls enrolled in the programme complete their primary and secondary education. Committing to these enrolled girls requires an estimated **CHF 480'000** to complete secondary school by 2035.

Figure 5: Funding commitment to enrolled girls until completion of secondary school KCHF



Conclusion

Leveraging our recent experiences, GCEF aims to refine key aspects of the project for greater effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. Improvements will focus on optimizing beneficiary selection with clearer social and economic qualifiers, enhancing data collection and consolidation for better monitoring and evaluation, and adding new impact indicators. Real-time evaluation through on-site monitoring will further strengthen GCEF's ability to respond to local needs. Nurses understand the risks of their work and trust that GCEF, supported by generous partners and donors, will assist their orphaned daughters in obtaining an education. To ensure sustainability and reaffirm our commitment to supporting these girls, we are revising fundraising strategies, seeking new partnerships, and enhancing data collection and financial management. Despite challenges such as the need to streamline and strengthen partner oversight and address funding needs, we remain dedicated to overcoming obstacles, adapting, and continuing to positively impact the lives of girls since GCEF's inception in 2006.

Annex

Annex 1 GCEF Country Overview

1.1. GCEF Eswatini

GCEF in Eswatini continues its unwavering commitment to supporting the education of orphaned nurses' daughters, successfully sponsoring girls through school this year. The programme, now operating with its normal three academic terms, welcomed new girls and provided substantial financial support.

This year, the GCEF community faced the tragic loss of Nontsikelo Temahlubi Dlamini, who was in her final year of high school, and provided financial assistance and heartfelt condolences to her family.

The programme has demonstrated significant strengths, with most sponsored girls passing their exams and progressing to the next term, additional support for transport, and dedicated local coordination. However, challenges remain, such as the need for specific medical expense support, additional academic support for some girls, and improved reporting. Addressing these issues is crucial for GCEF Eswatini to maintain its efficiency, ensuring the program's positive impact on the girls' education continues to grow.



Picture: Nontsikelo Temahlubi during the meeting with Dr Cipriano in Eswatini (2022)

1.2. GCEF Kenya

In Kenya, the GCEF initiative continues to make progress in supporting girls' education, with 20 girls enrolled and four new students during the academic year of 2023. The programme coordination facilitates the travel of volunteer staff and nurses to reach girls in remote areas. Challenges, including the need for financial assistance for higher education and improved internal financial reporting systems, have prompted NNAK to seek guidance from ICN.

Despite the challenges of a lengthy waiting list and internal staffing issues, the project demonstrates strengths, including its longstanding presence since 2006, a commendable graduation rate, and the establishment of a supportive alumnae network. With the dedication of its staff and the support of the NNAK team, the programme remains steadfast in its commitment to empowering young girls through education, ensuring a brighter future for them and their communities.

1.3. GCEF Uganda

GCEF Uganda has supported the education of orphaned nurses' daughters, with the programme enrolling one new student this year. Core activities include paying school fees, purchasing supplies, distributing scholastic materials, and conducting school visits, meetings, and counselling sessions for beneficiaries. Remarkably, none of the beneficiaries have experienced sickness, pregnancies, or dropouts during this period. However, the selection process remains challenging due to the overwhelming number of applicants.

The programme's strengths include its active educational support, growing interest with new enrollments, and comprehensive support activities. The dedicated team of project officers and senior nurses ensures ongoing psycho-social support and coordination, which is crucial for the program's success. Addressing capacity limitations, enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and improving financial reporting standards are essential for GCEF Uganda to continue making a positive impact on the girls' education.



Picture: A GCEF Beneficiary receiving personal items and school supplies in UNMO office

1.4. GCEF Zambia

In 2023, the GCEF-Zambia project continued its successful mission, providing support to 20 girls, with three newly enrolled in the programme. School fees for all three terms have been paid, and the team procured and delivered all necessary school supplies, distributing them in person in Lusaka or via courier and field visits for those outside the city. The programme maintains regular contact with parents and guardians through visits and phone calls to assess progress, placing strategic emphasis on mentorship and counselling.

GCEF-Zambia is planning a "Meet and Greet" event to enhance engagement. Despite communication barriers, delays in school attendance for one girl, and tracking difficulties for graduates, the programme demonstrates strengths such as comprehensive field trips, expanding personal visits, and innovative counselling approaches. Additionally, the rise in cholera cases since October 2023 has prompted adjustments to the school calendar.



The high dedication and involvement of the team contribute significantly to the programme's success, ensuring ongoing support and positive outcomes for the beneficiaries.

Picture: ZUNO field visit in Mwinilunga District