

Newsletter 3/2025 – Anniversary Edition

Dear friends, supporters, and partners of *Hand in Hand for Kenya*,

In our third newsletter of the year, we are excited to share something truly special with you: we are celebrating our association's anniversary. We look back with pride on **20 years of *Hand in Hand for Kenya* and 10 years of the *Maisha Mazuri Children Center***—and we are deeply grateful that you have stood by our side throughout all these years. In this edition, we would like to use our “Let us introduce” section to present active members in Germany as well as our long-time Kenyan project leader, Jimmy Kilonzi. We hope you enjoy reading!

The beginnings of *Hand in Hand for Kenya* are based on a family story. A story that started with the adoption of two children from Kenya during Barbara Hansen's seven-month stay in Limuru, Kenya, in 2004/05. But what emerged was more than just a family: emotions, a deep connection to a country and its people, friendships, respect, and mutual support.

Let us introduce: **The Hansen family**



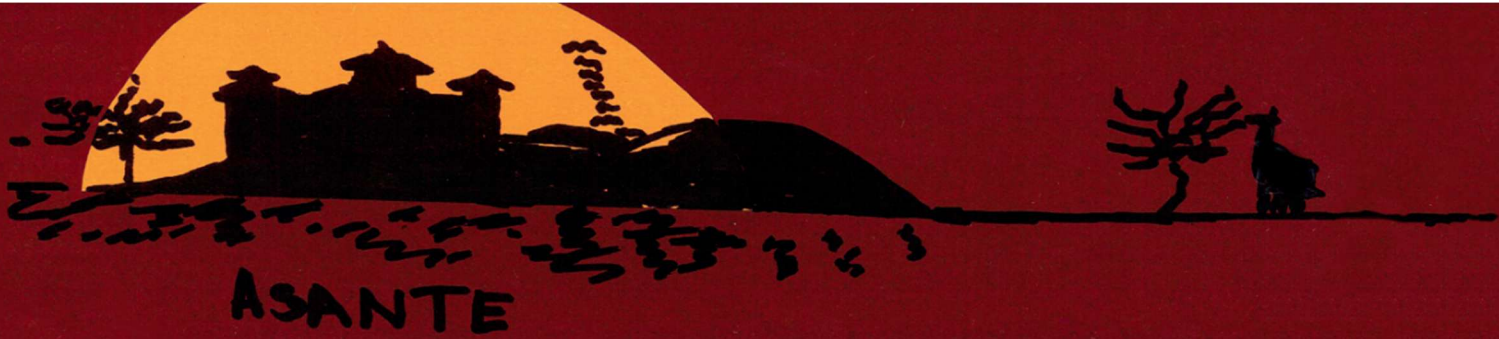
The Hansens – founding members, long-time board members, teachers, parents of three now adult children, and still actively and passionately involved in the association's work.

2005 The Start in Kenya

In August 2005, the couple Jane Nyambura and George Kilonzo, friends of the Hansen family, founded the children's home *Wajibu Wetu* together with John Kinuthia. *Wajibu Wetu* means “Our Responsibility.” It became a safe place for Kenyan children growing up in extreme poverty, affected by homelessness, or victims of abuse. To bring the project to life, they reached out to Barbara and Jürgen for support. In the beginning, friends and family members of the

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Hansens financed the children's home, everyone was brought together. As the number of children at *Wajibu Wetu* grew, the support network needed to grow as well. And so, in August 2005, the association *Hand in Hand for Kenya e.V.* was officially founded. The foundation was laid, and eight founding members formed an ambitious team for the years to come. Six of them still actively serve the association today: Barbara and Jürgen Hansen, Birgit and Stefan Walk, Robert Suske, and Johannes Schittler. Our heartfelt thanks for your loyalty to the association and your unwavering dedication to the projects in Kenya over all these years.

Soon, the children's home was caring for 30 children. Our ambitions and our association grew steadily with every new child who joined. Since 2008, we have supported exchange with our Kenyan team through volunteers who regularly assist with projects on site and bring many young members into our association. Our core principle: close cooperation built on appreciation and respect. This means learning from one another, reflecting on and embracing each other's cultures and values, and strengthening skills to ensure independent and responsible action within an international team. As an association, we take the word exchange very seriously. Since 2009, we have regularly invited colleagues from the Kenyan core team to visit us in Germany.

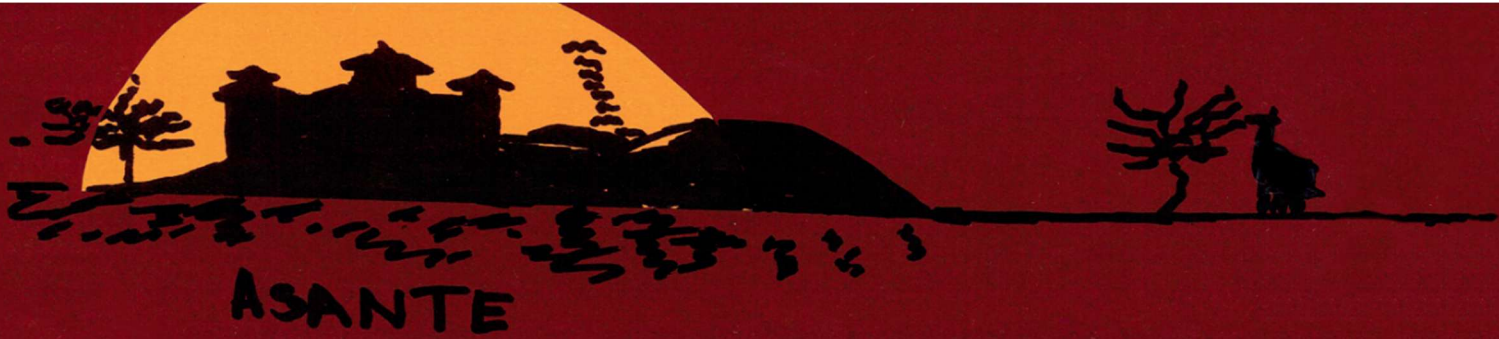
2014 – A Turning Point in Kenya

In addition to the children's home *Wajibu Wetu*, which has since been largely supported by a Belgian organization, our association, *Hand in Hand for Kenya*, began searching for a larger property and local project partners to build something new. We found what we were looking for in the Tala region, in the town of Nguluni, about 50 km from the outskirts of Kenya's rapidly growing capital, Nairobi. We received essential support from Jimmy Kilonzi, who had already established various child and youth support projects in Kenya through his organization *Youth Support Kenya (YSK)*. This marked the beginning of a long-term collaboration that continues to this day.

Let us introduce: Jimmy Kilonzi



Jimmy Kilonzi visiting Munich, with Kathrin Walk



Jimmy studied Community Development and, even during his university years, worked with various NGOs in the low-income neighborhoods around Nairobi. Today, as the Director of *Youth Support Kenya*, his commitment to children and young people has become both his life's mission and a full-time job. His motivation has always been to offer children safety and to prepare them for a self-determined life through education, as well as technical and vocational skills. Jimmy looks back with pride on the projects implemented together with *Hand in Hand*, and on the many small and large success stories that all of us have helped make possible.

"To all the Hand in Hand Trust members, individuals, families, volunteers, companies, and institutional donors: you are our heroes. On behalf of MM and YSK, we are proud of your support."

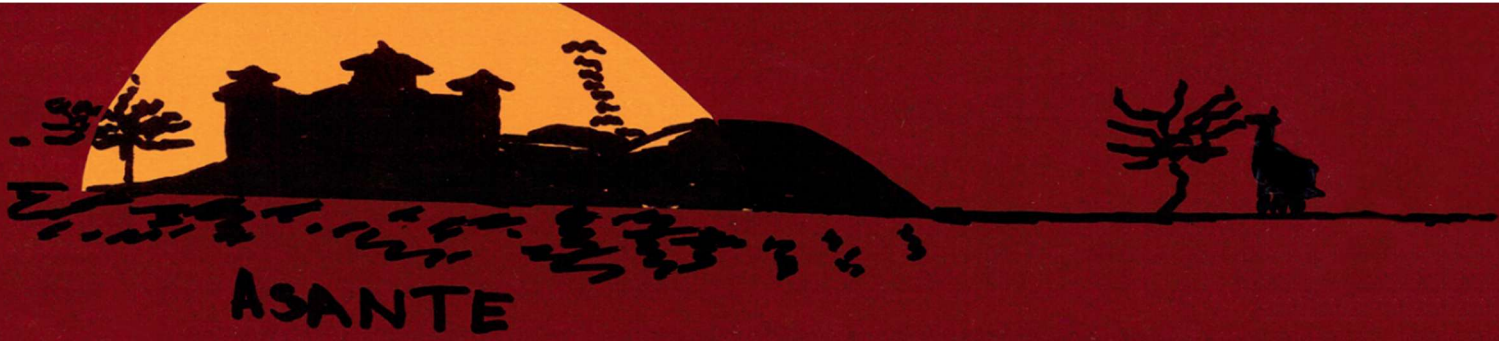


Jimmy at the MCC

2015 – The MCC: Maisha Mazuri Children Center

What followed was the planning of a joint project between *Hand in Hand* and *Youth Support Kenya*, with the goal of building a children's center for neglected and abandoned children and young people: the *Maisha Mazuri Children Center* (MCC). Thanks to the support of long-standing members and generous sponsors, the children's home was able to open in November 2015—after just one year of construction. Nine children moved in at the beginning; today, we are usually at full capacity, caring for around 40 children and teenagers every day.

With the Maisha Mazuri Center, the association set itself the ambitious goal of not only improving the individual lives of the children and young people, but of enriching the quality of life of the entire community in the long term. In 2017, a kindergarten and a primary school were opened in addition to the MCC. The *Maisha Mazuri Partner Program* (MMP) was also launched. Alongside the 39 current residents of the children's home, another 85 children and young people are supported within their families through the MMP. Further initiatives in-



clude: training and health programs for the community, parental support programs, the development of ecological agriculture with a farm house (2016), and the construction of a well (2018), financed through numerous school charity runs, and providing everyone with clean drinking water ever since. This achievement benefits not only the children and teenagers, but also the families living in the surrounding area.

2017 – Ambitious Goals

The ideas of Jimmy Kilonzi and our team around Maisha Mazuri remain as ambitious as ever: **2017:** Building, building, building. To provide the children and young people with a comprehensive education, we opened a secondary school on the children's home grounds in 2019: the *Academy of Maisha Mazuri (AMM)*. This secondary school offers educational opportunities to children in our project as well as to those from the surrounding area, opportunities that are often difficult to access in rural regions.

2020: Because many students' home environments do not allow for focused studying, higher-level schools in Kenya are typically run as boarding schools. For this reason, AMM was expanded over the following years with two dormitory buildings for boys and girls, a large outdoor kitchen, two workshops, and a school bakery. The children's home itself was also expanded with an outdoor kitchen in the same year. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of our long-term sponsors. We truly cannot say THANK YOU often enough to all who support us. This anniversary is dedicated to you as well.

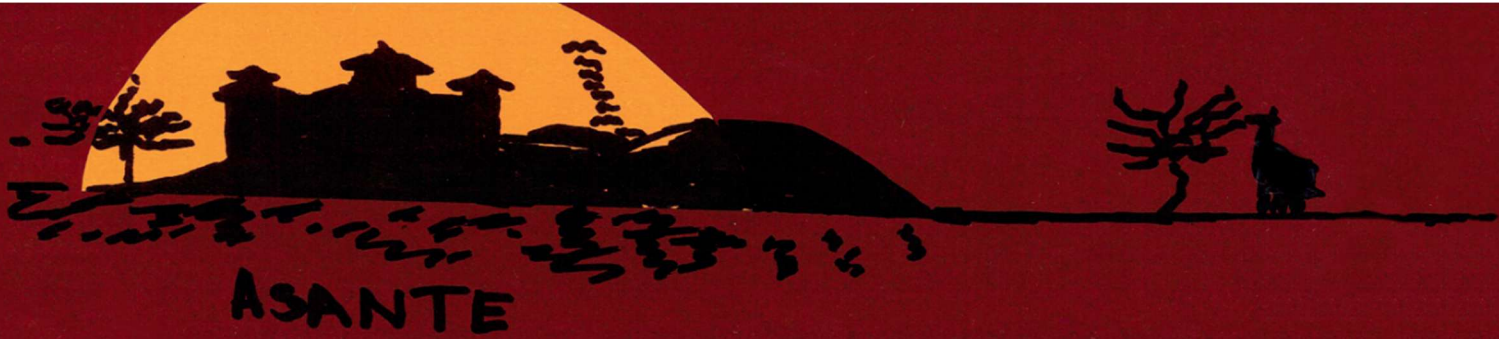
The developments of the past years would hardly have been possible without the commitment of our dedicated board members, Barbara Krohne, Helen Milkau, and Anita Wimmer. Our respect and appreciation for your tireless volunteer work.



Barbara visiting Kenya with Victoria



Helen visiting the MCC



Helen and Barbara with Joseph and Arriet



Anita (3rd from right) at an association meeting



The Hand in Hand family at the most recent general assembly

After years of extensive construction activity, we now want to focus on internal growth, expanding and continuing education, making full use of the facilities, maintaining them, and using them meaningfully. Maisha Mazuri as a whole should come alive, bringing support, development, and happiness to people.

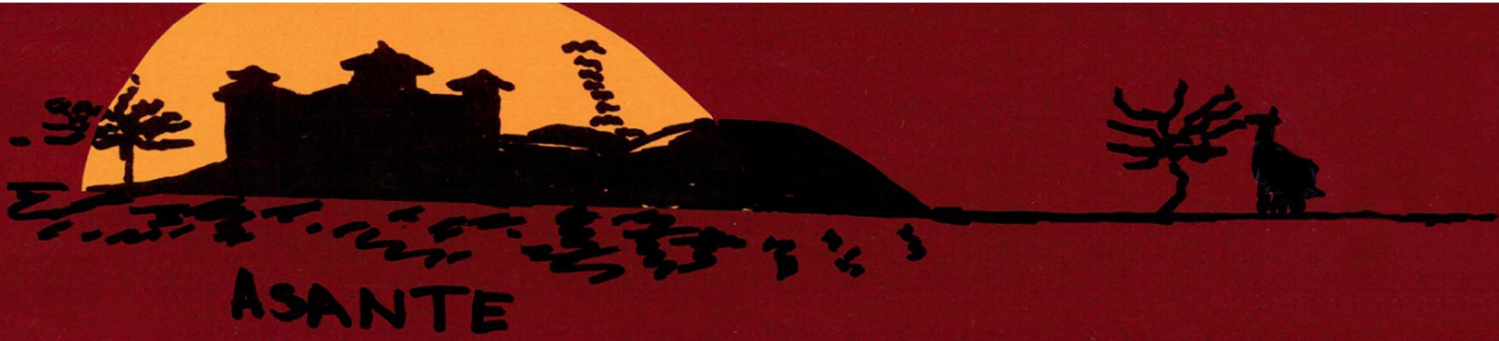
2025 - The Present

We recently welcomed a new board member: Christoph Schaller, our very first volunteer back in 2014 on the MCC construction site. He has been actively involved in the association ever since.

And this theme continues to run throughout our story: *Hand in Hand for Kenya* is a family story—a truly international association family with now 270 members, united in friendship,

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sharing highs and lows, and guided by emotion, commitment, and solidarity. We look forward to what the future will bring.

Let us introduce: Christoph Schaller



Christoph visiting the MCC

Active with Hand in Hand for Kenya since 2014.

His personal highlights: the trips to Kenya. Being able to spend time with the people and children on site, shaped by warmth, curiosity, and joy. Bringing the special sense of community from the MCC back to Germany and keeping it alive within the association.

“Working together in a motivated group that is warm-hearted and stands together as a community is fulfilling and wonderful.” Christoph Schaller