so they can

Jan - Aug 2025 Impact Highlights



Children in Kibowen Komen Primary School in Kenya.
So They Can will renovate their classroom this year to improve their learning and teaching environment.

We're working towards...
THE GLOBAL GOALS

Australian Aid

REGISTERED CHARITY

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Girls in Tanzania made their own placards to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day in May, 'Encourage a safe and protective menstruation environment for all girls and women'.

An Update From Our Tanzania Country Manager

Reflections on Sydney, the Q&A with Macquarie Bank and the annual Gala Dinner



In July, I had the incredible opportunity to visit Sydney.

It was not only a wonderful chance to work with our fundraising team, but also to deepen my appreciation of the Australian culture that underpins the generous spirit of so many of So They Can's supporters and donors.

There were countless highlights, but a few stand out. One was being invited to join the Q&A panel - Education in Africa. Why Bother? - hosted by So They Can and Macquarie Bank. Alongside our founder, Cass, Mark Cubit (Co-Founder of the Australian International Development Network), Ben Clark (The Phillips Foundation), and Peter Overton (Nine News Journalist), we explored why giving and investing in Africa is more important than ever. Did you know that by 2050, one in four people in the world will be African? I am so encouraged that so many of our supporters want to be a part of ensuring that this growth is inclusive, sustainable, and African-led.

Another highlight was our Annual Sydney Dinner, held at The Calyx in the Royal Botanic Gardens. The evening was a true celebration of So They Can's work, and I was delighted to represent our programs in Tanzania and strengthen the connection between Australia and East Africa in person.

To all the organisers, guests, and generous donors who helped to raise funds at both events, thank you. Together, we are working to end child poverty in Tanzania and Kenya through education.

Kindest regards,

Roselyne Mariki
Country Manager, So They Can Tanzania



An Update From Our Kenyan Country Manager

Reflections on Board members visit and the impact of 2025's global aid cuts



This year has seen major changes to the international aid and development sector. With USAID halting funding in January, the UK slashing its aid budget in February, and many more, 2025 has seen a decisive shift in support for global development and humanitarian aid.

As many of our supporters know, So They Can is a DFAT Fully Accredited NGO - an important recognition of the transparency, diligence, and accountability that underpins our work. We are grateful that the Australian Government has kept its Official Development Assistance commitments steady this year. Nevertheless, these global aid cuts have highlighted why our "School Sustainable Development Model" is so critical. This unique model makes it clear that our role is to strengthen government schools and their communities (through infrastructure, resources, training, and advocacy) so that, over time, they can sustain high-quality education independently.

We were proud to showcase this approach to several of So They Can's global Board members in July. Our founder, Cass, was joined by Dianna Crossan (NZ Chair) and her partner Neil, Katja Ullrich-North (UK Chair), Justin North (UK Trustee) and their children Sandrine and Hugo, Amber Matthews (Australia Director) and Angela O'Connell (Grants Manager) for 10 days in Kenya and Tanzania. They visited partner schools and communities to see first-hand the impact and sustainability of So They Can's work.

I look forward to welcoming more of our supporters in the future, as we continue to fight poverty, improve access to education, and advance gender equality.

Warm regards,

Boniface Mouti
Country Manager, So They Can Kenya



Partner Schools Win District Education Awards

Our Education Program enables excellence in Tanzania

Every year on May 1st Tanzania commemorates Workers' Day — a special day that recognises, thanks and awards outstanding workers, including educators, who play a vital role in building up their communities and economies. This year we're delighted to announce that So They Can's partners won 3 of the 4 District Education Awards, and we couldn't be more proud.

All of the teachers shared that it was So They Can's professional development support that led to their award win.

Best Ward Education Officer (WEO) – Mariam Chobu, Qash Ward WEO. Awarded for her exceptional leadership among the 25 WEOs in the Babati District, especially her problem-solving skills and dedication to quality learning. Mariam, pictured below, shared that:

'I was very happy and couldn't believe that I had been chosen among so many others. This award has given me the strength and motivation to continue working hard, because I believe that, even the little things I do have been seen to bring value to the lives of others'.



Best Head Teacher in Babati District Council & the Manyara Region - Geofrey Matandiko, Manyara Primary School. Awarded for his resilience and dedication, under his leadership Manyara has risen to the best ranking government primary school, out of 137 schools in the district.

Best Teacher of Lower Primary Grades – Lazaro Mapunda, Tsamasi Primary School. His creative talking classroom (pictured below) fosters active learning and has led to significant improvements in student outcomes. He is regarded as a champion teacher among the more than 1,300 teachers across the district.

For So They Can, these awards are more than just plaques and applause — they're a symbol of how locally led efforts can transform the national education system, with support from invaluable partners like your families.



First Birth Certificates Registrar Opens in Tiaty, Baringo

Sustainability in action through our advocacy in Kenya

Thanks to our partnership model and our Kenyan team's advocacy, Tiaty's first ever Civil Registration Services office has opened at Chemolingot shopping centre, operated by 2 permanent Government staff. It is a significant milestone. Children need a birth certificate to continue their education, get a job, vote and become active citizens in their communities. For the children from 8 of our partner schools in the area, with 3,500 primary-aged children, this new facility means that now, they can obtain one.

41% of children in our Baringo primary schools don't have a birth certificate.

Our So They Can team in Kenya have been supporting Tiaty families to access their birth certificates. The challenge has been that the nearest Registrar office in Kabarnet is 300 kms away. The cost, time and security risk to travel the distance meant that children were not officially registered, and held no formal documentation.



The new office is a result of So They Can's tireless approach working with the government, to effectively influence government support that improves access to education, and civil rights, for the long term.

In 2024, So They Can supported 400 children in Baringo to obtain their birth certificate. In 2025, we have supported 1,000 more children. For schools, every child enrolled with a birth certificate, increases a school's annual Government funding.

'The birth certificates have been quite instrumental in enabling our school to get more funding which has gone a long way to help us acquire a mobile laboratory for the school at a cost of KES 400,000 (approx. AUD $4,600). Initially, our Junior Secondary students used to walk to the nearby secondary school – almost two kilometres away – whenever they wanted to carry out any science related experiments. This caused a lot of inconvenience in terms of time and logistic arrangements. Now our students can be safe, and on time, since they don't have to walk again to the neighbouring school. Besides the walking, they can access the laboratory equipment any time they need to do an experiment unlike when they used to make an appointment with Chemolingot Secondary School to use their laboratory. It is a great relief brought about by increased capitation [government funding] due to acquisition of birth certificates for the students. Thank you So They Can for the support!'

– Bishop Joseph Losute, Chairman of AIC Sunrise Primary School, Baringo, Kenya

Champions Ending Violence & Keeping Children in School

Mothers & fathers in action in Tanzania

A remarkable movement is quietly transforming the lives of children in rural Tanzania — one voice, one family, one village at a time.

So They Can's Champion Mothers and Fathers — 116 everyday heroes trained and empowered by So They Can to protect children's rights, prevent violence, and keep children in school.

Our Champions are the first line of defence in the fight against child abuse, neglect, and school dropouts. They are the trusted voices in their communities, speaking out where silence once allowed violence to continue unchecked. They are the ones neighbours turn to when a child is in danger. And it's working.

'In our community, we can see that cases of violence against children have reduced by 75%. Our work has been recognised not just at Ward-level, but nationally. It is thanks to what So They Can started.'
Mzee Issa Nkunga, Chair of the Mamire Ward Champions.

In late 2024, So They Can was one of only two organisations visited by the regional Deputy Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Community Development. It was a learning visit, on our effectiveness in championing for child rights and gender equality. An opportunity to meet our Champions, and hear how they have successfully combated issues of violence against children and gender-based violence.

'Interacting with children directly, we see changes. How communities see education, and their futures.'
Dr. Muhidini Ngware, Chair of Endakiso Ward Champions.

As a result of the visit, our Champions groups are the first ever formally registered Champions Groups in Tanzania. It means that they will be recognised by the Government, and can access support for their work. Dr. Muhidini Ngware has donated an office space in Endakiso village, for Champions to work on cases, directly with vulnerable members of the community.

At So They Can, we believe in local leadership. That sustainable change happens when communities lead the charge. Our Champion Mothers and Fathers are living proof of that belief. They are stronger together. And thanks to their courage and commitment, so are the children.



All of our Champions are recognised by their t-shirts, which say: In the Manyara region, a life without violence against women and children is possible.

Inclusive Education: New Facilities, Aids, Education Support

Chemolingot School for the Hearing Impaired in Kenya

At So They Can, we believe education should open doors—for every child. Nowhere is that more beautifully realised than at Chemolingot School for the Hearing Impaired, where our inclusive education initiatives are transforming lives.

For the first time ever, 11 children at Chemolingot have been assessed and fitted with hearing aids—opening up a world of sound, connection, and learning. This milestone is a testament to our commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

In addition, here's the remarkable progress we've made so far this year alone at the school:

- 6 children, with their parents, supported to obtain birth certificates—a foundational step toward accessing essential rights and services.
- 3 new toilet blocks, totalling 6 toilets—one for girls, one for boys, and one for teachers—ensuring dignity and hygiene.
- A modern school kitchen with 2 efficient stoves, providing nutritious meals.
- 10 tables and 2 chairs for early childhood learners—creating a stable and comfortable learning environment.
- A secure fence and entrance gate around the school's 4-acre perimeter, safeguarding children and granting peace of mind to parents.

Why It Matters

Fitting hearing aids isn't just a technical intervention—it restores connection. Children can engage with classmates, absorb instruction, and feel part of the community.

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For 14-year-old Chepkite, the impact of her device was immediate:

'I am happy for the assistance. I can now hear with one ear.'

Meanwhile, the infrastructure upgrades—from sanitation to safety, nutrition to furniture—ensure that all 40 learners with hearing impairments at Chemolingot are supported in an inclusive, secure, and nurturing environment. This is not just a school upgrade—it's a transformation of opportunity.







School kitchen constructed & equipped with efficient cooking stoves





Children assessed and fitted with their new hearing aids



1 girls', 1 boys', 1 teachers' toilet blocks constructed



4-acre fence with gate erected around the school's perimeter

80-bed Girls' Dormitory Opens to Remove Barrier to Girls' Education

Qash Secondary School, Tanzania

Long walking distances is one of the leading causes for students to discontinue secondary school in rural communities.

1,114 students (53% girls) attend Qash Secondary School, one of So They Can's partner schools in Tanzania. Its remote location means that most students walk a 10 to 18-kilometre roundtrip every day. Not surprisingly, the student dropout rate over the four years of lower-level Secondary School (Form 1 – Form 4) was 60% in 2024.

In 2021, the Qash School Board converted 7 classrooms into temporary hostels to accommodate an average of 250 girls and 120 boys. The facilities were used by students when they were sitting the mandatory national exams in Form 2 and Form 4. It was an effective approach to improve academic performance – the school improved its ranking to 8th, out of 40 secondary schools, in the Babati District, previously it ranked 33rd. However, the problem of high dropout rates due to long distances still remained.



Qash Secondary is a secondary school in the Qash Ward, which children from 8 primary schools transition to attend. The communities from these villages hold responsibility for contributing towards their children's education. With your support and building on the community's efforts and contributions, we have constructed the school's first boarding facility. An 80-bed girls' dormitory, with 40 double bunk beds, 5 toilets (including 1 for children with Special Needs) and 5 showers. The Qash community were an important part of the project, contributing 10% of the total project cost in the form of local materials and labour for the build. It was a joyful occasion for everyone when the doors officially opened in May 2025.

'I am very grateful to the So They Can organisation for constructing this dormitory for us. Now, we will grow up in a safe place and have the opportunity to study well. In the past, we slept on the floor without beds and used the classroom as a hostel. However, we now have a comfortable environment to live and study at night. We are truly thankful for this project.'
Aisha, 18 year-old student from Qash Secondary School.

'With the construction of this girls' dormitory students will now feel safer. I sincerely thank everyone involved, including So They Can, the Qash community, and the Government, for their significant contributions. This will make a huge difference in their education and overall well-being.'
Ezekiel Kabogo, Headmaster of Qash Secondary School


BWENI LA WASICHANA
CASSANDRA






DONATED BY SO THEY CAN
TANZANIA


SO THEY CAN & QASH SEC. SCHOOL
"THE BEST PREPARATION FOR TOMORROW
IS DOING YOUR BEST TODAY"


LAUNDRY

The Ripple Effect When Women Become Mentors

Wezesha Business Skills Project (WBSP) in Kenya

Women's mentorship, whether informal or formal, is a powerful force for economic empowerment in rural Kenyan villages. It fosters shared knowledge, resources and opportunities that can uplift entire communities.

'I have been part of the groups supported by So They Can — I have visited various groups engaging in different activities like table banking, farming and merry go round, and the organisations impact can be felt. Today, women have knowledge of initiating and running successful businesses, and members can apply for and receive loans within their groups comfortably'.
Jacinta, WBSP Mentor, mentors 13 women's groups. After graduating in 2016, she's now a successful small business owner of poultry, vegetables, soap.

1,595 Kenyan women have benefitted from So They Can's business skills training. These are women, who through their local women's groups, support and mentor one another for business and personal success. Now, we are seeing how that trust and confidence in one another, changes lending habits.

In 2024, there was a decrease in loans disbursed directly by So They Can. We are now seeing that increasingly women are lending directly through their women's groups, and each other.

In support of this shift, So They Can introduced formal mentorship in 2024. 3 women, graduates from our Wezesha Business Skills Program (WBSP), were formally trained as Mentors. In their roles they visit the women's groups in person, participate in our WBSP trainings with women, and report quarterly with our Program Officers. This year, there will be 2 more mentors in Baringo and Grace is excited to be one of them.

'Through the training I received last year, I was able to secure a job as a Matron in one of the secondary schools in Marigat in Baringo County. Today, I run the school vegetable business. I also visit women's groups, encourage the women to have confidence in what they do, and have their space in the traditionally patriarchal families.'
Grace, new Wezesha Business Skills Project Mentor in Baringo.





so they can

By 2030, our goal is to sustain all of our partner schools through our 3-phase Sustainable Development Model.



Together we can be the difference.

Learn more and get in touch...

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