

GIRL CHILD EDUCATION FUND (GCEF)

2024 ACTIVITY REPORT



Hope lives. She is 12, a student with a dream in an impoverished developing country. She imagines graduating high school and even going on to study business and open her own shop. She knows she is fortunate to be in school—many girls are not. Tuition is a hardship, and when resources are scarce, boys go first. Education, for her, is not just about learning; it is the surest way to escape child labour, early marriage and other forms of exploitation.

Hope fades. Her life changes in an instant when her father, a nurse, dies suddenly. She becomes one of millions of children whose surviving parent cannot afford tuition. School is no longer an option and this eager student becomes a forced labourer.

Hope is restored. The Girl Child Education Fund (GCEF) receives word of her situation and takes steps to return her to school, covering all of her school expenses and mentoring through graduation.

Hope restored. Dreams realized.

This is what we do at GCEF, thanks to our generous partners and donors around the world and the dedicated NNAs who oversee and mentor each girl's progress. In this report, we reflect on the journey and achievements of GCEF, highlighting the resilience of its beneficiaries and the unwavering support of its partners.

At a time of escalating need and global funding crises, we remain stalwart, transparent, and grateful as we present to you this 2024 GCEF Activity Report.

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GCEF at a Glance

WHO: The Girl Child Education Fund (GCEF) is a pathway to opportunity for orphaned daughters of nurses in developing countries to continue their education despite financial hardship.

WHAT: Established in 2006 by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in partnership with the Florence Nightingale International Foundation (FNIF), girls are able to stay in school and pursue their ambitions with school fees, uniforms, books, and other essentials covered by GCEF.

WHY: Our programme is grounded in the belief that education is the key to better health and brighter futures, and that is why we address the critical barriers to education faced by one of the most vulnerable groups: orphaned girls under the age of 18. Without targeted intervention, these girls are often denied access to education due to financial constraints, caregiving duties, and cultural practices. The GCEF stands as a direct response to these inequities, guided by the vision of achieving gender parity in education and improving health outcomes.

WHERE: GCEF works closely with National Nurses Associations (NNAs) in Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia to ensure that funds are distributed effectively. Local coordinators and volunteer nurses not only oversee the financial support but also offer the girls mentorship, academic monitoring, and psychosocial care.

CONTEXT: These four countries are deeply affected by poverty, natural and man-made disasters, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the resurgence of diseases like tuberculosis and malaria. These challenges have disproportionately impacted nurses and their families, leaving behind millions of orphaned children.

WHY GIRLS: Research shows that educating girls yields transformative benefits: better family planning, reduced infant and maternal mortality rates,

and lower HIV infection rates. Furthermore, it fosters economic empowerment, with each additional year of schooling increasing a girl's future earnings by up to 15%. The initiative aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly quality education and gender equality, but also underscores ICN's commitment to fostering healthier and inclusive communities through education and empowerment.

2024: Expanding Impact and Strengthening Commitment

This year, GCEF proudly reaffirmed our commitment to supporting the 69 girls already in our programme and welcoming 9 new students, bringing our current total to 78 girls, aged 7 to 15. In the coming year, we anticipate celebrating the graduation of 6 young women across four countries.

The Girl Child Education Fund empowered these young women through four key pillars of support. By addressing both educational and personal needs, GCEF continues to honour the legacy of nurses while equipping them with the tools and opportunities to grow into leaders and agents of positive change within their communities.

Key Pillars of Support:

- **Educational Costs:** Full funding for school fees, uniforms, and supplies.
- **Academic Enrichment:** Extra tutoring and school visits from local coordinators.
- **Holistic Support:** Regular mentorship, guidance, and personal development from nurses.
- **Psychosocial Well-being:** Emotional and psychological care through our dedicated nurse coordinators and volunteers.

By the Numbers: GCEF's Impact in 2024



- 72 girls advanced to the next level of education
- 6 completed their secondary education
- Partners helped distribute over 3,000 personal items
- 3,500 educational materials such as books, notebooks, and pens distributed
- Zero dropouts
- Zero pregnancies
- Zero child/teen marriages

This brings the total number of girls supported since GCEF's inception to over 430 with more than 300 successfully completing their education.

Stories of Resilience and Transformation

Each of these 430 girls is a story all her own. We present two of them to you now.

KALUBA: From Adversity to Conservation Leadership

Kaluba's life took a difficult turn early on when she lost both her parents during primary school. Despite these challenges, her enrolment in the Girl Child Education Fund in 2006 marked the beginning of a transformative journey. As one of the programme's first beneficiaries in Zambia, Kaluba received support through her secondary education, which she completed in 2013.

Kaluba credits GCEF for enabling her to attain the education that laid the groundwork for her professional achievements. Beyond academics, the programme provided her with guidance and mentorship, helping her navigate challenges such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse.



Now a community environmental conservation expert, Kaluba serves as a role model, demonstrating how education and targeted support can empower individuals to overcome adversity and achieve impactful careers. Her work not only benefits her personally but also contributes to the protection of Zambia's wildlife and the betterment of her community.

AMUGE: From Grief to School Leadership

In 2023, at age nine, Amuge lost her mother. The experience left her reluctant to return to school. She struggled to move forward.

Later that year, Amuge was enrolled in the GCEF programme in Uganda, which provided her with both financial support and counselling. Through ongoing guidance and encouragement, including support from her father, she began to regain her confidence and refocus on her education.

Today, Amuge has made significant progress. She is actively engaged in her school community, where she holds a leadership position and demonstrates determination to succeed.

"The support from GCEF has given me the confidence to continue and a purpose to work toward," she says.

Strengthening Community Engagement and Fundraising

In 2024, GCEF put its strategic focus on enhancing engagement and fundraising efforts. We leveraged storytelling, social media, and key international awareness days to expand visibility and strengthen donor relationships:

- We refreshed our approach to communication by spotlight the transformative impact of education
- Emphasized education's critical role in advance gender equality, breaking the cycle of poverty, improving mental health, and driving economic development.
- Featured testimonials and quotes from beneficiaries and coordinators, bringing the programme's impact to life and fostering deeper connections with donors and stakeholders.
- Leveraged International Nurses Day and the International Day of the Girl to amplify GCEF's mission and outreach.
- Showcased GCEF during ICN's 125th Anniversary celebrations, underscoring the programme's alignment with ICN's legacy and vision for the future.
- Reintroduced the donation channel during line registration for the Helsinki Congress 2025 to further our fundraising efforts.





“Thank you for supporting Shayna in her education journey.

Her dreams will be achieved through your programme because she will never miss classes due to school fees. And she has nurses just like her mum who believe in her. Thank you so much.”

Anthony Wanyoike , father of Shaina, 8 years old, GCEF Kenya

Financial Overview and Sustainability

Total funds allocated for the programme amounted to CHF 86,700, strategically distributed across costs and countries to ensure GCEF’s impact.

Total funds raised in 2024 amounted to CHF 37,000. While this amount is consistent with past non-Congress years, growing demand highlights the need for expanded fundraising efforts. Long-term sustainability remains a priority.

75-80% of these funds were directed toward covering school fees and supplies, addressing the primary educational needs of beneficiaries.

Approximately 20-25% of the funds were allocated to administration and management costs incurred by the National Nurses Associations enabling effective programme implementation and oversight.

Funds were transferred to NNAs based on detailed requests and disbursed three times a year to align with the costs required for each academic term, ensuring efficient and timely support.

In 2024, an average investment of approximately CHF 1,120 was required to fund one year of education for each student across four countries.

To ensure the sustainability of the project and account for any unforeseen expenses or cost fluctuations, we set our call for donations at CHF 1,300 or USD 1,500 per student annually. This approach provides flexibility to maintain consistent support and address unexpected financial needs.

Figure 1: Main type of contributions to GCEF in 2024

Total Contributions (37K CHF)

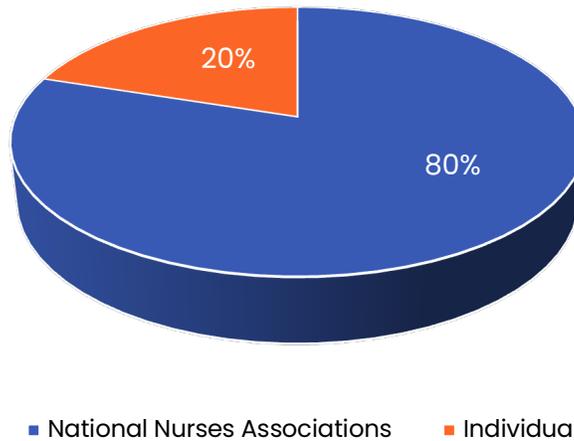


Figure 2: Leading organisations contributing to GCEF impact in 2024

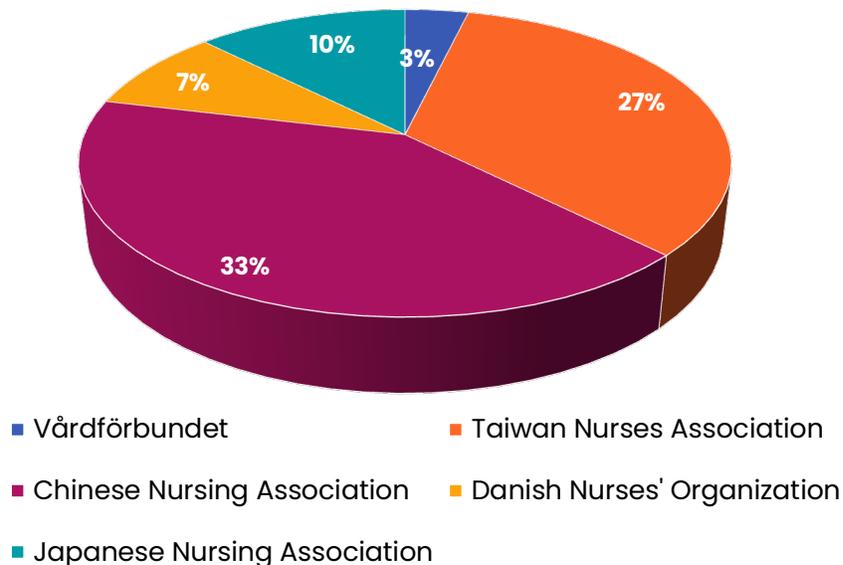
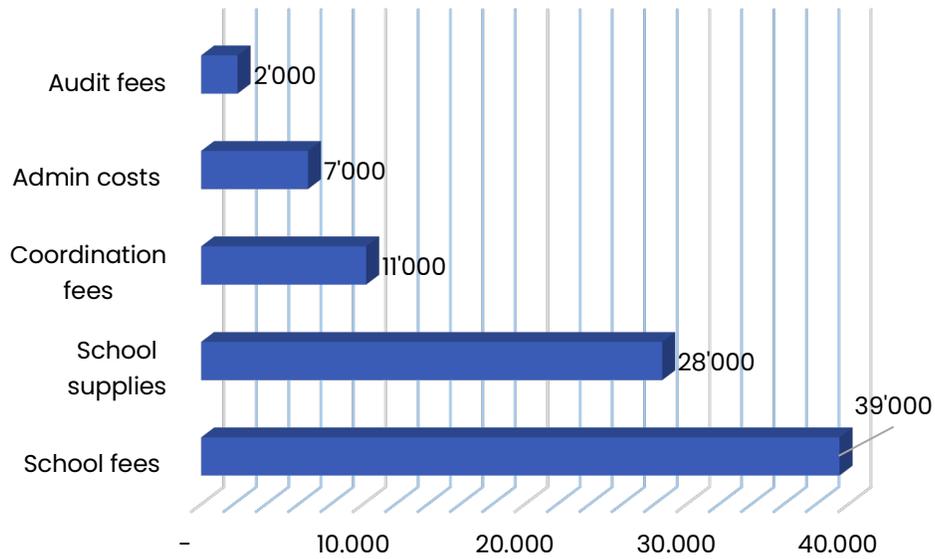


Figure 3: Allocation of funds in 2024 (CHF and %)

Funds allocation (CHF)



Funds Allocation %

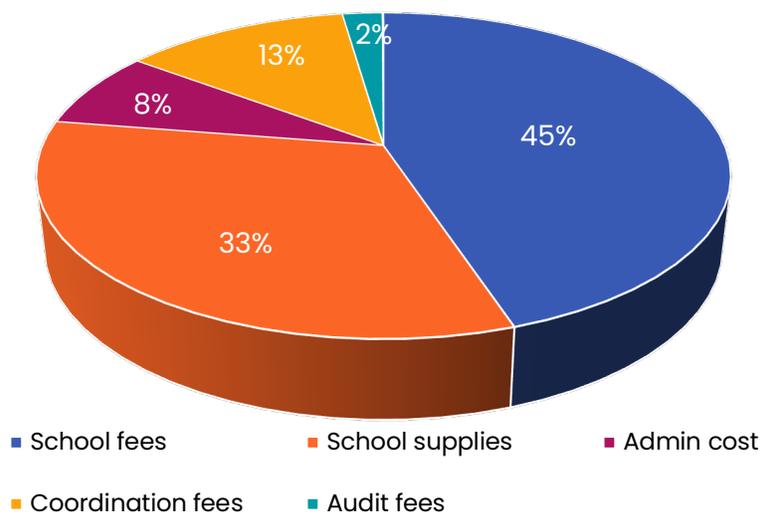


Figure 4: Countries total expenditure reported by type of cost CHF (2024):

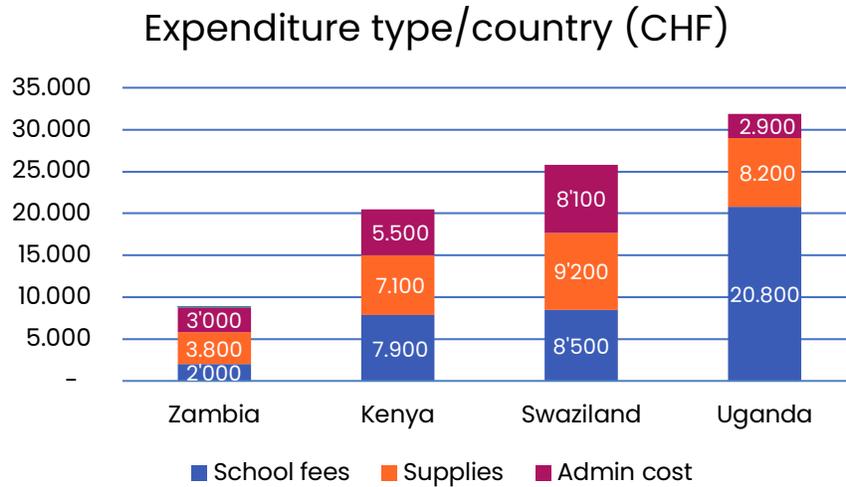
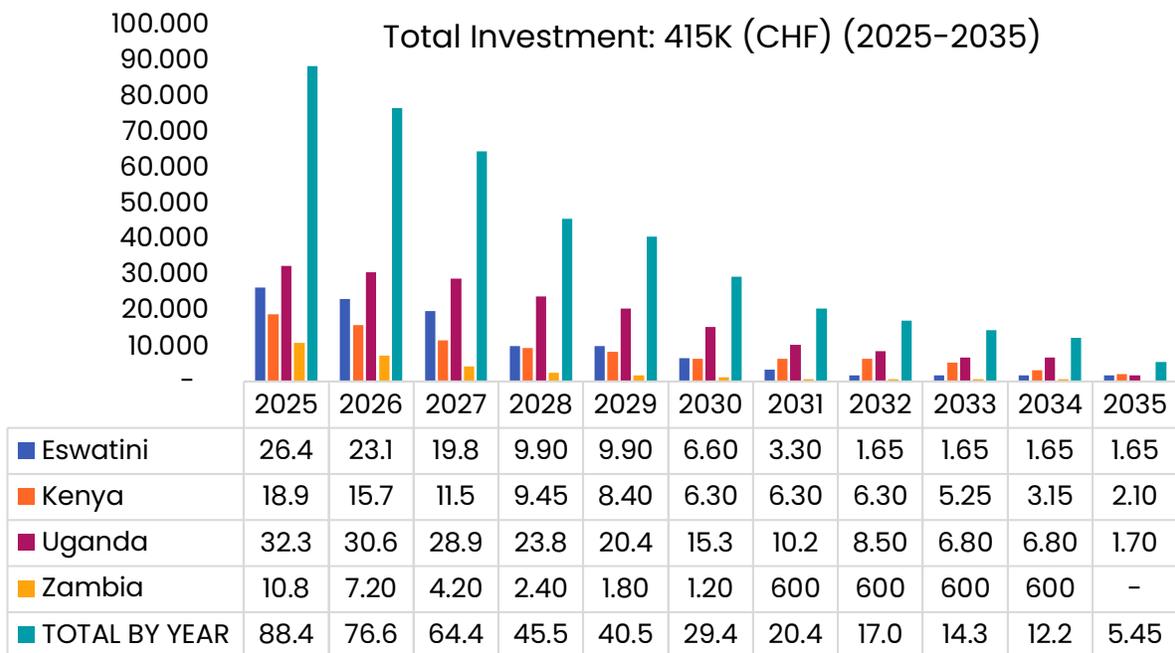


Figure 5: Funding commitment to enrolled girls until completion of secondary school



Future Funding Needs:

- CHF 415,000 required by 2035 to ensure all currently enrolled girls complete their secondary education.

Vital to sustaining our programme and empowerment of the girls is the financial contribution of our long-standing supporters, including the Japanese Nurses Association (JNA), Taiwan Nurses Association (TWNA), Danish Nurses Organization, and Vårdförbundet, as well as new contributors such as the Chinese National Nurses Association.

Looking Ahead: The Future of GCEF

As GCEF looks to the future, we will:

- Reflect and adapt to ever-evolving challenges
- Explore innovative approaches to sustainability
- Diversify funding streams
- Enhance the ways we measure and communicate the programme's impact
- Expand community engagement and amplify our reach through local and international partnerships

The continued support of donors, NNAs, and volunteers is essential in ensuring that no girl loses her education due to financial hardship. Together, we are investing in their futures—breaking barriers, transforming lives, and fostering stronger, more equitable communities.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to you who have made the GCEF's mission possible. Your generosity, dedication, and belief in the power of education and girls are transforming lives and paving the way for brighter, more equitable futures. Every donation, every moment of time volunteered, and every resource shared has brought hope and opportunity to those who need it most.

Together, we are not just educating girls—we are creating a ripple effect of positive change for families, communities, and nations.

Thank you for standing with us.

Annex

Annex I GCEF Country Overview

Eswatini



Through structured implementation, GCEF continues to enable vulnerable girls in Eswatini to access quality education and build brighter futures.

Girls in Eswatini face challenges in accessing education due to factors such as poverty, early marriage, and cultural norms. Although specific enrolment statistics are not readily available, the country experiences similar issues to other Sub-Saharan African nations, where economic and social pressures keep many girls out of school (Equal Measures 2030).

Picture: GCEF Beneficiaries working on their school assignment during meetings with national coordinator, Ms Tiny Dlamini

The GCEF has been supporting girls in Eswatini since 2005 by providing essential educational resources to daughters of deceased nurses.

The programme has helped 82 girls to date, with 25 advancing to tertiary education. Currently, 18 girls are enrolled, including two new recruits in 2024. The programme ensures beneficiaries receive school supplies, transport assistance, and extra tutoring to improve their academic performance.

Nurse volunteers play a key role in mentoring and supporting the girls, offering mental health counselling, educational guidance, and home visits to address barriers to schooling.

Kenya

About 44% of girls in Kenya are not enrolled in school, with significant regional disparities. In areas with high poverty levels, only 19% of girls are enrolled (Girls Education Challenge, UNICEF). Child marriage remains a critical issue, with 23% of Kenyan girls married before the age of 18 (Coachability Foundation).

GCEF Kenya provides educational support to girls facing economic and social challenges. Pauline Tabu Ngala, our Kenya GCEF Coordinator, brought together students, parents, and guardians for counselling and mentorship on career pathways at an annual meeting on April 22, 2024.

The National Nurses Association of Kenya (NNAK) plays a vital role by offering first aid training to students, equipping them with practical skills and encouraging interest in the health sector.



Picture: GCEF Beneficiaries celebrate together with National Coordinator Ms Pauline Ngala International Nurses Day 2024

The programme relies on school counsellors and teachers to provide follow-up support, ensuring continuous monitoring and assistance for the

beneficiaries. This collaboration strengthens educational access and retention, helping girls overcome barriers to their education.

Uganda

Approximately 24% of girls aged 15-24 in Uganda are not enrolled in secondary education. Child marriage is prevalent, with 34% of girls married before the age of 18 and 7% before the age of 15 (Equal Measures 2030).

Since 2006, the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union (UNMU) has been implementing the GCEF project to support vulnerable girls.

UNMU officers facilitate the distribution of scholastic materials and conduct school visits to monitor academic progress.

Picture: GCEF Beneficiaries and National Coordinator Mr Vicent Tumusiime during site visit



The project emphasizes counselling, career guidance, and life skills training to empower beneficiaries with essential knowledge and personal development opportunities.

To sustain long-term support, UNMU collaborates with schools through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that create a conducive learning environment.

Zambia

In Zambia, 27% of girls are married before the age of 18. Education enrolment remains a concern, with significant dropout rates among girls due to early marriage, pregnancy, and poverty. While specific data on non-enrolment is

limited, trends align with regional patterns where girls' education is frequently disrupted by socio-economic factors (Equal Measures 2030).

The Zambian Nurses Association (ZUNO) has implemented the GCEF project since 2006, focusing on educational support, mentorship, and mental health initiatives.

ZUNO conducts annual field trips to all provinces to distribute school supplies such as notebooks, groceries, and toiletries. Proof of school fee payments is presented to school authorities to ensure accountability.

Beyond material assistance, the programme provides counselling on academic success, career planning, health choices, and general hygiene. Girls are encouraged to join school clubs such as Girl Guides, Red Cross, and Science clubs to develop leadership and technical skills. ZUNO coordinators also organized a "Meet & Greet" event, focused on personal development and strengthening peer support networks.

Mental health remains a priority, with GCEF Zambia offering counselling on family involvement, personal challenges, and risks such as drug abuse. The project also facilitates access to solar torches and lamps for students in off-grid areas, ensuring they have adequate lighting for studying.

The GCEF programme continues to provide vital educational and psychosocial support across Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. Through structured mentorship, targeted financial aid, and community engagement, the initiative empowers girls to complete their education and pursue opportunities for a brighter future.

Girl Child Education Fund: Hope restored. Dreams realized.

Thank you for making this possible.