



At a recent WILK grazing management training, participants play our "balancing cup" exercise to demonstrate leadership, teamwork, and communication.

**WATER IS LIFE KENYA**



**Spring 2024**

# STAYING CONNECTED

The drought is over. The grass is back. Now, how do we help it thrive?

## ***Letter from the Director*** **Opening Our Eyes**

Dear Friends,

We have been on the road, taking our story of hope and transformation to new places. As I re-tell the story of how we got started, I recall the moment when I was in Kenya and began seeing the connection between a lack of clean water and girls not going to school.

When I first became a volunteer in 2005 for an organization which supported education for girls in Kenya, I thought that the lack of access to education had to do with *poverty*.

Living there in 2006 opened my eyes. I learned that women walked all day for water and needed their daughters to care for the small children as they trekked the whole day for water.

I asked myself, "Can this really be?"

It's good to start asking questions. We learn and begin to see from a fresh perspective. We start to think, "How could we solve this?" and, "Where should we start?" Learning and questioning are catalysts. They start a journey of our own development.

That is what's happening in our "**Improving Pasture**" program right now.



*WILK Co-Founder, Joseph Larasha, leading a training of one of the 11 Grazing Committees in Ogulului.*

We have been training the Grazing Management leaders and their eyes are being opened. They are asking themselves questions like, "How can we lead our communities to manage pasture so that no one loses cows again in the drought?"

Let's keep our eyes open to see new paths forward.

Thanks for being on this journey of transformation with us.

***With Love & Gratitude,***

***Joyce Tannian***

Director & Co-Founder

# WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS

Many Kenyans went three years without rain. Now, they're dealing with record rainfall during the 2024 rainy season. This means that lately, it's been pretty hard to get around. The dirt roads that service our area in Kajiado County become treacherous and even impassable under heavy rains. Without usable roads, schools were closed for several weeks. Day-to-day activities, such as buying food, were hazardous. Some people even got stranded as seasonal rivers isolated their homes. We're doing our best to help our Maasai friends weather this storm. Your support makes it possible to provide life-saving assistance when it's most needed.

## IMPROVING PASTURE

We are in an experimentation period. The recent 3-year drought in southern Kenya caused pasture shortages, livestock deaths, and collapsed household incomes. The drought highlighted the importance of improving grass management, and it's **Maasai livestock keepers** who can do it.

### Why We're Involved

Since 2011, we have invested in our innovative Livestock as a Business (LAB) Program, which focuses on improving incomes and drought resilience for farmers. In February, when the grass was high due to recent rains, we asked our LAB groups what they were doing to manage grass in preparation for the next drought. As it turns out, no one had any thought of planning ahead, even though we just came out of a 3-year drought! Forming new habits doesn't come easy.

Pasture management and conservation are important topics covered in LAB, with activities like planning grazing, building barns, baling hay, and storing crop residue serving as key lessons.

### State of the Field (of Grass)

The challenge has been for individual farmers to work together to manage their pasture. In the past, this land was communally held and grazed by Maasai livestock farmers. During drought times, grazing and overgrazing would increase when members of adjacent group ranches (without enough grass) migrated to their area. However, in the past four years the land has been subdivided. Now there is a combination of owned land and communal grazing land, which provides new opportunities.

In the Ogulului Group Ranch (an area like a Reservation for Maasai), eleven Grazing Management Committees (GMCs) were appointed by Group Ranch Leaders with the mandate to "manage the grass.



Namelok GMC members practicing a lesson.

With little training, ill-defined goals, and few invested resources, progress had been limited.

To solve this, we decided to bring our LAB training method to the GMC leaders through a new project called **Improving Pasture**. First, we spent time understanding their needs, then we developed a curriculum to empower all eleven GMCs to train community members and build group cooperation.

### The Next Steps to Pasture Management

This new training program is already bearing fruit. We met with GMC leadership, then held training sessions with all committees (11 zones x 16 members each) to understand their level of knowledge and experience. We have now moved to the next stage: preparing them to train their communities. GMC members love learning new things like drought cycle management. They are feeling empowered, excited, motivated, and ready to teach.

We have 3 critical conditions on hand: 1) people now own their land, 2) there is plenty of grass because of recent rainfall, and 3) GMCs are poised to spring into action. There is an opportunity to make progress on this vital issue and build habits that boost resilience!

That is why we are investing money at this crucial time to train people to manage the current abundance of pasture. By teaching members of the GMC grazing zones, we hope to build a spirit of cooperation that leads to more pasture; healthy, fat, sellable livestock; and prosperity for people *and* their animals.

## DONATION CORNER

### 4 WAYS TO GIVE

DONATE



1 Send us a check in the blue envelope

3 Become a monthly donor (set up online)

2 Donate online at [waterislifekenya.org](http://waterislifekenya.org)

4 Match your gift through corporate matching

## Hope for Widows: What's Happening in the Highlands?

We have a Mt. Kilimanjaro cluster in our Hope for Widows program. These women share the mixed farming lifestyle of many Maasai people in the highlands, which means livestock and crop farming. They primarily plant corn, kidney beans, potatoes,

# NEW LIFE AT LOSITETI

Last year, we raised over \$80,000 to implement a deep borehole well for Lositeti. After a three-year drought, the death of many cows, and recent heavy rains, this project is nearing completion.

## Lositeti Community Borehole Update

In February, we finally broke ground in Lositeti. We had to wait for the weather to break before we could transport the drilling equipment to the site. Community members had to repair the slippery road before we could drive on it.

To everyone's surprise, we hit first water earlier than expected at 28 meters. We continued drilling to 152 meters (almost 500 feet). Test pumping confirmed that the water was potable and had good flow.

Every borehole requires the community to "buy-in," supporting some aspect of the project either financially or with sweat-equity. The borehole was drilled over a mile away from the community hub, so Lositeti's buy-in involved digging a trench for a pipeline connection to the water storage.

While Lositeti was digging, contractors got to work building the reinforced concrete infrastructure. The pump house, storage tank, water points, latrines, and water trough for animals were constructed, all surely "elephant-proof" as Lositeti is an elephant hotspot.



*Left: A Lositeti community member digging the pipeline connection.*



*Top: Lositeti's water storage tank.*



*Bottom: Lositeti's panel installation.*



*Kids celebrate during Lositeti test pumping in February.*

## Partners: Making a World of Difference

In mid-May, the water pump and thirty solar panels were installed. This equipment, along with the electric fence which will protect the panels from elephants, were generously donated through our partners at the Newark Rotary Club, Rotary District 7630, and eight other partner clubs who raised \$16,350 for this stage of the project. We are so grateful for their partnership—they truly put "Service above Self" for Lositeti.

The borehole will be complete and operational this summer, at which point we can hand it over to the people in Lositeti. Even months after the drought ended, Lositeti is still recovering from livestock losses. Their borehole will support a tremendous improvement to their livelihoods.

So many people were on board with this project, including the Raskob Foundation, the Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation, our friends Linda and Richard Landis, and you, our loyal donors. Thank you so much for changing lives—for the better—in Lositeti!



*The Kilimanjaro Highland widows standing tall at a meeting.*

and, less frequently, tomatoes. It is rain-fed agriculture, so during the 3 years of the 2021-2023 drought they suffered from 6 failed harvests.

When we gave the women their cash grants of \$150 each in 2022 and 2023, the money was for small businesses to provide a stream of income. However, as soon as the rain came last October, they liquidated their stock and put the cash into farming inputs. It was not what we intended, but they're farmers and they need to plant! We're curious to see the outcome of their efforts and whether the use of capital for farming paid off. We are still collecting data, so stay tuned for the final results. Since it's been raining again in April and May, they are busy weeding the next bean crop and harvesting corn. It's hard to find them standing still!

## ON TAP: Global Linkages Water Project is Bringing a Borehole to Olmoti

Our friends at **Global Linkages** (GL) have been crushing their fundraising goals! Since December, their team of fundraising ambassadors inspired over 180 donors to donate over **\$45,000** of their **\$100,000** goal to bring a borehole to Olmoti. At this pace, they're well on their way to bringing clean water to Olmoti.

So far, we've helped Olmoti mobilize their leadership team, organize their Self-Help group, register over 700 borehole members, conduct a hydrogeological survey, and submit the application to drill to the county government. The application has been accepted, so, if all goes to plan, drilling will be happening soon.

Our GL ambassadors are making this ambitious project possible. We are so happy to be their partners in mission and in service to the Maasai of Olmoti!



*From left to right: Joseph Larasha (WILK), Lorna K. Johnson (GL Principal), David Alleyne (fund-raiser), and Samy Twarari (Olmoti) meet in Kenya in October, 2023.*

## Spring Event Highlights: We Met the Brewer!

This spring, we celebrated our 8th annual **Thirst Reverse** at Iron Hill in Newark, followed by a Thirst Reverse at Iron Hill in Newtown, PA. The Newtown event was attended by our new friends at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Richboro where we talked on Pentecost Sunday.

And... At Iron Hill Newtown... **We met the brewer!**

For several years, Pete Corbett, the Senior Head Brewer at Iron Hill, has been making a special beer for us, a fruity IPA called **Kenyan Quench**. To give you a sense of how good it is—last year, Pete entered his beer, Philly Chilly, into an international beer contest. He **WON** World's Best Beer in the spicy beer category.

Pete works at the Newtown location, so it was an honor to meet him, along with many new friends. We hope to keep celebrating Thirst Reverse in Newark, Newtown, and new locations soon!



**Top:** Joyce, Brewer Pete, and Aaron with Kenyan Quench!



WILK Team at Kid's Greenfest

**Miss us this spring? Catch us later this year!**  
Learn more at [waterislifekenya.org/events](http://waterislifekenya.org/events)



314 E. Main St., Suite 2 | Newark, DE 19711  
(302) 894-7335 | 501(c)3 nonprofit  
EIN: 26-3185829  
[info@waterislifekenya.org](mailto:info@waterislifekenya.org)  
[@waterislifekenya](https://www.instagram.com/waterislifekenya)



[waterislifekenya.org](http://waterislifekenya.org)

Sign up for WILK Wednesday, our biweekly email newsletter, at [waterislifekenya.org/wednesday](http://waterislifekenya.org/wednesday)

## Spring Fundraising Highlight: Dress Down for Hope & Water, Water Walks, and Empty Bowls

Before working at WILK, our Outreach & Operations Manager, **Aaron Lemma**, taught at Neumann Goretti High School in South Philly. This spring, he renewed his classroom skills by presenting at different schools across the area, including: Aspira Academy, Bonner Prendie HS, Pope John Paul II HS, St. Joe's Prep, St. Laurentis School, and Wilmington Montessori School (WMS).

Some of these schools participated in dress down day fundraisers in a campaign we called **Dress Down for Hope & Water**. Joyce's alma mater, St. Mark's HS, led the charge, raising over \$2,200! In total, over \$5,000 was raised to help us start a new water project. Schools fundraised in other ways, too, such as WMS' **Empty Bowl** event. We were happy to be one of four charities chosen by students!

Lastly, students in the Beautiful Social Research Collaborative at SJU organized a Water Walk called **Magis for Maji**. On World Water Day (March 22), over 40 students, as well as SJU President Cheryl McConnell, walked around campus to raise awareness and over \$1,000 for WILK. We are so grateful for their remarkable partnership!



**Top:** A WMS student showing Aaron where Kenya is on the map.

**Bottom:** St. Laurentis students are eager to participate in the assembly.

**Left:** Water Walk participants after the 1st annual Magis for Maji walk.

**Right:** St. Mark's Students in Action Club present a check to WILK.

