

FUNDRAISING



At the start of November, Luke and Adam organised a 12-hour football fundraiser to raise funds for their upcoming trip to Rwanda. There were over 70 different players plus supporters. Games ranged from walking football, ladies game and fancy dress! They raised a fantastic £1800 and were even congratulated in Parliament for their efforts! Well done to Luke and Adam for their amazing fundraising. Let us know if you are doing any fundraising and we will try and support you as best we can!

KILT WALK 2025



We would love YOU to sign up to the 2025 Kiltwalk today! Why not walk 3, 14 or 23 miles for us in:

- Glasgow - April 26th and 27th
- Aberdeen - June 1st
- Dundee - August 17th
- Edinburgh - September 14th

Join other Comfort supporters at Scotland's biggest walking fundraising event and have a blast raising much needed funds! Sign up at thekiltwalk.co.uk/events

CALENDARS



Our beautiful 2025 calendars with photos from our partner countries to keep you smiling all year long are now half price! Grab yours for only £5 and all proceeds help Comfort International reach more lives with the love and support they need.

Buy your calendar at shop.comfortinternational.org, where you can also buy Comfort Gifts and Comfort Crafts, handmade by genocide survivors in Rwanda, or get in touch to reserve your copy of our calendar.

Contact Comfort International

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SCIO SC030369



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WELCOME

CALLUM HENDERSON, COMFORT INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR

The breadth of projects covered in this newsletter gives some indication of the range of needs we are responding to - children being forced into child soldiering and needing rehabilitation, resource-poor children in the world's poorest country, South Sudan, the need for church leaders' training to equip pastors and others where mainstream training is inaccessible or unaffordable, street children in Bujumbura, Burundi, and Feeding Projects designed to build school attendance and attainment. Thank you for being part of the answer to those needs and for reading this newsletter in order to stay up to date with all that is going on.

A LOOK AT OUR GOALS FOR 2025

2024 has been a special year. With the continuing support of our incredible family of supporters, volunteers, trustees and staff, and our profound dependence upon the provision, wisdom, grace and favour of God, we look forward to 2025 and to building on those 25 years. Below, we layout some of our goals for this year:

•**Comfort Transformation Centre (CTC)** – we hope to have the main structure for this residential centre for 80 children completed by the end of this year. We are grateful for the progress made last year and trusting God for the remaining funds.

•**Comfort Rwanda** - We are working closely to develop reporting, monitoring and evaluation to help show clearly what we already believe is the effectiveness of the projects. When these are in place we hope to expand the projects to meet the ongoing needs.

•**Good News International (GNI)** – With Feeding Projects at school and nursery and community projects working well, and the Vocational Training Centre at the Joy Centre thriving, our goal is to help GNI build a carpentry and welding workshop at the Joy Centre.

•We continue to work with **Solace Ministries** to support genocide survivors and with **Africa Hope Initiatives** to provide grants for Solidarity Groups, which we hope to see grow in the coming year.

•The work in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** has been growing consistently over the last 15 years with large and urgent needs. Several projects need more sponsors. The feeding of 2000 displaced children continues in the IDP camps. In 2025 the new maternity unit at the Central Hospital of Rusayu will, God willing, be completed. The Children of Liberty project has a new group of child soldiers starting and we hope that work can restart on Rubaya school, presently on hold because of the occupation by the M23 army. We are aware that the situation in DRC is very fluid and new needs are likely to surface. Comfort Congo have long desired to introduce the Comfort International Ministry School (CIMS) to DRC and this will start in March.

•**Uganda** - 2 CIMS locations will run in Uganda. The work at the LEMA Hope Centre with street children is the first development project in Uganda and we will work to see that develop.

•**Burundi** – The partnership with the Batwa is working towards building a resilient and hope-filled community. The Street Kids Rescue (SKR) project in Bujumbura is moving towards the point where children can graduate.

•The Child Support project in **South Sudan**, which still faces insecurity and deep poverty, and to which very few of our supporters have travelled, is our least known area of work but we would love to see it grow significantly.

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THE CHILDREN OF LIBERTY - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



The Children of Liberty project continues to change lives in a radical and powerful way. When in DRC last year we found ourselves talking to one of the boys on the project. He told us how he left child soldiering. He spent his time in the army looting, killing and raping. One day in a village, a man approached him and spoke to him about how he could leave the army and live a better life. As the man spoke, the child soldier took out his gun, pointed it at the man's head and told him to kneel on the ground. He then described what followed as the man knelt on the ground with his hands in the air, asking for mercy and continuing to tell the boy he could have a better life. The child soldier said in amazement that he doesn't understand why he never shot the man, but something made him have mercy. It was this meeting that led to him leaving the army and joining the Children of Liberty. Later we asked Joseph Nsengiyumva (right) if he knew the man who had gone to the village to rescue the soldiers. "It was me," Joseph said calmly. There have been several other times that he has been in the same position whilst rescuing children; with a gun pointed at his head and his life in the balance, but God has always protected him. What struck us most was how he accepted the risk but nevertheless continued the mission. It left us in such admiration of our partners and the life-endangering work they do.

12 Children of Liberty graduated from the project in December. They were given a grant to start up small businesses earlier last year including selling phone air time, a sewing business, a small restaurant, selling spices, fruit, vegetables and shoes, and a teacher. They have all faced challenges because of the war since they began. Not long after launching their businesses, the main road out of Goma which runs through Sake was closed when Sake was taken by the M23 army and so raw materials and trade have all suffered. Nevertheless, although their income is not high, all of them managed to graduate – please do pray for them that their lives would continue to make progress. Germain was one of those who graduated:

"I have neither fear nor hate anymore because now I know God's will in my life. I became a man, I love God and my dreams began to be achieved gradually and I am doing well because God protects me day and night."

In their place, we have taken on 15 more ex-child soldiers, and we are in need of more sponsors to support the project.



Please pray for the COL as at the time of writing, the M23 rebel armies have taken over Goma and our partners and projects face unprecedented danger. Pray for safety from the armies and protection and peace to come.

SOUTH SUDAN

BY DAVID GASANA, COMFORT RWANDA COMFORT SOUTH SUDAN PROJECTS



Comfort South Sudan is committed to improving the quality of life for sponsored children in South Sudan through various programs supported by Comfort International. This report outlines the key achievements and impacts made in 2024.

1. Family Reintegration:

In 2024, Comfort South Sudan successfully reunited 8 children into their extended families. These children received the necessary emotional and practical support for a smooth transition. Among them, 3 children are now fully reintegrated and supported by their families, receiving 100% financial support for their daily needs.

2. Educational Achievement:

Through the support provided by Comfort South Sudan, children were given access to vital school materials, tuition, and meals. As a result, 98% of the children have excelled academically, moving on to higher education levels.

3. Vocational Training:

Comfort South Sudan is preparing children for employment by offering various vocational training opportunities. 3 girls are receiving hairdressing training on weekends and holidays. One boy is undergoing driving training to improve his employment prospects.

4. Health and Medical Support:

In 2024, Comfort South Sudan addressed a range of medical challenges, including malaria, typhoid, ulcers, cholera, diarrhoea, skin infections, and dehydration.

5. Food Security and Malnutrition:

Comfort South Sudan provided regular, nutritious meals to combat malnutrition and hunger. This initiative has been crucial in maintaining the children's health.

6. Hygiene and Dignity:

Comfort South Sudan ensured that children received clothes and hygienic materials to maintain cleanliness and dignity. This support helped the children engage in social activities with confidence and self-esteem.

7. Social Interaction:

Various activities were organised to promote social interaction and mental healing. Children were encouraged to share their dreams and encourage one another.

8. Foster Care:

Comfort South Sudan created a foster care home for children with no family support. In 2024, 4 children were placed in foster care and received full support, including housing and basic needs. This initiative ensured that these children had a safe, nurturing environment to grow and thrive.

9. Team Visit from Scotland:

A special highlight of 2024 was the visit of a team from Scotland, who spent valuable time with the children and the project team. This visit helped strengthen relationships, foster a sense of dignity, and improve the overall support network for the children.

10. Housing Support for Families:

Comfort South Sudan also provided housing support for five families facing financial struggles.

11. Security and Safety Challenges:

South Sudan continues to face ongoing security challenges. The staff reported a number of concerning incidents.

12. Continued Outreach to Vulnerable Children:

The need for support remains high, and Comfort South Sudan is committed to reaching more vulnerable children.

CIMS UPDATE AT THE END OF 2024



CIMS (Comfort International Ministry School) is a project of vital importance providing pastors, many who have received no formal education in any field, in Burundi and Uganda, with accredited training and equipping them to lead their churches with theological and practical skills. There has been significant progress in both countries and we are grateful to God for all He is doing to bless this work.

Burundi

In Burundi we are delighted that the first group of students have now completed all their studies. It has been a challenging programme, firstly with Covid closing down the programme and then because of the border closure with Rwanda. However, the final teaching week took place in May last year when Callum was able to find a way through Tanzania to get to Ngozi and teach Healing and Reconciliation and then Preaching and Teaching. The Healing and Reconciliation teaching was a special time with a real sense of God's presence and grace teaching and healing hearts, minds and souls. The Preaching and Teaching is also a crucial module. In an oral culture close reading of the text and context does not always take place and the two pitfalls of missing key information and taking verses or words out of context are ever-present, so we do a lot of practical reading and interpretation and it went well.

Uganda

The CIMS programme in Uganda continues to forge ahead. The programme is now taking place in two locations – Busia, on the border with Kenya, and Mbale, about 2.5 hours north. The pastor who helped organise the teaching at Mbale had been praying for over 30 years for a proper training programme in his region that would allow poor pastors to attend. As with Busia this training takes place with a mixture of in-person visits, training of local oversight to do some of the teaching, and online video conferencing. In May there was a graduation in Busia. 79 students graduated at Certificate level and 36 at Diploma level. It was a very special occasion with over 800 people present. It was a joy to see how highly the students valued their training. Wejuli Fred, who heads up LEMA, continues to pursue his vision of training Ugandan pastors and is now looking at doing the training in Kampala. Fred regularly sends us updates of how the training is making a practical difference in the lives, families and churches of the pastors attending and in the wider Ugandan church. Please do pray for God to be at the centre of every CIMS development, that He would be the One directing, leading and providing. Pray also for Phil Arbon (CIMS Director) as he continues to dedicate his time to leading the work.

ROBIN'S STORY

Burundi is a tiny landlocked country right in the heart of Africa, and is the second poorest country in the world, with huge levels of food insecurity and less than 5% of the population with access to electricity. Thousands of children end up sleeping on the streets of Bujumbura, the capital, and every day, kids like Robin run the risk of adding to the numbers.



When Robin was 10, he showed up at the door of one of Comfort International's partners in Burundi, begging for food. He was living with his mother and siblings, with no knowledge of who or where his father was. He had never been to school and suffered regularly from episodes of bad health. Robin's daily life consisted of hanging out on the streets, begging for food and occasionally playing football with the other boys, then heading home at night. He had no education, and no hope.

By 2019, Robin had been on the Street Kids Rescue Project in Kamenge for one year. He wrote to his sponsor, Luis, about how his life had changed since coming onto the project. "This year has been good to me! I got the chance of going to school and I was the 3rd in my class. I also sleep in good bedsheets, I get food to eat and when I fall sick I am treated by the project [...] I want to work harder at school and score good marks and be 1st in my class."

Robin went from strength to strength, still playing football with his friends but now working hard at school, and in great health.

In 2020, he wrote once more, "We are still going to school and I am really enjoying it. When I am in school, I pay so much attention to the teacher and then after school I continue to do revision of the lessons we studied at school. In my free time I like to play football with my friends. I am happy that the project is always providing food for us and it also gave us mosquito nets. Thank you so much for all that you do for me to make my life better, I am forever grateful for you."

Robin's childhood went from a daily struggle with hunger to one where he could enjoy education, health and fun. Now 15 years old, his life is far from easy but is a completely different story to his situation begging on the streets. His entire family has been transformed. His latest letter to his sponsor reads like this:

"The best part of this year so far is being able to get food and not lacking anything to eat, because there were moments that I used to miss lunch or just have a single meal a day and sometimes I would go the whole day with no food, but this year there was no single day that I missed a meal [...] I am now in P5 and I am working so hard so that I can be get good grades to be permitted to the next class level. When I get home after school, I change out of my school uniform then help my mum to wash the dishes. At home I live with my mum and my siblings, 3 boys and 3 girls. We are a big family. My mum takes good care of us with the support of the project by providing the basic needs."

Although Robin's story is not unique, his life is, and stories like his are why Comfort International keeps working and asking for incredible sponsors to step forward and change a life. If you or anyone you know is interested in sponsoring a child like Robin, please get in touch today.

FEEDING PROJECTS UPDATE

Comfort International Feeding Projects work with local partners to fight hunger among children and families in our partner countries, some of the poorest in the world.



Emergency Feeding in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

One of the most urgent hunger emergencies is the situation of displaced people in the North Kivu area of DRC who are in desperate need of food, clean water and medical supplies. The children previously being supported at Sake orphanage through the Feeding Projects were evacuated due to the intensified fighting. These children are now scattered throughout Internally Displaced People (IDP) Camps in the area. Our partners at Comfort Congo have been working hard to identify and support these children, along with many others who have been orphaned in the war and those who are suffering severe malnutrition. They are visiting the camps around twice a week, feeding about 2,000 children every week. Many of these are suffering from severe malnutrition and/or other diseases relating to the crowded conditions in the camp. The children are fed porridge, dishes of rice, beans, a little meat and vegetables. Moses Kusimwa Mulimbo, the nutritionist of Central Hospital Rusayu, goes to meet the children and dispense medication provided by the Comfort Congo Pharmacy. Our partners estimate that around \$6,000 a quarter is needed to maintain the feeding only for these children.

School Feeding Programme

Comfort International works with partners Good News International (GNI) to provide school meals for children of low-income families in the Bisesero area of Rwanda. Many families in this area are subsistence farmers, and are unable to pay the fee, around £3.50 a month, for their children to receive school meals. When we started the project with GNI over two years ago, the average attendance rate for the school was down at 64%. After just one term of school meals, attendance shot up to over 90%! Grades also went up, and the children reported themselves to be happier, with teachers noticing a huge improvement in behaviour. This year Comfort International and GNI are supporting 96 children to receive school meals.



Birara Nursery Nutrition

This year, we are supporting 69 nursery children (43 newly enrolled) to receive nutrition support - a healthy breakfast and lunch - at Birara Nursery. Clement from GNI writes, "In the beginning there were many children starting nursery with signs of malnutrition. About 20% of the children showed signs, some very severe. Today the story is different, because of all the teaching and training of the parents. The children presenting malnutrition signs dropped from 20% to 4%, and those signs are not as severe and can be healed as the children start getting food at school. Our aim is to drop this number to 0% in the next 2 years."