

KILT WALK

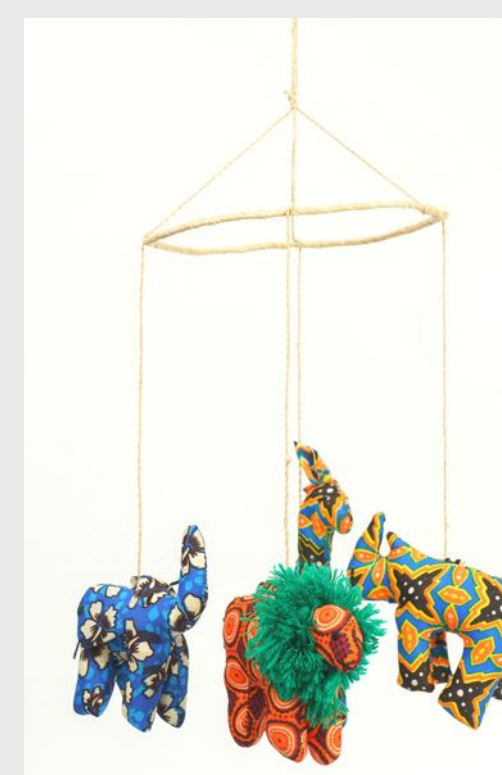


Registration is open for Kiltwalk 2023 for the cheapest price ever of only £20! The Kiltwalk is an amazing fundraising event across a variety of locations. We will receive 100% of all donations plus eligible gift aid, and in the process you can get fit, meet new people, see Scotland and raise funds for your favourite charity! You can choose from a range of distances at these locations:

- Glasgow: 30th April
- Aberdeen: 4th June
- Dundee: 20th August
- Edinburgh: 17th September

Register at www.thekiltwalk.co.uk/events

NEW ONLINE SHOP

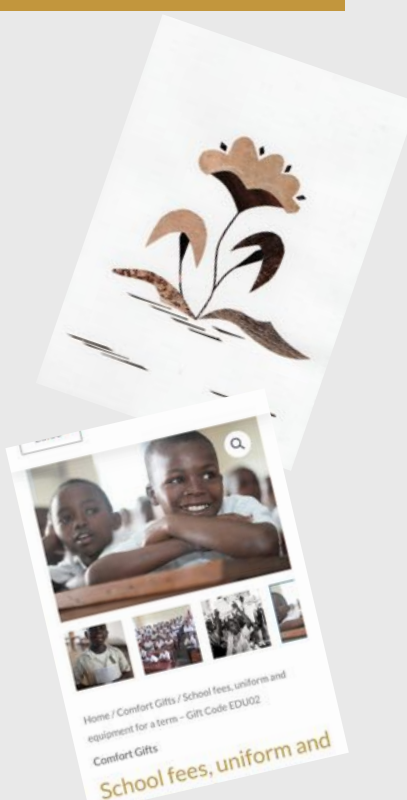


Comfort International has a new online shop

You can now browse our beautiful new online shop and find unique, handmade Rwandan and Congolese crafts, jewellery and cards. You can also purchase Comfort Gifts where your chosen recipient receives a beautiful greetings card and their gift can provide healthcare, education, safe accommodation and much more for those who need it most.

Visit shop.comfortinternational.org or get in touch for a catalogue

give a gift and change a life



SUPPORTERS' DAY

A special day to celebrate you!



We had a wonderful time at Supporters' Day this year. It was a blessing to spend time in worship, hearing from our partners and discussing all projects - old and new; what's come before and what's ahead. It is always a reminder of the wonderful supporter base we have here at Comfort International and how everything we do is only possible through the foundational love of Christ and the generosity and dedication of our supporters - thank you!

Contact Comfort International

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Comfort International

Quarterly News | Winter 22-23

Comfort Rwanda Christmas Parties
Health Insurance for 480 people
Central Hospital Rusayu Update
Refugee Crisis in Goma
New Online Shop

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a little can change a life

WELCOME

Editor: Ailidh Alvim

Welcome to the Winter edition of our Comfort International Newsletter! I started as the creative manager here at Comfort International in August, and since that time I have been blessed and overjoyed to read so many reports of lives being changed across Africa. The work is endless; challenging, emotional, and totally worth it. I am continually amazed by the bravery and dedication of the men and women on the ground in our partner organisations, working with the poor, vulnerable, widowed, orphaned, abandoned, traumatised,

broken and hopeless, and patiently, gently working to bring hope, light, love and joy into these lives. The Lord's grace is endless, no matter where we are from or who we are. Isaiah 1:19 says, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." This is what we aim to do here at Comfort, and we hope you are as encouraged as we are at the reports of all that is happening through the work of Comfort International and because of your generous support.

GNI UPDATE

This quarter, we're sharing a 2022 round-up from partners Good News International (GNI) in Rwanda. There were some hugely encouraging stories to share. These included a report on the SOS (Sponsor an Orphan or Survivor) sponsorship scheme, where various beneficiaries have graduated from the programme and become independent. They talked of how the scheme changed their lives, allowing them to start their own businesses, get married, fulfil their dreams and build a foundation of hope for a new life.

We also heard of the Gishyita housing project where GNI has built 10 good quality duplex houses for extremely poor families who were without accommodation.



a little can change a life

The picture shows the new land which has been purchased for the Karengera community. In 2 years, when the current contract for the field expires, they will have their own land. They are in the process of preparing that land so they can start planting pineapples. Karengera is one of the most successful communities through their pineapple project. They have used income to pay health insurance for the community members, to pay school fees for some of their students and they still have some money left over.

Finally, we were delighted that Comfort International could pay health insurance for **480 individuals** last year. One testimony says, "I have 6 children. My wife died in 2019. I was a security man for my neighbour. I lost my job because they told me that I am too old. It became too difficult to pay health insurance. Last year I received insurance from GNI. It helped me so much because almost everyone in my family suffered from malaria. I myself spent 2 weeks in the hospital. I try to imagine how it would be without health insurance."

CENTRAL HOSPITAL RUSAYU SAVING LIVES

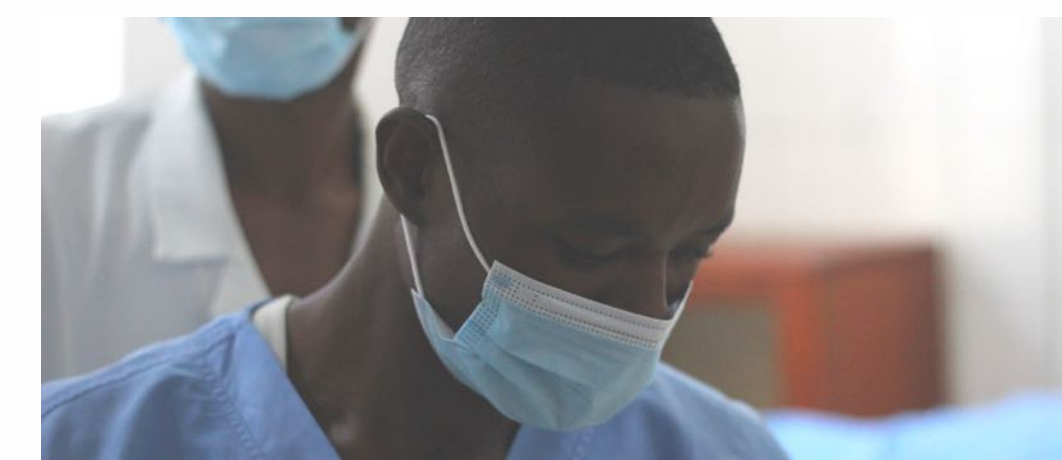
We have been encouraged by reports of busyness in the hospital. While it's encouraging that the hospital is so busy, even to the point of bed shortages, it's also a reminder that the need is so great, and hospital staff and resources are stretched to full capacity. A huge blessing was to see how much new equipment, including a heart monitor (which staff are showing off in the top picture) and the much needed solar panels (demonstrated bottom left where a busy hospital is being powered by the solar panels so staff can continue to work into the darker hours), have given the whole centre a big boost and are massively increasing their capacity. The scope of the hospital is so large that we are hoping in the future to have separate general and maternity units by constructing another hospital building.



The Faraja in Action Pharmacy was initially set up to provide low-cost medication to the Kyezye extension of the CHR and to generate funds to go towards the running of the hospital. The pharmacy has been busy, but there have been some challenges. There were a large number of people displaced following increased levels of violence and massacres in the areas of Rutchuru and Nyiragongo, and the

pharmacy provided \$2,000 worth of free medication and supplies in response. Although wonderful to be able to provide, this left the pharmacy short on stock and short on income to pay the staff salaries. However, we were bowled over by the sacrificial attitude of the staff at the pharmacy – 2 pharmacists and a cashier (shown bottom right). They were delighted to be part of a project providing so much help and hope to the people of Goma.

CHR TESTIMONY



Testimonies of rape survivors recently treated at the CHR are harrowing to read, but representative of the plight of so many women in North Kivu. They emphasise the vital service of CHR, giving access to surgery which would otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

Caroline* was attacked when out in her field by two men and raped multiple times. When she returned to her husband, he mocked and rejected her. When she found out she was pregnant, he left her with her two young children and the baby on the way. About her treatment at CHR, she says, "I testify with gratitude that my health is getting better since the Rusayu Maternity and General Clinic medical team took good care of me with medicine, food and daily spiritual assistance." *name changed

REFUGEE CRISIS IN GOMA

In December last year we reported on a serious escalation of violence and conflict in the areas surrounding Goma, DRC. The fighting greatly intensified in the areas of Rutshuru and Kibumba, forcing very large numbers of people out of their homes. Many of these fled to Goma. Comfort Congo counted 2354 displaced people from Rutshuru and Kibumba, divided into 563 households, taking refuge in Kyezye and Mbula schools and some of the houses on the newly bought plot of land at the Village of Hope (shown top right).



Comfort Congo responded valiantly, donating heavily to the needs of displaced people of this conflict (our partners shown handing over supplies in the picture below), and the stocks of the Faraja Pharmacy, which supplies the Central Hospital Rusayu, were completely depleted. We launched an emergency appeal to replenish these stocks to continue supplying vital medication to those who need it most, and you responded generously, raising £3500 to help restock the pharmacy and continue providing life-saving medical supplies to those who need them most.



The Comfort Congo team also visited Kanyaruchinya refugee camp, to which tens of thousands of people have been displaced. Director of Comfort Congo, Dieudonne Mugongo writes, *“People are grouped into internal displaced camps and we count many in our region. My team and I were able to visit one of the camps which hosts over 800,000 (number unsubstantiated) people and what we saw and heard was heartbreaking. When we visited Kanyaruchinya IDP Camps, people were able to talk and to give us testimonies and stories about how they fled from their homes and the village of Kanyaruchinya and it is horrible, they are actually suffering.”*

RUKUMBERI PENSIONERS



44 elderly people from Rukumberi Community, in SE Rwanda, are under a sponsorship scheme in partnership with Solace Ministries, supported by Ebenezer Church in Scotland. Charlotte testifies: *“I am 77 years old, I moved to stay with my daughter and her children. We cultivate for our living. I am disabled. I am so grateful for the support I receive. With the donation, I have been able to buy a pig which gave 8 piglets. I plan to buy goats with the next donation. This has given a feeling of dignity as even if we live together with my daughter, I also can help this way.”*

BATWA AGRICULTURAL PROJECT



The Batwa of Burundi, like Batwa populations in DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, are a vulnerable minority group of around 100,000 people in Burundi. Historically, they have lived in forest areas in Burundi, but forest clearances and conservation as well as planned integration into mainstream Burundian life, have resulted in the Batwa being largely moved from the forests. The foremost challenge facing Batwa is usually understood to be a lack of land on which to live and farm. One of the populations of Batwa was moved to an area called Gatonde just outside Ngozi, where Comfort International works with local churches doing CIMS (Comfort International Ministry School) training. Around 190 households now live there, likely to be a population of just under 1000. Our partner, Gerard Rukerandanga of the Elim Church in Ngozi approached us around a year ago to ask us to consider a project to help tackle some of the development challenges the Batwa face. Conditions in the village are those of extreme poverty. The majority of houses are circular grass huts with a diameter of around 2.5m. There are some mud brick houses but those are generally leaking due to an inability to roof them, and some are just sticks covered with scraps of material.

We received funding from the Souter Foundation to launch the project and have spent many months working through project options. A recent visit to Burundi for the CIMS programme enabled CI director, Callum Henderson, to undertake a visit to the Batwa village and meet community leaders with partner Gerard. The Batwa were extremely welcoming and eager to engage with project ideas. The outcome is a comprehensive agricultural project, and the first cows have arrived as part of this. The bovines were welcomed with singing, dancing and joy. There are three cows and one calf. They will bring new life to the community, providing milk, calves, fertiliser and a sense of responsibility and pride to the community. They are going to be particularly helpful for fertilising the fields which are part of the integrated agricultural programme.



You can read more about Callum's visit to Burundi and teaching trip to Uganda on our website blog.

FEEDING PROJECTS LAUNCH

Comfort International is excited to launch two new feeding projects with long term partners Good News International (GNI). Many of their previous projects centre around supporting older survivors, and while GNI will continue to support these communities, they have proposed two new projects to work with young people and children in difficult situations in Rwanda. These projects are based in the Bisesero area of Rwanda. The first is aimed at providing meals to nursery age children most at risk of malnutrition. The other is providing school meals to children whose families cannot afford it and would otherwise go hungry.



The first project is the nursery nutrition project. This is based in the Birara nursery in Bisesero, where Tutsi children were historically excluded from schooling and encouraged to stay at home and help on the farm in this predominantly agricultural area. Due to the nature of the subsistence farming, families were often faced with severe food shortages and many children in this area experience hunger and show signs of malnutrition. A malnutrition programme was set up in the Birara nursery in 2020 and aims to tackle both issues – improving child nutrition and encouraging attendance at nursery. There are about 70 children registered for the malnutrition project, all between 3 and 6 years of age. This project provides nutritious meals for these children who are most at risk of malnutrition.



The second project is the School Feeding Programme. The Rwandan government is subsidising the cost of school meals for children in Rwanda but the schools require a contribution from the family of 2,000rwf (roughly equivalent to £2) per month per child for school meals. However, many families in the Bisesero area are so poor that they cannot afford this for some, or all of their children. Some families are forced to choose one or two of their children to eat meals for a month while the others look on, hungry. This is not a choice any family should have to make.

These are two very worthwhile projects, much needed and this is a wonderful solution for the situation these children are in. We would love to present these projects to people who are not currently supporting Comfort International in any other way, especially schools and businesses. To help with this, we have created a welcome pack for your school or business. If you are interested in a welcome pack for your school or business please get in touch with the office team.

CHRISTMAS PARTIES



Thanks to your wonderful response to our appeal to make this a Christmas to remember for all of the project members and staff on our Comfort Babies and Street Kids Rescue Projects throughout Africa, and also to a number of generous donors, we were able to send out a great sum to put on fantastic Christmas parties and events this year.

David Gasana, director of Comfort Rwanda, writes, "For this Christmas as well as for the coming New Year of 2023, together at Comfort Rwanda, we wish you and your family health, happiness, peace, and prosperity. Christmas reminds us that we are adopted into God's family by Christ's birth! We are sisters and brothers despite where we live, the colour of our skin or the language we speak."



The team at Comfort Rwanda made sure that every child and mother from Comfort Babies made special memories this Christmas. Every child had special Christmas food and helped to decorate the tree. They got a Christmas hat and a number of the children also received special tartan clothes as gifts. Mothers also received party food and drinks and money was given to them to purchase special meals for them to enjoy with their families. On top of this, some of the homeless mums who stay in the Comfort Babies centre were given special Rwandan-made dresses and trousers.

There were also celebrations at the individual SKR centres, and families were given gifts and financial help to allow them to celebrate at home too, and prepare Christmas food with friends and family who would otherwise have been unable to celebrate. A trip was taken to Lake Kivu in the Western province where the children spent the day boat touring, island hiking, swimming and exploring. Children were also given gifts of new trousers, project t-shirts, shoes and Christmas hats.

Parties like these are not just about presents, food, photos and smiles. These moments are so important in the healing process. It is a reminder of their intrinsic worth; evidence that they are valued and acknowledged, and hope for a better life. We thank you so much for your contribution to these special memories.