

**FCA**

# KECO CONNECT

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NEWSLETTER

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**EDUCATION**

**LIVELIHOODS**

**PEACE**

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# FOREWORD

Dear Team

Welcome to this edition of the FCA Kenya Newsletter! As we move into this new quarter, we're excited to share the latest updates, achievements, and upcoming events with you.

In this issue, you'll find highlights of our operations and recent projects, stories from our community, and a sneak peek into what's ahead.

Some of the key highlights, include the urgent need for support following the U.S. funding freeze affecting refugee education, FCA Deputy Executive Director Dr. Ikali Karvinen's insightful 3-day visit to Kenya, where he engaged with teams and partners on strengthening our programs. We also spotlight FCA's advocacy for women's roles in peace and security at CSW69.



We're grateful for your continued support and engagement, and we look forward to growing together as we work toward our mission.

Happy reading!

Ruth Asami  
Procurement & Logistics Officer  
Kenya



## FCA Deputy Executive Director Dr. Ikali Karvinen's Impactful 3-Day Visit to Kenya

Dr. Ikali Karvinen, Deputy Executive Director of FCA Finn Church Aid, recently completed a 3-day visit to the FCA Kenya country office. The visit focused on discussing the organization's new country strategy and sharing insights into its livelihoods and climate resilience programs.



During his stay, Dr. Karvinen toured the FCA Creative Industries Program Hub in Jericho, accompanied by Country Director Mr. Bongei and other FCA staff. They reviewed the hub's progress, which supports digital economy growth and youth employment, while exploring opportunities for future expansion.

Dr. Karvinen also met with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers to discuss peace, governance, and the critical roles of religious leaders, women, and youth in Kenya's development.

The visit concluded with a tour of the Takataka Solutions Recycling Plant in Limuru, where FCA partners with TakaTaka Solutions to support women waste pickers, offering skills development in waste management and improving access to social benefits for a dignified, sustainable life.



## >>> KENYA COUNTRY PROGRAM <<<

### KECO Conducts Annual Reporting Workshop and Humanitarian Standards Assessment



KECO successfully held the Country Annual Reporting (CPAR) workshop, bringing together FCA staff to review progress and gather valuable feedback for FCA's annual reporting process..

During the same period, KECO also conducted a Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) self-assessment, involving staff, community members, and partners through surveys and group discussions. The assessment evaluated progress on key commitments and led to the development of an improvement plan to guide ongoing implementation throughout the year.

### Advancing TVET and Youth Employment in Kenya



The Youth Employment and TVET in Kenya project continues to enhance skills development and employability for young people. A collaboration between Finn Church Aid Kenya (KECO) and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), the initiative focuses on strengthening TVET institutions, training educators, and fostering industry partnerships.

The Youth Employment and TVET in Kenya project continues to enhance skills development and employability for young people.

A collaboration between Finn Church Aid Kenya (KECO) and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), the initiative focuses on strengthening TVET institutions, training educators, and fostering industry partnerships.

By integrating these insights, the project seeks to improve vocational education quality and better align training with job market needs in Kenya. KECO remains committed to bridging the skills gap and expanding opportunities for youth employment.

## FCA Champions Women's Role in Peace and Security at CSW69



ACT Alliance and its members, including Finn Church Aid (FCA), organized a side event titled Empowering Change: Advancing Women's Role in Peace and Security during the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Co-sponsored by the governments of Finland, Norway, and Colombia, the event focused on strengthening women's participation in peace and security, marking the 25th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325.

FCA Kenya Peace Advisor Aziza Maalim, a panel speaker, emphasized the role of women in informal peace structures in Kenya's Kerio Valley and called for formal recognition of locally led peacebuilding efforts. She also urged countries to enhance their National Action Plans by integrating traditional conflict resolution methods, security sector reforms, and gender policies.

Key takeaways included the crucial role of women and faith actors in peacebuilding, the need for increased funding for women in mediation and conflict prevention, and stronger National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325 effectively.





## US Funding Freeze Threatens Refugee Education, FCA Calls for Urgent Support



The US government's decision to freeze and terminate nearly \$7 million in funding to FCA has placed the education of over 209,000 refugee children in Kenya and Uganda at immediate risk. The loss, amounting to 10% of FCA's global budget, has forced the closure of critical education programs, affecting students, teachers, and entire refugee communities.

FCAKenya's RISE project and PATH project have ceased operations, leaving thousands without essential school supplies, mental health support, assistive devices for children with disabilities, and vocational training for youth. Schools in Kalobeyei settlement, which serve over 35,836 learners across 10 schools, are particularly affected, with 58% of teachers unpaid.

This has led to increased teacher absenteeism, larger class sizes, and a steep 40% rise in school fees, putting education out of reach for many families.

### **Ripple Effects and Job Losses**

The cuts have already cost 102 FCA staff members their jobs, with a total of 151 jobs impacted. The effects extend beyond FCA, destabilizing refugee education, protection services, and humanitarian aid in vulnerable communities.

### **Call for Urgent Action**

FCA is urging new donors from the European Union, the Finnish government, and Gulf countries to step in and fill the funding gap. Without urgent intervention, the long-term impact could reverse years of progress in education and child protection.



## ECHO Modification Request to Expand Budget and Reach More Right holders



FCA, in consortium with Handicap International and TDH, has submitted a Modification Request to enhance the current ECHO-funded project aimed at promoting safe and inclusive quality education for refugees in Dadaab, Kakuma refugee camp, and Kalobeyei settlement.



The request seeks to improve education quality by increasing support for learners with and without disabilities through various interventions, including cash transfers for transport and uniforms, psychosocial support and child protection services, recruitment, mentorship, and training of teachers, provision of assistive devices, teaching and learning materials, enrollment drives, basic literacy and numeracy programs at reception centers, and community engagement, sensitization, and education awareness initiatives.

So far, FCA has supported over 2,000 vulnerable learners with cash transfers for uniforms and transport allowances for children with disabilities in the first quarter. An additional 5,000 learners will be supported in Kakuma and Dadaab in the next quarter, further expanding the project's reach and impact.





## ECHO Delegation Visits FCA Field Offices in Kalobeyei to Monitor Project Implementation

FCA recently hosted an ECHO delegation at its field offices in Kalobeyei, where they visited schools and reception centers to assess the implementation of the ongoing education project. The delegation included Kenya's Education in Emergencies focal point, Eunice Maina, and Regional Technical Specialist for Education in Emergencies, Tracy Sprott, among others.

During their visit, the delegation observed FCA's work in promoting safe and inclusive quality education for refugee learners. They acknowledged the positive impact of FCA's interventions while also identifying gaps resulting from recent U.S. budget cuts. These gaps include staff and teacher layoffs, reduced mental health and psychosocial support services, and shortages in teaching and learning materials.

The visit highlighted the urgent need for additional funding to sustain and expand education initiatives in Kalobeyei. The delegation commended FCA's commitment and urged continued collaboration to address emerging challenges and ensure uninterrupted learning for refugee children.





## U.S. Embassy Representative Visits Kalobeyei School to Assess Aid Impact



The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi's Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Marc Dillard, visited Kalobeyei Settlement Primary School on a fact-finding mission. He examined how U.S. government funds, provided through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), have been used in Kalobeyei Settlement and Kakuma Refugee Camp.

During the visit, Finn Church Aid (FCA) highlighted the challenges caused by the freeze of PRM funds. They urged the U.S. government to restore the aid, emphasizing its importance in keeping refugee children in school.

## FCA Advocates for Refugee Education Inclusion Under Shirika Plan



Rehabilitation of desks and painting of blackboards using the approved refugee SIP 2024 under the KPEEL project.

FCA is actively advocating for the inclusion of refugee education into the national education system as part of the Shirika Plan. The initiative seeks to ensure better integration of refugee learners by facilitating the registration of refugee schools, access to capitation grants, and placement of teachers in these schools.

Additionally, FCA is pushing for the recognition and certification of trained refugee teachers and the issuance of work permits to enable them to contribute meaningfully to the education sector. These efforts aim to promote the social and economic integration of refugees into national systems, ensuring sustainable and inclusive education for all.

### Five Key Facts About the Shirika Plan

- **Refugee Integration – Transforms camps into integrated settlements, granting refugees access to national services like education, health, and jobs.**
- **Education & Teacher Recognition – Advocates for refugee school registration, capitation grants, and certification of refugee teachers.**
- **Legal & Policy Shift – Supported by the Refugees Act 2021, marking Kenya's move from temporary camps to long-term refugee inclusion.**
- **Global & Regional Alignment – Supports Kenya's commitments under GCR, IGAD, and international refugee treaties, advancing SDGs.**
- **Collaborative Approach – Led by the Government of Kenya and UNHCR, involving refugees, host communities, and development partners.**



## Thousands of Learners in Kalobeyei Registered for National Exams



The FCA has officially registered thousands of learners for national examinations this year. A total of 2,248 students will sit for the Grade 6 Kenya Primary School Education Assessment (KPSEA), while 1,408 learners are set to take the Grade 9 Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA). Additionally, 811 students have been registered for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams.

These registrations mark a significant step in ensuring access to education and certification for learners in the settlement.

## Back to School Campaign

Through a partnership with UNICEF, we have successfully reintegrated 1,653 out-of-school children (735 boys, 918 girls) into classrooms across Turkana, Tana River, and Garissa counties. This achievement was made between January and the end of March this year under the UNICEF-funded Prospect 2.0 project. The initiative aims to ensure more children access education and secure their future.







## Fallohide Donates VR Videos to FCA Kenya

The Fallohide team paid a courtesy visit to FCA Kenya to officially hand over a donation certificate for two virtual reality (VR) videos created for the FCA Creative Industries Program. These videos highlight the program's transformative impact in empowering youth with critical skills for entrepreneurship and employability in the digital economy.

This collaboration demonstrates how innovative technology can be leveraged to support young people and foster positive change. FCA Kenya remains committed to equipping youth with the tools needed to thrive in the evolving job market.





## WICE Project Hosts Skills Expert for Creative Industry Assessment



The Women in Creative Enterprise (WICE) project recently hosted Yanina Hihnala, a Skills Donation Volunteer from Women's Bank, for a needs assessment on challenges and opportunities facing creative entrepreneurs in Turkana and Nairobi Counties. She engaged with creatives and industry stakeholders, focusing on barriers to market expansion and potential solutions.



As part of her visit, Yanina toured the Made in Kakuma artist initiative and an upcoming TVET institution. Her assessment culminated in a Co-Creation Workshop, where creative entrepreneurs and stakeholders collaborated to refine WICE project strategies, ensuring they remain responsive to the evolving needs of the creative industry.

## Expanding Digital Skills Training for Youth



Through UNICEF Prospect 2.0 funding, FCA Kenya has supported 80 young people—40 in Kakuma and 40 in Dadaab—to enroll in digital skills training as part of efforts to expand the program.



Additionally, through funding from MFA Finland, 40 youth in Jericho have also benefited from digital skills training under the Jericho Youth Skills initiative. These initiatives align with FCA Kenya's commitment to equipping young people with essential digital competencies for better employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.



## Supporting Waste Pickers for Sustainable Livelihoods



FCA Kenya is advancing women's empowerment in waste management by piloting household waste collection in three groups. Two groups have already received startup kits, including handcarts and waste bins, to support their work and diversify their income.

As part of this initiative, business startup kits were distributed earlier this year to the Alliance Self-Help Group in Nonkopir, Kajiado County. The kits, which include waste bins, bin liners, and a mkokoteni (pushcart), will help launch a residential waste collection business. This effort empowers both male and female waste pickers through the GSLA model, enabling them to generate profits, save collectively, and access financial opportunities.



## KECO Engages WICE Incubatees, as Cohort two are onboarded



KECO was able to engage both Cohort 1 WICE incubatees from Nairobi and Kakuma—80 in total—and collaboratively agreed on modalities to disburse the micro-grants, which will go a long way in boosting their businesses.

Meanwhile, Cohort 2 incubatees from both locations have been onboarded and have begun Phase 2 of their face-to-face training sessions, further enhancing their skills and business development in the creative sector.







## FCA Partners with Media Embed to Highlight Peace Efforts in North Rift



Through the DIPAK II Project, FCA Kenya partnered with stakeholders in the multi-agency Operation Maliza Uhalifu (OMU) for a media embed activity in the North Rift region, starting in Kapedo. The exercise aimed to highlight the successes in restoring peace, strengthen collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, and foster community engagement. The OMU initiative also seeks to facilitate media embed engagements focused on peace, security, and development, fostering dialogue between duty bearers and rights holders to encourage further buy-in and support.

The first stop was Lomelo Primary School, refurbished and reopened by the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF). Activities included a medical camp, peace meetings, and aid distribution, all documented by the media.

## Dialogue Meetings Ease Tensions in Kerio Valley



In response to rising tensions over land disputes and livestock theft in Kerio Valley, the DIPAK II project, in collaboration with Elgeyo Marakwet County and national officials, held two community dialogue meetings to promote peace.

OMU, a multi-agency operation, works to eliminate banditry and restore normalcy in six counties. Successes include recovering firearms and livestock, reopening schools and markets, and improving infrastructure.

Additionally, FCA facilitated a joint grazing management meeting with representatives from Arror, Kipnai, and Bartabwa. Chiefs, herders, and Natural Resource Management Committees discussed sustainable grazing practices to enhance cooperation among the Tugen, Pokot, and Marakwet communities.

A meeting in Chesongoch, led by a local priest, focused on resolving land conflicts among clans, with elders and peace committees fostering reconciliation.





## Faith in Action: Strengthening Peacebuilding Through the Hidden Peacebuilders Network



In December, the Peacebuilders Network attended a gathering in Nairobi organized by the Hidden Peacebuilders Network (HPBN), a coalition of academics, faith leaders, practitioners, and policymakers working at the intersection of faith, development, and peacebuilding.

The gathering in Nairobi provided an opportunity to exchange insights and plan future collaborations, including an exciting new research proposal examining the role of religion in fostering hope, aspirations, and resilience to radicalization among youth, and gain a deeper understanding of the work being carried out by local faith actors in Kenya and East Africa.



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