



## Newsletter No. 1 – June 2025

By Dina Sodjadan - Digital learning for high-quality education

By Yao Sodjadan - Strengthening Entrepreneurship in Education Center

An assignment from Comundo

## Departure and new beginning: Kenya here we come



## Dear friends and family, dear colleagues and readers

Welcome to our first newsletter. We are happy to have you join us and take the time to read about our journey... We hope you will enjoy it.

### Stepping out of our comfort zone: The decision to leave

As a married couple and parents, it is important to us to always act as a team and to take new and next steps together. Even during our master's degree in African Studies in Bayreuth, it was clear that one day we would probably move abroad.

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Comundo sends co-workers to Kenya, Namibia, Zambia, Nicaragua, Colombia, Bolivia and Peru.

Your donation makes these missions possible. You can find information on how to donate on the last page.





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During the Covid pandemic, we moved to Bonn, a city that we have grown to love over the past four years. But anyone who knows us knows that we can't or don't want to stand still for long. We love to travel and discover new things.

Eventually, parental leave around baby Elinam led us to look for new challenges. Away from our habits, away from Germany, away from the cold months. Perhaps also away from the comfort as we know it and, above all, from our family circles and networks.

## Searching for opportunities

While the baby slept and the big brother played at kindergarten and Yao worked, Dina began to do research. Website after website, platform after platform. Until she finally found Comundo (more on this on the last page)

A job offer in Kenya sparked her interest - "Not bad", Dina thought, and decided to attend an online session from comundo. The content of the position sounded exciting, so she decided to go ahead and find out more about the process of working abroad.

## The right path for our family

As an intercultural family, we have often talked about where the world might take us one day. Yao speaks six languages - including English and French. Dina's knowledge of French? Let's call it... improvable.

So, we concentrated on African countries with English as an official language - eight were shortlisted. It wasn't just the language that was important to us, but also safety and infrastructure for our two children. As a result, Kenya was always at the top of our list and so the advertised position fitted well with our future plans.



*Emmanuel und Elinam in Switzerland*



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## Preparation and excitement

The decision had been made: We are leaving home. And the best thing was that Comundo offered us both a job - an opportunity that we finally took. However, this also meant saying goodbye to our beloved jobs at GIZ and Engagement Global - organizations that had given us many opportunities. During our parental leave, we started with the preparations. Week after week, our apartment in Bonn-Rüngsdorf became emptier. Anyone who has ever sold things via local networks, Vinted or eBay knows how exhausting this can be.

In February, we went to a safety training course in Cologne and in April to a preparatory seminar in Switzerland. There we met other Comundo professionals - an inspiring exchange that increased our excitement

## Moving houses & saying goodbye

At the beginning of April, we entered the most stressful phase of our departure so far: Packing and shipping boxes, clearing out the apartment, last doctor's appointments... Fortunately, we were able to stay with friends who were on a trip home to Mozambique at the time, in their house in Bonn-Schweinheim. We commuted back and forth between the house and the apartment, emptied our home, sold last things... Since Emmanuel's last day of kindergarten was on March 28, 2025, the two boys were always with us. The little helpers joined in the action, and so did wonderful friends, neighbours and family who helped us move boxes, put out household clutter, transport suitcases to Kassel (Dina comes from Kassel) or clean the apartment. There was even wine, cheese and delicious cupcakes - thanks again to all the helpers, it wouldn't have been possible without you.



Seminar & Yao's 40. birthday



Mount Pilatus in Switzerland with friend Fabienne



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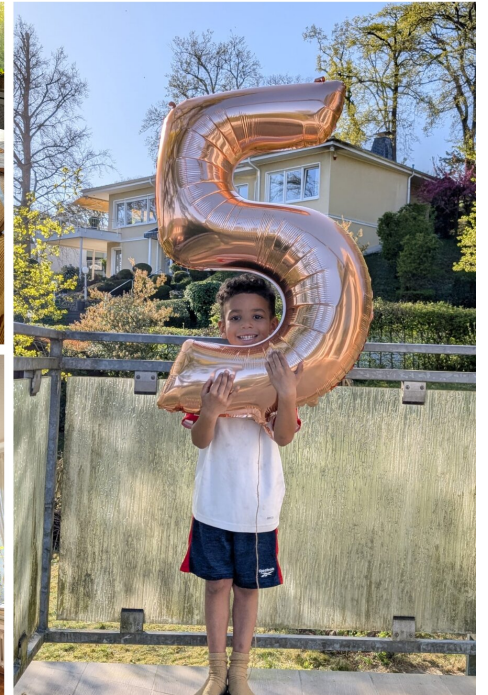
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At the same time, we are extremely grateful to the Kern-Zango family that we were not only able to sleep in their house, but were also able to celebrate Manu's 5th birthday with (almost) all of his friends from kindergarten. It was a very special spring day, full of laughter, games and memories. Emmanuel knows that he is leaving many nice people behind and is looking forward to seeing you soon!



## Friendships



Umzug / Moving April 2025

Manu celebrates his 5th birthday



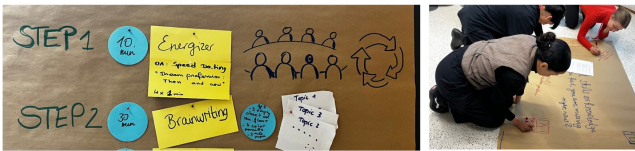
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The last stop in Bonn was the Academy for International Cooperation, where we had another seminar on “Effective Facilitation”. After that it was time to say “Goodbye Bonn”.



Akademie für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ  
April 2025



Byebye Kassel April 2025

## Stopover in Kassel

Shortly before Easter, we went to Kassel to “wind down” before the big trip. Between friends and family, we packed our suitcases: seven large and three small ones.



Last gatherings before the departure

Plus, backpacks, a stroller, and a baby seat for the car. The excitement grew, but nervousness? No sign of it. Perhaps because we had already travelled a lot. Maybe because we were still in “Kenya vacation mode” internally. But of course, we were still looking forward to it.

Shortly before we left, we also celebrated Elinam's christening and it was very nice to get together with the closest German family once again to say goodbye.



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### *Elinams Baptism on 27.04.2025*

We are very grateful that we were able to spend this day together and will look back on it with a warm heart for a long time to come. Of course, we were also very emotional, as we don't know when we will be coming back to Germany.

## The departure

On April 29, it was time to leave. The journey began. First, we drove from Kassel to Frankfurt and stayed in a hotel for one night.

Fortunately, our luggage was transported to Frankfurt by our brother and brother-in-law Darius with the active support of family friend Tony. We opted for a direct flight from Frankfurt to Nairobi with Lufthansa, partly because the airline allows passengers to drop off their luggage the day before. Sounds stress-free if it weren't for the little chaos at check-in. Four elevators, three counters and 60 minutes later we were finally through.



*Thanks to our helpers!*

We said goodbye to the helpers and walked to the hotel, where we tried to relax and rest.



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### *Goodbye from brother (in law) and uncle Darius*

Our flight departed at 11:30 a.m. on April 30. Although we had already dropped off our bags, we left for the airport at 8:30 to have enough buffer time with the kids. We dropped off two carry-on suitcases, which was very convenient as we then had less luggage for the plane. We were delighted with the Frankfurt security check, where you no longer have to take any liquids or electronic items out of your hand luggage. This is very practical, especially if you are traveling with small children. We arrived at our gate for boarding right on time, took the bus to the plane and made ourselves comfortable.



### *Finally in Kenya*

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Thanks to our reserved seats with a baby crib and the friendly crew, the flight was surprisingly relaxed. Emmanuel watched movies, we played MauMau, Elinam slept a few times - and suddenly we were there.

## The arrival

We arrived in Nairobi late in the evening, around 10 p.m. When we got off the plane, we immediately got our stroller back, which helped a lot with the logistics. The passport and visa checks went smoothly and very quickly. We then collected our suitcases from the baggage carousel and left the airport to wait for our driver. Unfortunately, he was delayed due to a mechanical issue, so we arrived at our guesthouse, which was organized for us by Comundo, at around 11 pm. We had a late dinner and then quickly fell into bed.

The onward flight to Kisumu was scheduled for the next day at 2 pm - but was postponed to 7 pm. This gave us time to buy a local SIM card (with the Comundo country director Marc Bloch) and to meet up briefly with Nastassja, a colleague we already knew from Lucerne.

Quite tired and exhausted, we were then picked up by Julia and James (also a Comundo colleague) at the airport in Kisumu on Wednesday evening. Julia had packed us a special care package so that we could quickly get to the hotel, eat and sleep. Our arrival was wrapped in darkness at night, so we were only able to get a first impression of Kisumu the next morning.



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## First impressions

We spent the first few nights at St. John's Manor, a hotel close to our workplaces. We visited Ujima (Dina's place of work) and drove around the city a bit to discover new places here and there. Julia also treated us to some delicious chapatis.

The first impression combines delicious food, warm temperatures and friendly encounters with mosquito bites and tiredness.



*Our first days in Kisumu*

On Sunday, May 4, we continued to the comundo annual meeting in Nyahururu and Nakuru. But that's a story for the next newsletter :-)

Until next time :-) Yours, the Sodjadan family (EEDY)

## A few facts about Kisumu

Kisumu is located on an outcrop of Lake Victoria in the west of Kenya and is the third largest city in the country.

A variety of languages are spoken. As it is the cultural centre of the Luo, this language also dominates.

Kisumu is only 24 kilometres away from the equator and usually has warm temperatures throughout the year.



*Kisumu in Kenya*





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## Together for a fairer world

Comundo is the leading Swiss organization for development cooperation through the exchange of people. We currently have nearly one hundred active co-workers working in seven countries in the Global South. Every day, they collaborate closely with colleagues from local partner organizations to find innovative and sustainable solutions to combat injustice and inequality. We use three main tools to create lasting change: the exchange of co-workers, the funding of projects, and the promotion of networking.

At Comundo, we believe that each of us has a responsibility to act against injustice and inequality. Choosing to engage with us is a concrete way to contribute. Together, we can foster long-term change toward a fairer world. We are convinced that change is possible through an exchange between North and South based on mutual respect and trust.

Our mission is to promote networking, exchange, and cooperation among people and organizations from different continents, cultures, and religions. Our vision is guided by the belief that a world in which all people live together in equality, dignity, and peace is possible. In this way, we contribute to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

### Comundo

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