



Newsletter No. 2 – October 2025

By Dina Sodjadan - Digital learning for high-quality education

By Yao Sodjadan - Strengthening Entrepreneurship in Education Center

An assignment from Comundo

Welcome Back!



Today you are receiving our second newsletter, because we want to share a few more insights into our life and work with you. For us as a family, these updates are always a balancing act: while we share our daily life with two children here in Kisumu, these newsletters also play an important role in public relations for our employer, Comundo.

Many of you are familiar with or even work in an international relation context (so maybe our updates might seem a little “boring” to you), while for others these letters are a direct connection to a country or even regions only known from the news, films, or stories.

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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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As an organization, Comundo wants to show what development cooperation in their partner countries means and what types of challenges are involved. As a family and as professionals, we want to reflect on ourselves and our work, explaining and breaking down stereotypes, and sparking curiosity among many of you to see the world and humanity as a whole – highlighting commonalities, celebrating differences, and not perceiving them as foreign.

At the end of each newsletter, you will always find a pre-written donation appeal, which we are not able to edit. However, it is important for us to make clear – and to emphasize – that we do not expect you in any way to provide financial support to Comundo. If you do decide to contribute, of course we are glad for the broader mission of Comundo: to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged people in the medium and long term.

In Switzerland, Comundo also advocates for development policy issues and raises awareness about the root causes of inequality. For us as a family, working with Comundo means that we can dedicate our energy fully to our projects – while at the same time giving our children the opportunity to grow up in an international environment that shapes and enriches them.

But enough about that... today we want to share more about our work assignments – and in the next newsletter, you'll hear again about our challenges and adventures as a family.

Nyahururu – highest town in Kenya

We'd now like to take you along to Nyahururu, the highest town in Kenya. About 4½ hours from Kisumu, it greets you with cool temperatures and fresh air. Just three days after our arrival in Kisumu, the first work trip was already on the agenda.

Nyahururu hosted the annual meeting of all Comundo partner organizations in Kenya. Together with our partners, we discussed how to work more effectively, exchanged ideas, and planned ahead. Because of the chilly weather and frequent rains, it was a bit difficult to fully explore the area. Still, we managed to visit the "Hippo Pools" and admire the waterfall. We also stopped at St. Martin, where our colleague Sarah works.



Annual Meeting (Photographer: Yao :-))



Being tourists in front of the waterfall



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Kids are preparing lunch

St. Martin supports children and young people who are especially vulnerable for various reasons – for example, because of disabilities, living on the streets, or being at risk of violence, child marriage, or sexual abuse. These children are taken into rehabilitation centers where they receive care, encouragement, and basic education, helping them reintegrate into their communities and the formal school system.

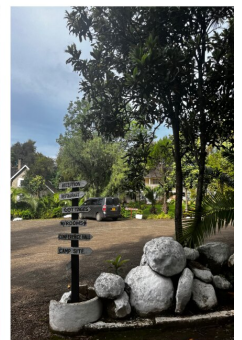
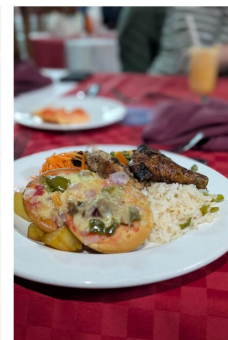
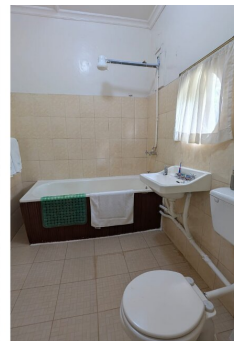
A new competency-based curriculum, recently introduced in Kenya, is opening up fresh opportunities – especially for children and youth in difficult life circumstances. You can read more here: <https://www.saintmartin-kenya.org/>



Out visit at St. Martin

In addition to visiting a TVET center (Technical and Vocational Education & Training – essentially vocational schools with hands-on training), we also had our very first taste of *nyama choma* (grilled meat). On the menu: grilled goat, fries, and coleslaw, with Fanta and Sprite to drink.

A special memory from Nyahururu was the nights at Thomsons Fall Lodge, where we slept with a generously heated fireplace in our room – yes, it really was that cold!



Some impressions of the Thomsons Falls Lodge



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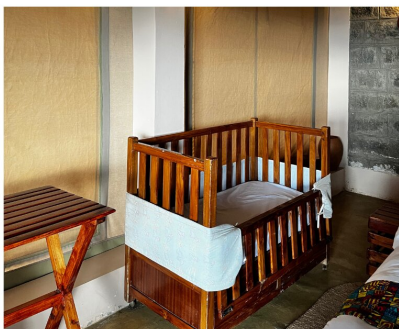
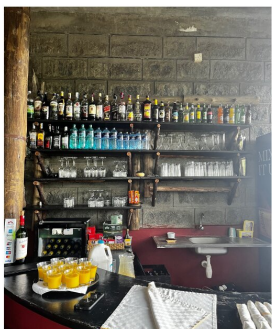
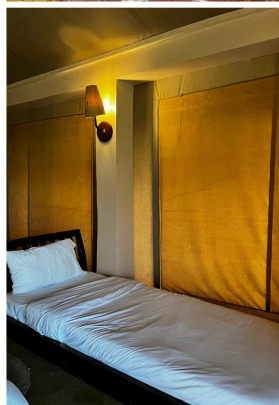
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Nakuru – Maili Saba Camp

The second part of the annual meeting took place at Maili Saba Camp in Nakuru. In a smaller group (without the partner organizations), we discussed new goals and ideas. Highlights included misty sunrises, delicious food, and a shared cooking evening. The menu featured culinary specialties from Kenya, Switzerland, and Germany. For Germany, we went with potato salad and *Bienenstich* (a traditional cream and almond cake) – and at first, we weren't quite sure if we'd manage a proper version abroad. But the end result turned out beautifully: tasty, creative, and innovative!



Maili Saba Camp Background Information

In April 2006, Ujima (founded in 2004) opened a unique lodge in Nakuru – *Maili Saba Camp*. The vision was that Maili Saba (Swahili for “Seven Miles”) would serve both as a sanctuary for travelers and as a source of income for Ujima. At the same time, the lodge was intended to provide a place where students could test and refine their newly acquired skills. By 2007, Maili Saba Camp was already able to financially sustain the program in Nakuru, and since August 2025 the training program has also been located on the camp grounds. If you come to visit us, we will certainly spend some time there!

You can read more here: <https://www.mailisabacamp.com/>

If you ever want to stay at MSC - let us know and you will receive the family & friends discount :-)



View of the Menengai Crater

Beautiful rooms



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Our time at Maili Saba Camp

For us, both the larger partner meeting and the smaller group sessions were a wonderful way to kick off our work. We were able to meet all the organizations and colleagues in person right away. The boys handled it as well as one can when it's only the first week in a new country, you don't speak any English (yet), and you're still being breastfed ;-)

Building Skills and Futures: Dina at Ujima

As you could read in the info box, Maili Saba Lodge is part of the Ujima Foundation, my assignment organization for the coming two years.

Ujima Foundation is an organization deeply committed to empowering vulnerable youth through vocational training, life skills development, and employment support in the hospitality industry. At its core, Ujima exists to create opportunities for orphaned and disadvantaged young people, equipping them with the knowledge, attitude, and practical skills they need to build self-reliant, socially responsible futures. My role is to support this mission by helping the organization harness the power of digital learning and innovation to make its impact even stronger.

As an instructional designer, project manager, and facilitator with a background in African Studies and social sciences, my focus is to strengthen Ujima's capacity to deliver high-quality, blended vocational training that responds to the real needs of both youth and the labor market. This includes developing a digital training platform, modernizing curricula, and ensuring that the teaching methods and materials align with current industry standards and learning trends. In a country where youth unemployment is both a structural and social challenge, these efforts aim to bridge the gap between education and employment by making learning more accessible, relevant, and effective.

Ujima's unique approach combines classroom instruction with real-life experience.



With Julia (Comundo) and Charles (Ujima)



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Trainees learn hospitality, beauty, grooming, soft skills, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy in fully equipped centers, before being placed in attachments with one of Ujima's 100+ private-sector partners – from hotels to salons and restaurants.

The idea is simple but powerful: learning by doing. This hands-on, work-based learning model doesn't just prepare for jobs; it prepares for life: best support is self-support

My assignment focuses on three main pillars. The 1st is **capacity building**: assessing training needs, mentoring trainers, and supporting staff with practical tools to deliver blended learning programs that combine online and face-to-face instruction. I'll facilitate workshops on pedagogy and digital methods, support individual learning journeys, and help make the training content more engaging or interactive – not just for the learners, but also for the trainers themselves.

The 2nd pillar is **organizational development**. Working closely with the team, I will co-develop guidelines for digital learning and contribute to a stronger internal training strategy that ensures consistency across the Kisumu and Nakuru centers. This includes digitizing Ujima's training content, advising on curriculum updates, and helping the team to build monitoring tools and feedback systems. Innovation will play a key role – from integrating new learning solutions to exploring partnerships with other training providers.

The 3rd pillar is **networking & promotion**. Ujima's work is too powerful to stay hidden. I'll contribute to increasing the organization's visibility and creating new links with other institutions, both locally and internationally. By building bridges with similar initiatives and expanding Ujima's digital footprint, we hope to create a broader community of practice – a hub of learning and innovation in Kenya's vocational training landscape.

This assignment is not just about delivering solutions, but about **walking a shared path**. The goal is long-term sustainability. My presence is meant to strengthen the team and systems, not to replace them. I will work side by side with trainers, managers, and youth to ensure that Ujima's impact continues well beyond my stay – and that others can replicate what we've built together.

Professionally, I see this opportunity as a unique intersection of my skills and values. Personally, it's a journey of learning, humility, and commitment. I've already felt the energy and warmth of the Ujima team – and despite the initial chaos of moving from Nairobi to Kisumu and settling into a new rhythm, I feel grounded in purpose. There is work to be done – and I look forward to the challenges and growth that lie ahead.

More about Ujima: <https://www.ujimafoundation.org/>.

The Comundo Approach

What makes working with Comundo so exciting is its focused, hands-on approach in collaboration with partner organizations. As technical advisors, our role is to integrate ourselves into existing systems and adapt to available methods and processes. This doesn't mean we shouldn't question or critically reflect on them – but it does mean being open to the unfamiliar and the new, without judging too quickly. Depending on our background, knowledge and experience, we are sensitized and prepared (usually in Switzerland, for some of us also in Germany) – but the real plunge into the work naturally happens on the ground. For both of us, this is the first time working so directly with target groups, which makes each day stimulating and positively challenging. It pushes us to reflect on our role, our perceptions, and even our own values and knowledge. At Comundo, you are intentionally given the first three months to really immerse yourself in the new environment without the pressure to deliver results immediately.



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Those who have worked interculturally before know that rushing into a new setting can damage trust and transparency in the long run. That's why we are convinced by this "getting an impression" approach. Starting slowly first quickly transforms into concrete opportunities to launch joint projects.

This adapted pace creates acceptance – our colleagues already joke: *"You've now arrived at Kenyan speed."* It's true: in Germany, life often moves faster than we can keep up with. We also tend to overcomplicate things or get lost in details. Here, sometimes things just get started – and people say, *"In the end, it'll work out."* And so far, we can absolutely agree... everything seems to be falling into place. We're not always sure how, but it happens.

Entrepreneurship Made Simple? Yao's Work...

In Kenya, when young people leave school, too many face an uncertain future. With youth unemployment at around 67%, finding stable employment can seem like an impossible quest. Yet this challenge holds enormous potential, which the Centre of Vocational Expertise (CoVEx) Kenya programme aims to harness.



Yao visits Akado

This is where my own multi-partner assignment comes in (a multi-partner assignment means working with more than one organization or project and advising on a program level instead of a single partner level).

It is my task to connect the dots between vocational training centres, private sector companies and the dreams of young people who want to stand on their own two feet. I am very committed to providing technical support for the integration of entrepreneurship modules into our partner organizations' curricula.

Another stream is to work on career guidance and integrate it into the fabric of vocational education in Kenya, so that students graduate not only with a certificate, but also with the confidence, creativity and skills necessary to shape their own lives.

In practice, this means many things. Working with teachers, I am designing training modules that bring entrepreneurship to life in the classroom.

I am currently developing a concept that help graduates see self-employment as a real option, whether it is setting up a small carpentry workshop, running an IT service or opening a food business. I also work hand-in-hand with private companies to create pathways to internships and apprenticeships, enabling students to take their first steps into the world of work.

Additionally, I aim to build networks between counties and institutions, so that successes in one place can inspire solutions in another.



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But beyond strategies and frameworks, what makes my mission so powerful is its human side. It's about a young woman in Kisumu learning to pitch her business idea for the first time, a group of carpentry students finally able to practise with modern tools in a real workshop, a teacher gaining new confidence to guide their students not only academically, but also towards a career.

Each of these small changes contributes to something bigger: a vocational training system that prepares young Kenyans not only for jobs that may or may not exist, but also for a future they can create for themselves.

A small detour to lake Victoria

Kisumu is directly located at Lake Victoria, and we really enjoy the view and the time we spend there.

Since it is the largest lake in Africa, you could almost think you're looking out over a vast sea. Only 6% of the lake belongs to Kenya, 49% lies in Tanzania, and 46% in Uganda.



Lake View



Time at the lake



Fresh fish/tilapia from the lake

The next newsletter will highlight some of our daily challenges again... We'll tell you what came out of the house-hunting, whether we found the right school for Emmanuel, and how we can find enough calm to navigate the Kenyan hospital system...

Take care – EEDY



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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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**Your donation
in good hands.**

Your donation matters!

Cuts in international cooperation are a reality – both in Switzerland and globally. That is why we ask those who believe in a fairer world to continue supporting us: only with your help can our work continue. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

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