

# MID -YEAR REPORT 2025

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## Advancing Self-Reliance: Empowering Communities Through Innovation, Resilience, and Partnership

As we navigate the heart of 2025, Village Economic Empowerment (VEE) reflects on a year grounded in learning, community solidarity, and ongoing commitment to grassroots transformation. The progress we've made so far is deeply rooted in the resilience cultivated throughout 2024—a year that saw the expansion of our child sponsorship program, significant steps toward improved educational infrastructure at Osiligi VEE School, and the completion of the BMZ-supported Lighthouse Industry in Karangatha.

Through continued engagement in Kinare, Karangatha, Ilbisil, and Bisil, we provided essential food and hygiene support to vulnerable households, promoted mechanized farming with the introduction of tractors and training, facilitated access to certified potato seeds. These interventions have supported agricultural practices and encouraged self-help groups to explore more sustainable, community-based approaches to income generation.

Our farming and livestock activities continue to evolve from foundational goat rearing to more integrated herd management that includes cows. At the same time, training on composting, greenhouse care, and nutrition have reinforced practices that prioritize both food security and environmental health.

At this midpoint in the year, we remain steady in our mission. This report presents not only the activities undertaken but also the realities encountered reminding us that development is a journey, often marked by small, meaningful steps. With the continued collaboration of our communities and partners, we move forward with optimism and a commitment to inclusive, sustainable growth.

## **CHILD SPONSORSHIP**

At the beginning of 2025, a few children's photos were still missing from our sponsorship records across the various project regions. Recognizing the importance of these photos in keeping our records up-to-date and in fostering a strong, personal connection between sponsors and the children they support, and took the initiative to follow up with the respective child sponsorship coordinators on the ground. Through close coordination and field-level engagement, we were able to track down the missing entries and organize the necessary photo sessions in a timely manner. Each updated photo was carefully labeled, categorized, and shared.

This year, the child sponsorship program has grown significantly, reaching a total of 425 children currently sponsored across our three regions. The breakdown is as follows: Karangatha – 79, Kinare – 139, and Bisil – 161. We also have a growing waiting list, with 15 children in Karangatha, 11 in Kinare, and 20 in the Osiligi region, all hopeful for sponsorship opportunities.

As part of our strategic expansion earlier in the year, we focused on enrolling new children who have siblings already participating in the program. This family-based approach helped us build a stronger support network and deepen the impact within households. As a result, eleven new children were successfully added under this sibling priority criterion, after careful vetting to ensure their eligibility and alignment with our goals.

However, due to the increasing number of children on the waiting list, we have temporarily paused the addition of new children into the program. This decision allows us to focus our efforts on reducing the backlog and ensuring that those already identified as in need receive the support they require.

Moving forward, no new children will be enrolled until the waiting list has been sufficiently reduced.

## **EDUCATION SUPPORT**

In 2025, we took this commitment a step further. Through the generous support of Annett and Peter, Village Economic Empowerment (VEE) successfully undertook vital infrastructure improvements at Osiligi VEE Primary School. This included the construction of two new classrooms and a library. Additional developments included the construction of a teachers' quarter for the newly appointed headteacher, who holds a valid practising license for teaching, repair of school desks for students, the construction of shelves in the school library to store books, and the purchase of a table and chair for the headteacher's office.

Alongside these infrastructure developments, VEE also continued to support children by paying for their bursary, ensuring that financial constraints did not hinder their access to education. These enhancements have greatly improved the learning environment for both students and teachers, creating more space, access to educational resources, and a healthier setting for school meals.

This combined effort covering bursary support, school fees, and infrastructure improvements reflects VEE's holistic approach to education: removing barriers while also enriching the environment in which learning takes place.



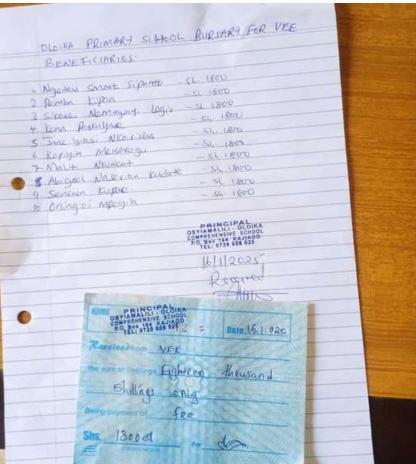
construction of new classrooms at Osiligi Primary

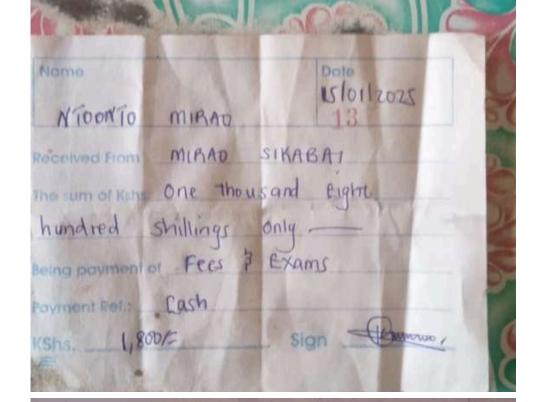




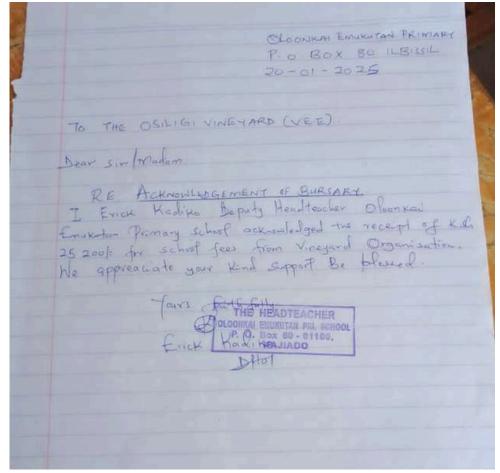
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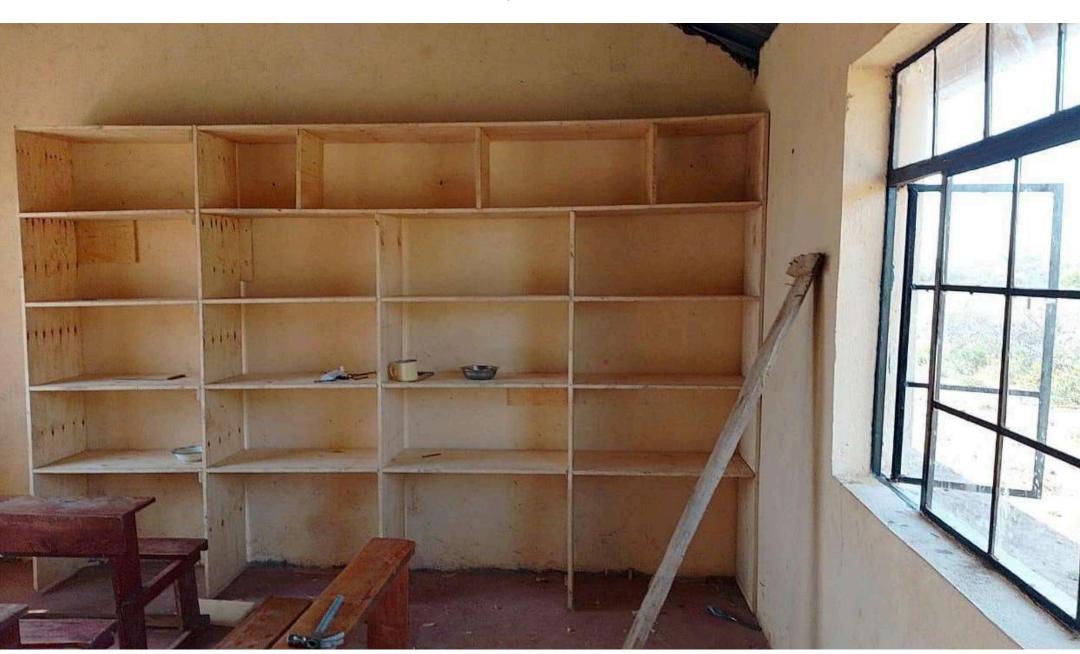




Acknowledgement letters and receipts payments of school fees for children in the program



construction of shelves for Osiligi school library



construction of shelves for Osiligi school library



headteachers table and chair





repair of school desks for students



Teachers quarters

Thanks to the generous sponsorship from ORA, Abel joined Maa Institute of Professional Studies (MIPS) on 14th January 2025 to pursue his studies in health-related fields. In his first semester, he studied three units:

- i. Strategies
- ii. Linkages
- iii. Digital Literacy

He sat for his examinations and passed well, scoring within the Proficiency range (65–79). (Grading scale: Proficiency – 65–79, Mastery – 80–100)

In Semester 2, Module 1, Abel reported back on 7th May 2025 and undertook five units:

- i. Applied Workplace Essential Skills
- ii. Epidemiology
- iii. Anatomy
- iv. Community Health Care
- v. Community-Based Health Care

He sat for his end-of-semester exams last week. The next semester is expected to open on 5th September 2025. As of this year, Abel has six units remaining. In the following year, he is expected to complete the remaining 14 units. All school-related expenses, including tuition, exam fees, and accommodation have been fully covered for both semesters. Abel remains committed to his academic journey and has promised to stay focused until the end of his studies.





Abel at school studying

## **FARMING**

During their visit, farmers were taught how to prepare sauerkraut, a nutritious fermented cabbage product. The training covered the fermentation process, hygiene practices, and storage methods. This was aimed at promoting both improved household nutrition and opportunities for income generation.









Self -help group members being trained on how to prepare sauekrat during Annet & Peters visit

At the start of the year January greenhouse activities focused on clearing the structures which had been occupied by kales and spinach. One greenhouse that had previously been used to nurse Sawa carrots introduced by Peter and Annette did not succeed. In preparation for the new season the team avoided buying seedlings from external plant raisers instead opting to prepare their own nurseries. A variety of seeds including cabbage spinach and kales were purchased and three nursery beds of cabbage kales and spinach were established enough for group members and for greenhouse planting. Plans were made to distribute kales and spinach seedlings to farmers while reserving cabbage for greenhouse production.



Thrive gardening continued to attract interest from new farmers. In January alone seven more farmers joined the initiative and received seedlings to start their gardens. The adoption of this low cost sustainable farming method has been steadily growing since the beginning of the year.

As the months progressed however agricultural activities faced significant challenges particularly from prolonged drought and the collapse of the borehole. This water crisis severely impacted greenhouse production leaving only one operational greenhouse by June sparsely planted with cabbages. Following a strategic review greenhouse planting was temporarily halted due to high input costs and low yields.

To sustain some level of production the operational greenhouse was handed over to self help groups farmer members for community led management including watering and pest control.

In response to the worsening conditions Thrive farming was promoted as a viable alternative. By midyear thirty five raised beds had been established and were managed by twenty members. While some beds thrived others struggled under the dry conditions and adoption of organic methods faced resistance from farmers accustomed to synthetic chemicals.



Life bed gardens for self-help groups in Bisil



greenhouse -Ilbisil

To improve resilience, permission is being sought to pump water from the nearby dispensary borehole, with plumbing and pump installation planned to follow once approval is granted. Planting will only commence after the permission process is completed and the water supply secured. Once this is in place, farmers will proceed to plant tomato and cabbage seeds. Seeds for cabbage, tomato, and spinach have already been purchased, compost heaps prepared, and both greenhouse and life garden beds allocated to farmers. Agronomist-led training sessions have been conducted to promote organic practices, although planting schedules in July were delayed due to water shortages.

A worn-out perimeter fence remains a risk, with livestock intrusion threatening crops until permanent fencing is installed. Despite these challenges, notable achievements include improved community coordination, timely seed procurement and distribution, access to a nearby water source, and enhanced farmer skills in compost preparation. Moving forward, key priorities include securing borehole pumping permission, completing the water pumping system, rehabilitating or replacing the existing borehole, increasing training in organic farming, improving fencing, and exploring long-term water solutions such as borehole drilling.

### <u>Self-Help Groups Farming Progress – Kinale and Karangatha</u>

The potato production program in Kinare and Karangatha has completed three full planting and harvesting cycles, supported by strategic interventions aimed at improving yields, post-harvest handling, and storage.

The first season, which ran from May to August 2024, began with planting on 11th May and harvesting completed by 30th August. Kinare farms, namely ROI and Old Farm, produced an estimated 200 bags, while Karangatha farms, CBK and Cheese, yielded approximately 185 bags. One of the main challenges experienced during this period was elephant threats, which required mitigation measures.

The second season took place between October 2024 and January 2025. Planting started on 4th October and harvesting concluded on 25th January. Kinare recorded a total of 416 bags, while Karangatha produced 110 bags. Losses in Kinare during this season included 39 missing bags, 4 damaged bags, and 3 rotten bags. The final store inventory in Kinare comprised 83 bags of seed potatoes, 42 medium-sized bags, and approximately 30–35 bags of ware potatoes.





sorting and grading in kinare and karangatha

The third season, from March to July 2025, was the lowest–producing season of the three. Planting took place in March, with harvesting between 30th June and 1st July. In Kinare, ROI produced 112 bags and Old Farm 49 bags, giving a total of 161 bags. Post–harvest sorting resulted in 30 bags of ware potatoes, 21 medium, 21 seed, 3 damaged, and 1 mini tuber. The final store inventory comprised 66 bags of ware, 36 medium, 35 seed, 6 damaged, and 2 mini tubers. In Karangatha, sorting yielded 3 bags of ware, 8 size one, 5 size two, 2 damaged, and 1 mini tuber. The store inventory in Karangatha consisted of 20 bags of ware, 16 size one, 45 size two, 8 damaged, and 5 mini tubers, totaling 94 bagsa decrease of 16 bags compared to Season 2.

During Season 3, field activities done by the agronomist visited five farm visits in Kinare to farmers Peter Muchai, Dominic Kigonyi, Grace Wairimu, Joseph Kariuki, and Eunice Nduta. These visits focused on training farmers in blight control using appropriate fungicides and crop rotation techniques. A pilot initiative of 22 organic beds was introduced in Kinare, where organic manure was applied at planting and foliar sprays were used, though with only 45% blight control effectiveness. Fungicide spraying and foliar applications were carried out as crops approached maturity, but were stopped before harvesting. Additionally, guards were deployed from 30th May 2025 to protect crops from elephant damage.

Season 2 recorded the highest production levels, while Season 3 experienced the lowest yields. Nevertheless, there were notable improvements in sorting and storage efficiency, particularly in Kinare, where ware potato inventory increased from approximately 30–35 bags in Season 2 to 66 bags in Season 3. Post-harvest management also improved, with no missing bags reported in the third season.

Currently, farmers in Kinare have completed land preparation to plant kales, while in Karangatha, land preparation has been carried out for the planting of peas and carrots as part of crop diversification efforts to enhance food security and income streams for the self-help groups.



land preparation



planting of kales

## **BMZ PROGRESS**

VEE is currently working on a targeted marketing and training initiative in partnership with the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), a government agency mandated to promote industrial research, innovation, and technology transfer in Kenya. The collaboration focuses on building farmers' and cooperatives' capacity in value addition for potatoes, particularly in processing, blanching, packaging, and meeting the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) requirements for standardisation.

The training covers potato processing techniques, including washing, peeling, slicing, and blanching a vital pre-processing step where potatoes are briefly boiled or steamed, then rapidly cooled. Blanching halts enzyme activity, preserves natural colour and texture, maintains nutritional value, and extends shelf life, enabling the production of high-quality potato chips, crisps, and other processed products.

Alongside processing, KIRDI is also providing guidance on modern packaging practices to ensure products are attractive, tamper-proof, and well-preserved for both local and external markets. This is directly tied to compliance with the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), the national body responsible for developing and enforcing quality standards for products and services in Kenya. KEBS certification assures buyers that products meet established safety, quality, and labelling requirements, which is crucial for entering supermarkets, institutional markets, and potential export channels.

VEE is currently in the process of registering for KEBS certification to ensure that processed potato products meet these national standards. Once certified, our products will have enhanced market credibility, opening opportunities for scaling sales and accessing more lucrative markets.

This initiative is expected to directly benefit participating farmers and self-help groups by:

- 1. Reducing post-harvest losses through value addition.
- 2. Diversifying income streams.
- 3. Creating employment opportunities in processing and packaging.
- 4. Positioning them to capture a greater share of the potato value chain.

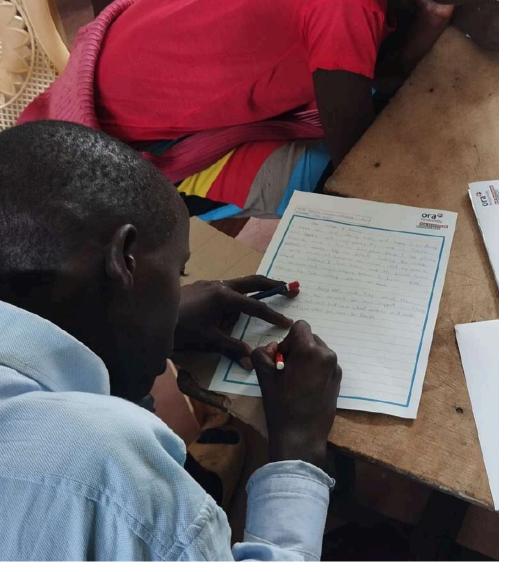
By combining hands-on technical training with compliance to recognised quality standards, VEE is laying the groundwork for sustainable, market-ready potato products that will deliver long-term economic benefits for our communities.

## LETTER WRITING

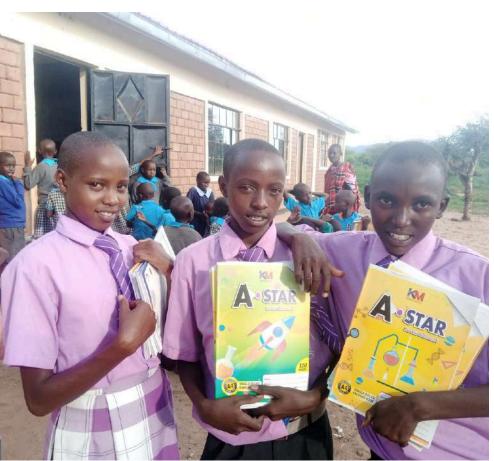
The letter-writing activity among children in our project regions of Ilbisil, Kinare, and Karangatha continues to be a key initiative in fostering meaningful connections between sponsored children and their sponsors. This year, in addition to guiding children on how to improve their communication skills and express gratitude, we encouraged them to incorporate more drawings in their letters. To support this, VEE provided the children with colour pencils and crayons, enabling them to bring their illustrations to life with vibrant colours. Many children chose to draw their favourite games, such as football and skipping, while others illustrated their homes, family members, or scenes from their daily lives. These artistic additions allowed the children to share their personal stories in a creative and visually engaging way, adding a unique and intimate touch to their correspondence.

The activity was conducted in a supportive environment, with child sponsorship coordinators providing step-by-step guidance to help the children express themselves more clearly and confidently. For the younger children, extra assistance was offered to ensure their messages were coherent and heartfelt.

All completed letters, along with the children's colourful drawings, were uploaded in their respective folders for sharing with sponsors. After the children finished writing their letters, each was given five exercise books as an additional form of support for their education. The increased emphasis on creativity, coupled with the use of art materials provided by VEE, strengthened the bond between sponsors and children while giving the children an opportunity to explore their talents, improve their self-expression, and feel a deeper sense of connection and pride in their achievements.









letter writing and exercise book distribution









#### Child Welfare Progress – Israel and Isaac Naipaa

At 9 months old, twin boys Israel Naipaa (P146-16820) and Isaac Naipaa (P146-16821) continue to show steady growth and healthy development. Since birth, they have met key developmental milestones, including sitting with support, responding actively to familiar voices, and engaging with their surroundings. Their weight and physical growth remain within healthy ranges for their age, and both boys are alert, active, and showing promising cognitive progress.

Over the past months, they have been supported with their basic needs, including adequate nutrition and baby formula. This has played a significant role in sustaining their health and enabling them to thrive. With the introduction of a more diverse diet at this stage, their feeding routine now includes fresh fruits, vegetables, cereals, and occasional food supplements, alongside the use of feeding utensils suitable for their age. While these changes have enhanced the quality of their nutrition, they have also led to an increase in the cost of care due to the growing quantity and variety of foods required.

Despite the rising expenses, efforts remain focused on maintaining the quality and consistency of their meals to support continued healthy development. The twins' progress so far reflects the positive impact of sustained care and targeted support in ensuring their well-being.











Israel and Isaac

#### SELF-HELP GROUPS LIVESTOCK REARING PROGRESS - ILBISIL

In addition to crop production, self-help groups in Ilbisil have continued to invest in livestock rearing as a sustainable livelihood strategy. The initiative, aimed at improving household income, food security, and resilience, has seen steady progress across various groups. The Ilaitete Group currently owns 6 goats and 1 cow, while the Enduata Group has 7 goats and 1 cow. The Ilaramatak Group has grown its herd to 20 goats and 1 cow, and the Iltareto Group now maintains 7 goats and 3 cows. The Olomayiana Group has 6 goats and 1 cow, and the Ilmepukoo Group manages 5 goats and 1 cow.

Significant expansion has been recorded by the Ilmirishi Group, which currently owns 6 goats and 5 cows, and the Ilmirisho Group, with 18 goats and 1 cow. The Ilmejooli Group maintains 10 goats and 2 cows, while the Ilmeshuki Group has 17 goats and 1 cow.

These livestock holdings play a crucial role in enhancing the groups' economic stability, offering both immediate benefits such as milk production and long-term prospects through breeding and sales. The progress demonstrates the groups' commitment to diversifying livelihoods and strengthening their economic base alongside other farming activities.



**Ilaitete Group** 



**Enduata Group** 



Ilaramatak Group



Iltareto Group



Olomayiana Group



Ilmirishi Group



Ilmejooli Group

Ilmepukoo Group



Ilmirisho Group



Ilmeshuki Group





Ilmemiri Group

Ilparakuo Group

## **HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

#### Evaline Kataro Shabar – P146-16287

Evaline Kataro Shabar, currently in Grade 5, sustained an injury after attempting to jump over a deep hole, which resulted in her legs being forcefully separated. She was admitted to AIC Kajiado Hospital on 3rd March for medical attention.

Previously enrolled at Emorkeya Primary School, located approximately 10 kilometers from her home, Evaline was later transferred to Osiligi VEE Primary School, which is closer by about 4 kilometers, making it easier for her to attend classes. Despite experiencing a slight limp, she can walk to school and has adapted well to her new learning environment.

She has been attending monthly medical check-ups and is scheduled for her next clinic appointment in August. VEE continues to support Evaline by ensuring she receives the necessary medical attention and educational opportunities. Her resilience is evident as she makes commendable progress in both her health and academics.





Evaline while in the hospital receiving treatment





Evaline using a walking frame





Current state of Evaline without a walking frame and her mother besides her

#### FAMILY WELFARE AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT - NANCY KARANKWA

On 2nd July 2025, Nancy Karankwa, a Grade One pupil at Osiligi VEE Primary School, suffered the loss of her father, Mr. Karankwa Olishoki, who had been unwell since 2008. Despite prolonged treatment at Selian Hospital in Tanzania, he passed away after battling cancer and complications arising from diabetes.

Nancy's mother, Mrs. Emily Karankwa, now bears the full responsibility of supporting the family. She currently sells milk, earning approximately Ksh 3,500 per month, which is barely enough to meet their basic needs. Nancy is the youngest child in the family, and her eldest sibling is in Form Two at Mataparasha Secondary School. The burial of her father took place on 9th July 2025.

Following the bereavement, VEE liaised with Abel, who then visited Nancy's family to assess their household situation and explore the possibility of supporting Nancy's mother in starting a small business. During the visit, a guided conversation with Mrs. Karankwa provided insight into her daily struggles, her aspirations for self-reliance, and the type of assistance she would need to launch a home-based venture. She explained that her family's daily needs are largely met through the goodwill of relatives, friends, and community members, a situation that has left her feeling vulnerable and dependent. Her goal is to create a more stable and dignified means of income to support her children, and she expressed a strong interest in starting a small business selling essential household goods purchased in bulk and resold in smaller quantities to her neighbours.

To better understand her readiness and the practicality of this venture, VEE provided Abel with a set of guiding questions to discuss with her in order to develop a sustainable financial plan. These covered her current means of supporting the family, her interest in running a small business, and the logistics of storing and selling goods. They also explored which items she would prioritise if start-up support were provided, how she would manage stock and restocking, and her willingness to keep basic purchase and sales records to track progress. Finally, the conversation addressed her openness to saving a portion of profits to sustain the business long-term and the possibility of starting small, then reviewing progress after a few weeks.

Mrs. Karankwa plans to operate the business from her home, which has a secure room for storage, avoiding transportation challenges and associated costs. She expressed readiness to manage the business responsibly and to apply the guidance provided. From the visit, it was evident that she has the motivation, planning skills, and dedication needed to run a small business successfully. With initial support in the form of start-up stock or capital, she has the potential to create a reliable source of income that would benefit both her family and the wider community.



Abel's Visit to the family

#### CONCLUSION

The 2025 mid-year review confirms that VEE and BMZ-supported programs are delivering measurable, multi-sector impact despite persistent environmental, logistical, and economic challenges. Education interventions have ensured continuous learning through academic learning materials. The child sponsorship program has expanded its reach, now supporting 425 children across Karangatha, Kinare, and Bisil, while maintaining a waiting list of 46.

In agriculture, the BMZ potato production program has strengthened local food systems through multiple planting cycles, improved post-harvest handling, and market-oriented training. Though climatic conditions and blight affected yields in Season 3, mitigation strategies such as crop diversification into kale, peas, and carrots are helping to build resilience against pests, diseases, and weather-related risks.

Livestock rearing remains a key livelihood pillar, with SHGs improving herd management. Notably, during a meeting in Ilbisil, SHG leaders proposed selling two goats per group, with proceeds deposited in the Ilbisil account to establish a computer training center, an initiative to be sustained through regular member contributions. Such community-driven actions demonstrate both the commitment and capacity for self-reliance among beneficiaries.

Overall, the integration of education, agriculture, and livestock development, combined with community-led initiatives, is enhancing livelihoods, building resilience, and laying the groundwork for sustainable socio-economic transformation.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Efforts will be expedited to engage with the relevant authorities and secure formal permission to pump water from the dispensary borehole. This step is critical to ensuring a reliable water supply for irrigation and other agricultural activities, enabling farmers to overcome the challenges posed by prolonged dry spells. Timely approval will facilitate the installation of plumbing and pumping systems, thereby improving productivity and resilience.

Follow-up on ongoing engagements with the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) and the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) will be prioritized to advance certification, branding, and marketing of potatoes and other farm products. Achieving KEBS certification will enhance product credibility, while strategic branding and marketing partnerships will open up new market opportunities and increase the competitiveness of farmers' produce in both local and regional markets.

Financial oversight will be provided for the proposed computer training center to ensure it is both operationally efficient and financially sustainable. This will include developing a clear business model, monitoring income and expenses, and implementing cost-control measures. The initiative aims to create a steady income stream for the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) while building digital skills within the community.

The frequency and scope of agronomist-led training sessions will be increased, with a particular focus on pest control, crop rotation, and water-efficient irrigation techniques. These trainings will empower farmers with practical, sustainable methods to improve yields while maintaining soil health and reducing dependence on chemical inputs.

Regular contributions within SHGs will be promoted to strengthen long-term financial stability and ensure funding for future development projects. By fostering a culture of savings and collective responsibility, SHGs can reduce reliance on donor funding and build resilience against economic shocks.