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IOP NEWSLETTER MARCH 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Hello fellow readers of our monthly newsletter article from IOP! March has truly been a month of transitions and exciting developments, marking the early days of spring. From the first blooms of flowers to the close of the first quarter, we have much to reflect on and celebrate.

This month's article is packed with engaging topics, ***including International Women's Day, the International Women's Day forum at IOP, the Iringa children's trip, and the heartfelt farewell ceremony for our guests here at IOP.*** Each story highlights moments of inspiration, connection, and growth within our community.

We invite you to join us in reading this issue together and immerse yourself in the vibrant narratives that define this season. Let's celebrate these milestones and enjoy the beauty of spring as it unfolds. Happy reading!

CELEBRATIONS OF THE WOMEN'S DAY IN ILULA!

On March 6, women in Kilolo District celebrated International Women's Day in a vibrant event under the slogan "Women and Girls 2025: Let's Strengthen Justice, Equality, and



IOP staffs and Volunteers posing for a picture after receiving an award

Empowerment." Although the day is nationally observed on March 8, Kilolo chose to mark it earlier with a series of engaging activities.

The celebration began in the morning with stakeholders setting up exhibition booths showcasing products such as liquid soaps, batik, beauty items, and handmade

baskets and IOP showcased the handmade crafts made by the young single mothers. Later the guests gathered for festivities featuring music and camaraderie. The program included introductory remarks by the Ilula Township Executive Officer (TEO) and a brief history of International Women's Day presented by the Kilolo District Community Development Officer. There were various topics presented that day including;

- Psychology and Gender: A speaker emphasized understanding societal and familial roles while highlighting the importance of mental health care for building safer communities.

- Nutrition: Guests were reminded of the role of proper nutrition in fostering stronger societies, particularly for children.

During the event there were awards that were presented to individuals and organizations excelling in community empowerment. The Ilula Orphan Program (IOP) received recognition for its impactful work empowering women. Additionally, a young mother from the IOP's project was honored for her entrepreneurial success, inspiring others to pursue business opportunities.



Madam Tulia Mkwama receiving an award from the guest of honor

The guest of honor delivered a speech urging the protection of women's economic, political, and gender rights. She encouraged women to participate in upcoming elections and take leadership roles within families and communities. She also stressed reporting incidents of violence against women and children to authorities to ensure justice.

The event concluded with a call to action for collective advocacy toward gender equality and community development.

THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FORUM AT IOP!

In celebration of International Women's Day, the Ilula Orphan Program (IOP) hosted a forum that brought together a diverse group of participants, including staff from various IOP



The Students and IOP staff posing for a picture during after the forum

departments, students and teachers from local schools, police representatives from the gender desk, young mothers, young peacemakers, volunteers, and community leaders. This inclusive event fostered discussions on pressing societal issues affecting both women and men.

The panel discussion served as an interactive platform for youth and

stakeholders to share their perspectives on this year's theme. Key topics included the meaning of gender equality, the current status of women and girls in society, and the importance of

inclusive empowerment that involves men as allies rather than sidelining them. Speakers emphasized the need for mutual respect, equitable opportunities, and the dismantling of harmful gender stereotypes within schools, families, and communities.

The local police force highlighted the critical role of the Gender and Children's Desk in addressing gender-based violence. They educated attendees on how to report such cases, follow up on them, and support victims through legal and psychosocial resources.

A standout moment was a speech by Ms. Berit, IOP's founder. As a trailblazing female leader, she underscored the importance of collaboration between men and women. She encouraged women to confidently leverage their skills



A nice picture from participants after the forum

and voices to assume leadership roles and advocate for their rights while fostering respect and unity in society.

The International Women's Day Forum at IOP was more than just a celebration—it was a powerful reminder of the work still needed to achieve true gender equality. Through open dialogue, education, and shared experiences, the event strengthened the collective commitment to building a more inclusive and respectful society. By engaging diverse voices and emphasizing unity, IOP continues to champion a future where every individual, regardless of gender, is empowered to thrive and lead.

VOLUNTEER'S GOODBYE PARTY AT IOP!

With heartfelt gratitude, the Ilula Orphan Program (IOP) bid farewell to dedicated volunteers—Doret Cornelissen, Inza Gast, Pia, and Charlotte—during a special ceremony in March 24th 2025. Staff, children, and young mothers gathered to express their appreciation for the volunteers' transformative work, which has profoundly impacted the organization's growth and the lives of IOP Beneficiaries.

The volunteers' efforts have been instrumental in advancing IOP's mission. By taking on critical tasks—from supporting children to aiding educational projects—they enabled significant cost savings that would otherwise have been spent on hired labor. This efficiency allows IOP to allocate more resources directly to vulnerable children and community programs.



The Volunteers together with the Children and staff enjoying the dance at IOP grounds

A standout contribution came from Doret Cornelissen (Netherlands), whose donation of 5,746,400 Tanzanian shillings has directly

supported the Ilula Orphan Home, Kids Corner Preschool, and Mama House. Also, another volunteer from the Netherlands Inza Gast donated more than 4,500,000/= that has supported different projects like the vulnerable families in Ilula that she visited, Center children, Youth Center and the IPVTC. Moreover, she has fundraised more (5500 Euro) that has been sent to IOP Netherlands to support more programs like the IOP Center and Chicken Project. This act of generosity underscores how volunteer involvement often extends beyond time and labor to include vital financial support for IOP's expanding initiatives.

During the ceremony, IOP's Managing Director highlighted the indispensable role of volunteers, noting that the organization's founder remains its "first volunteer." This spirit of selfless service continues to drive IOP's growth, particularly in education, healthcare, and sustainable community projects.

IOP invites others to follow this example by volunteering or donating to sustain its programs, including the Ilula Orphan Center, Sunflower Primary School where we need more dormitories



The Volunteers giving out their speech during the farewell ceremony

also at the Lord's Hill secondary school where we also need more dormitories for the students. This support will enable us to construct more dormitories hence have more safe space for accommodating our students in the school.

THE IRINGA CHILDREN'S TRIP!

On March 29, 2025, Inza Gast, a volunteer from the Netherlands, sponsored a memorable trip for 36 people from the IOP center to Iringa town. The group, which included 26 children (15

girls and 11Boys), and 10 adults (5 male and 5 female) who embarked on a journey filled with fun, learning, and exploration. For many of the children, this was their first time visiting Iringa town, making the experience even more special.



Girls enjoying the moment on the trampoline

The tour featured visits to three key locations which were Gentle Hills Hotel where the children engaged in various games and activities, enjoying the serene environment then went to Iringa Garden where the delicious lunch was served, allowing everyone to relax and socialize and last stop was at Sunset Iringa Hotel where the

children learned swimming and participated in additional games, further enhancing their experience.

This outing provided the children with an opportunity to explore new environments outside of their usual surroundings at the Orphanage. It broadened their perspectives and brought joy to their hearts. The trip left a lasting impression on the children and underscored the importance of such initiatives in enriching their lives.



Brighton enjoying on the slide

The IOP center expressed heartfelt gratitude to Inza Gast for her kindness and support in making this trip a success. Her contribution has created unforgettable memories for the children and inspired hope for future opportunities like this.

ENHANCING CHILDREN'S GROWTH THROUGH CYCLING: A CALL FOR SUPPORT!

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for reading our March Newsletter from IOP. Your support and interest mean a lot to us. At our center, we have been organizing bicycle training and games for children, creating opportunities for them to learn, play, and develop essential skills. However, we face challenges due to the limited number of bicycles available

and the unsatisfactory quality of some of them. This has made it difficult for the children to fully enjoy these activities.

To ensure that the children remain engaged and active, particularly on weekends after completing their personal hygiene routines, we are in need of more bicycles. Additional bicycles will enable us to expand our programs and ensure that all children at the center can participate in cycling activities safely and joyfully.

We deeply appreciate your continued support and encouragement. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of these children by fostering their growth through play and learning. Thank you for being part of this journey!

If you would like more information about projects and/or sponsoring opportunities,

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