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## IOP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER- 2025

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## INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

We bring you more great news from the IOP Monthly Newsletter! We hope you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and New Year. We're excited to update you on the impactful events our organization has hosted recently, including the IOP Children's Mikumi Tour, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, dialogue on preventing sexual violence, VICOBA training, and the installation of a gas cooking system at our Sunflower School. Dive in and read on!

## MIKUMI NATIONAL PARK EDUCATIONAL TOUR

In December, children from Ilula Orphans' Home enjoyed an unforgettable educational tour to Mikumi National Park, combining learning, recreation, and exposure beyond the orphanage environment.



The trip generated great excitement and offered the children a refreshing experience as they entered their short December vacation before reuniting with their guardians. For many of the children,

this was their first opportunity to see wild animals such as elephants, giraffes, and lions in their natural habitat. The vast open landscape brought joy, comfort, and inspiration, creating lasting and meaningful memories.

After several hours of guided wildlife viewing, the children relaxed together, sharing reflections on what they had seen while enjoying a nutritious meal prepared especially for them.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our generous sponsors whose support made this enriching experience possible.



Educational tours such as this are essential in broadening children's knowledge, nurturing curiosity, and helping them appreciate the natural beauty and biodiversity of their own country.

## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In partnership with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Ilula Orphans Project (IOP) successfully commemorated the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) across several



areas in the Iringa Region. The campaign focused primarily on communities where IOP and NCA are jointly implementing development initiatives, with the aim of raising awareness and promoting collective action against GBV.

Throughout the campaign, community dialogues and youth-focused discussions were conducted. A key emerging concern was the growing challenge of digital violence. While awareness of traditional forms of GBV—such as physical and emotional abuse—has improved, participants, particularly young people, highlighted that online violence remains poorly understood.

Across all targeted areas, a consistent message emerged: communities, especially youth, require



stronger awareness of digital violence and unsafe online behaviors that may violate cyber laws. Issues such as cyberbullying, harassment on social media, and sharing intimate images without consent were identified as increasingly common. Many young participants acknowledged engaging in risky online practices without realizing the legal consequences under Tanzania's Cybercrimes Act.

These findings reveal a critical gap in GBV prevention efforts. While progress has been made through traditional education, digital abuse demands urgent attention in an





era of widespread smartphone use. Addressing online violence is not only a youth concern but a broader societal responsibility. Policymakers, civil society organizations, schools, and technology stakeholders must collaborate to strengthen education, enforcement, and access to protective resources.

The 16 Days of Activism reaffirmed the importance of listening to community voices. The call to action is clear—greater focus on digital safety is essential to prevent online violence from becoming normalized.

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) DIALOGUE – KILOLO DISTRICT**

In a significant step toward community transformation, the Kilolo District Government, in collaboration with Ilula Orphans Project (IOP) and SOS, organized a district-level dialogue addressing gender-based violence (GBV).



The dialogue brought together diverse community stakeholders to share experiences, identify challenges, and propose practical solutions. Discussions examined the root causes of GBV—often overlooked in many communities—and explored strategies for prevention, survivor support, and the promotion of gender

equality. Participants emphasized that GBV negatively affects families, economic development, and social cohesion, calling for coordinated and immediate action.

This initiative aligns closely with IOP's strategic priority of addressing GBV at all societal levels. Engaging local stakeholders was recognized as an effective approach to fostering ownership, accountability, and sustainable change.



Participants left the dialogue motivated, committing to continued advocacy, awareness creation, and collaboration toward policy and community-level reforms. Kilolo District's

leadership in this effort serves as a positive example for advancing safer and more inclusive communities.

## CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

As December marked the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, IOP staff and children embraced the Christmas season with joy, unity, and reflection, while looking forward to the New Year.



On 23rd December, IOP staff held a vibrant Christmas celebration featuring singing, games, and dancing. A highlight of the event was the unveiling of "secret friends," a month-long gift-exchange activity that strengthened teamwork and fellowship. The celebration concluded with an

inspiring message from the IOP Managing Director, who extended Christmas and New Year wishes and encouraged staff to work with renewed dedication toward greater impact in 2026. On the same day, IOP children joined members of the United Methodist Church (UMC) – Ilula for a special Christmas celebration at the Centre. The program included devotionals, singing, dancing, drama performances, and the distribution of gifts generously donated by friends and supporters. The children's joy and excitement made the event truly memorable.



These celebrations reflected the true spirit of Christmas at IOP—bringing together faith, gratitude, togetherness, and hope for the year ahead.

## VICOBA TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

A successful VICOBA (Village Community Banking) training session was conducted for leaders



from Vitono, Dunguya, and Iwungi villages. The training aimed to strengthen leadership capacity and refresh participants' understanding of effective VICOBA operations.

Key topics included leaders' roles and responsibilities, proper planning and evaluation of group activities, financial

accountability, and governance principles. Interactive sessions enabled participants to gain practical skills to enhance transparency, sustainability, and impact within their savings and lending groups.

Following the training, participants visited Farm for the Future (FFFTanzania), where they engaged with agricultural practitioners and learned about sustainable farming techniques that can improve productivity and resilience within their communities.



We sincerely thank all participating VICOBA leaders for their active involvement and commitment to strengthening community-led economic development.

## INSTALLATION OF A GAS COOKING SYSTEM AT SUNFLOWER PRE & PRIMARY SCHOOL

In December, Sunflower Pre & Primary School achieved an important milestone with the successful installation of a modern gas cooking system. This initiative complies with the government directive issued in 2023 and strictly enforced in 2024 and 2025, particularly for private schools.



This achievement was made possible through the generous support of the IOP Luxembourg Supporting Committee, whose contribution is highly appreciated.



The gas cooking system has significantly improved the school's operations by ensuring timely meal preparation for pupils while enhancing the health and safety of kitchen staff through the elimination of smoke exposure—a factor that previously

contributed to staff turnover. Additionally, the system supports environmental conservation by reducing dependence on firewood and preventing deforestation.

Beyond operational benefits, the system also serves as a learning opportunity for pupils, promoting environmental responsibility and sustainable practices from an early age.

The government directive applies to schools with 100 pupils or more. Currently, Sunflower Pre & Primary School has 548 pupils, following the completion of Class VII. Due to strong academic performance, enrollment is expected to increase further in 2026 and beyond.

With the ongoing construction of two additional classrooms at the Kids' Corner, expected to accommodate over 100 pupils, the gas cooking system directive will soon extend to that section as well.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to IOP Luxembourg for their continued cooperation and support, which continues to positively impact the Tanzanian community.



## FINAL GREETINGS

To create more safer, more hygienic environment for preparing meals, we urgently need to complete essential repairs. These include tiling the floor and walls, painting the entire kitchen structure, and installing sinks and exhaust pipes. The total estimated cost is 17,650,000 Tanzanian shillings.

We sincerely thank you for your past generosity and kindly request your assistance to make this project a reality.

Thank you for joining us in this update—we truly appreciate your continued support. We look forward to sharing more stories from our 2026 events. As our key development partner, your partnership means the world to us. Wishing you every success in your important work this year!



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

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