

**WFWP USA's First Schools of Africa Service Trip - A Journey of Heart in Rwanda**

Katarina Connery  
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In November 2025, a group of seven volunteers from WFWP USA traveled across the world to participate in our first-ever Schools of Africa Service Trip - a landmark visit to the New Hope Technical Institute in Kigali, Rwanda. What unfolded over four unforgettable days became far more than a site visit or cultural tour. It was a journey into the heart of a nation that has risen from unimaginable tragedy and into the everyday hopes of students striving for a brighter future.

Led by WFWP USA President Katarina Connery, the team included Carie Arline, Meagan Robles, Myrna Lapres, Elizabeth Aihe, Marguerite Felig, and Maria Ferreira. They were joined by WFWP International President Moriko Hori. The trip was organized by WFWP Rwanda President Georgette Umubyeyi, together with Marie Nozaki of WFWP Japan, who first arrived in Rwanda in 1994, only months after the genocide, and has devoted decades to helping build and sustain New Hope.

From the moment the group stepped into the warm embrace of WFWP Rwanda members, arms full of flowers and faces full of joy, the experience began touching each participant's heart. "Never to be forgotten are the gracious greetings from WFWP members at the Kigali Airport," shared Marguerite. "I was embraced warmly and sincerely... I felt the pure hearts of WFWP members!"



**Confronting History, Embracing Hope**



The trip began with a solemn morning visit to the Kigali Genocide Memorial, an experience that every participant described as deeply emotional and transformative. Walking through the exhibits featuring photographs, stories, mass graves, and more brought the realities of 1994 into sharp focus.



Elizabeth recalled seeing Georgette, herself a survivor, quietly crying on a bench. "She and her brother are the only survivors in a family of eleven," Elizabeth reflected. "Hearing her story broke my heart. The visit gave me a much deeper understanding of the genocide." Meagan added, "Learning what neighbors, relatives, and friends went through shook me to my core... I wish I could rid that stain from human history."

Yet even in the pain, participants found signs of resilience, forgiveness, and extraordinary courage. That afternoon, the atmosphere shifted to celebration as the team arrived at New Hope Technical Institute for a beautiful welcome ceremony. Students performed traditional dances and proudly guided visitors through classrooms for tailoring, hairdressing, and culinary arts. Their joy was contagious. "The students are the fruit of all the investment and love given by Marie, Georgette, and the volunteers. Interacting with them gave me so much hope."



**Lessons, Gifts, and the Reality of Students' Lives**



The second morning brought laughter, connection, and learning as WFWP USA volunteers led English lessons with vocabulary relevant to each training course, teaching songs, and exchanging stories. The students' eagerness to learn left a deep impression. The group then distributed gifts collected in the US and watched students' eyes light up, delighting in the exclamations of surprise and gratitude.



The afternoon confronted the group with another reality: poverty that is difficult to truly comprehend without seeing it firsthand. Volunteers visited the homes of four scholarship students supported by WFWP Japan and other donors. Some homes were uphill through steep dirt paths; others were one- room structures housing large families. Meagan reflected tearfully, "I couldn't sleep in my bed after seeing where the students and their families lived... Each person said 'food' when asked what they needed most. How can they only eat once a day, if that?"

Marguerite described one home as "the house on the mountain," reached by an almost impossible incline. "Looking back, my conscience convicts me... Their will to live depends on their goals for the future and the helping hands given by New Hope." These encounters strengthened a commitment to expand sponsor and scholarship programs, lunch programs, and sustainable development efforts at the school.



**Experiencing Rwanda's Natural Beauty, Culture, and Living History**

The latter half of the trip offered participants a chance to absorb the broader story of Rwanda, its



brehtaking landscapes, rich traditions, and deep historical roots. A daylong safari in Akagera National Park provided space for reflection amid Rwanda's rolling savannas and diverse wildlife, reminding the group of the country's extraordinary natural beauty. The following day's visit to the Royal Palace Museum in Nyanza offered another dimension, immersing the team in Rwanda's pre-colonial heritage, royal customs, and cultural identity. Together, these experiences rounded out the journey, giving volunteers a fuller understanding of Rwanda as a nation shaped not only by tragedy, but also by strength, dignity, and an enduring spirit.



### **A Trip That Marks a Beginning, Not an End**

New Hope is more than a school. It is a living testimony to resilience, international friendship, and the healing power of education. Founded through the unwavering commitment of Japanese volunteers and Rwandan staff and volunteers, the school has grown into a place where young women and men gain technical skills and develop character, confidence, and hope. Many students come from backgrounds marked by trauma or extreme poverty, yet they pursue their education with determination. Graduates shared how the training transformed their lives, stories that gave Myrna "hope and pride in the evidence of recovery, resilience, and courage."

Every participant returned home changed. "I cried all the way to the airport," Meagan admitted. "I didn't want to leave. I want to help create a sponsorship program in America... I feel called to tell my story." The group echoed a shared sentiment: gratitude - to the Rwandan hosts, to WFWP Rwanda, and to the



students, whose courage and hope touched them deeply.



The 2025 Schools of Africa trip was a first, but it will not be the last. Participants left Rwanda with a renewed commitment to support New Hope Technical Institute and expand WFP's Schools of Africa program. WFP USA is grateful to all who made this journey possible, and to the people of Rwanda, whose resilience and beauty continue to inspire us.

If you would like to donate to the Schools of Africa, please visit [www.wfp.us/schools-of-africa](https://www.wfp.us/schools-of-africa). Your generous gift of any amount can truly make a significant impact on a young student's future.







# SCHOOLS OF AFRICA



SUPPORT EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AFRICA!



Yes! I'd like to give to Schools of Africa!

☒ Recurring

☐ One Time

Give Monthly ▾

\$100

\$200

\$500

\$50

\$25

Other

#### Greatest Impact

Thanks for giving Monthly! Your steady support helps us meet ongoing needs and plan for the future.

Your gift starts today. Cancel anytime.

[Customize Dates](#)

☒ Add a little extra to help with fees (\$3) ?

☒ Give \$103/month



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SCHOOLS SERVED: 6 SCHOOLS IN 5 COUNTRIES

TOTAL RAISED: \$687,000+

**DID YOU KNOW...**UNESCO reports 59 million primary age children are out of school, with 54% in Africa.

**Schools of Africa Project:** In the early 90s, WFWP Japan launched international cooperation activities by Japanese overseas volunteers to serve all over the world. With willing hearts, these women went to nations with the greatest need and to neighborhoods in every corner of the world. They started schools, supported opportunities of education for those in need, and created opportunities for women and girls to build a promising future.

Inspired by their dedication, WFWP USA initiated the "Schools of Africa" project in 2001 to financially support 9 schools in 8 African countries founded by those faithful volunteers.

#### YOUR DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

Since 2001, WFWP USA has sent over \$687,000 to these schools, which have empowered 24,000+ African graduates through education since 1994, and continues to enroll nearly 2,000 per year thanks to your support!

*"When we give and forget, true love flourishes."* - Mother Moon, Founder of WFWP

## 2025 UPDATES

The schools continue with their missions to provide quality education to boys and girls, men and women, to empower their dreams and make a brighter future possible. Please click below for the most recent reports and updates from the schools, including what your donations have made possible in 2024 and current needs which will be funded this year.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT!



## YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT!



### STUDENT AT ONE HOPE LITERACY CLASS

"When I entered this school, I did not know anything. But since I started studying here in school I can write my name and I know numbers very well. It has made a big difference in my life."



### PARENT AT HANDOW SECONDARY SCHOOL

"What I appreciate is the individual attention my child gets thanks to the commitment teachers are putting at our beloved school. My child is learning the love of learning."



### GRADUATE OF SUN OF MOZAMBIQUE

"I came from a family where nobody had gone to University before but the story of my family changed when I started going to Sun of Mozambique Secondary School."



### STUDENT AT PEACE HANA SCHOOL

"I love this school because the sport scholarship helps me to realize my football dream. I have played and won trophies for the school and I strongly believe that through this career I will take care of my family in the future."

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



### LIBERIA

#### Peace Hana School since 1998

Initially, Peace Hana was established to equip economically disadvantaged children from 3-6 years old with reading and writing skills and extracurricular courses. Later in 2002, the school was expanded to become an elementary school. There are currently 98 students enrolled. [FIND OUT MORE](#)



### GUINEA BISSAU

#### Sunac Elementary School since 2003

Despite political and social instability in Guinea Bissau, Sunac offers classes regularly throughout the year, making the school zone a safe place for children to grow. Also, the school has a high female enrollment rate. Sunac has been able to reach 587 graduates since 2003. [FIND OUT MORE](#)

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS



### MOZAMBIQUE

#### Sun of Mozambique Secondary School since 1995

After a civil war in 1992, the country lacked resources and infrastructure for quality education. Sun of Mozambique offers quality education at a low fee. In addition to this, the school also provides scholarship programs to deserving students, and a library and computer lab facilities. The school has earned a worthy reputation, impacting the lives of 12,444 graduates, many of whom have gone to attend university. [FIND OUT MORE](#)



### KENYA

#### Handow Secondary School since 1998

Handow is located in a poor neighborhood village far away from the capital with limited electricity and running water. Since its establishment, the school has successfully educated 2,130 graduates. With continuous support from WFP, the school became accredited as a public school and later implemented a tuition-free policy in 2008. Donations have been utilized in the construction of the school's infrastructure and providing school supplies to the students. [FIND OUT MORE](#)

## ADULT EDUCATION



### RWANDA

#### New Hope Technical Institute since 1998 and New Hope Professional Training Center since 2023

The institute was founded to help women and ex-soldiers after the Rwandan genocide become financially independent by equipping them with skills in culinary arts, dressmaking, and hairdressing. This has not only brought a sense of independence amongst the 2,501 graduates, but also a sense that they are loved and valued. In 2023, construction was completed on the New Hope Professional Training Center for graduates of the New Hope Technical Institute. [FIND OUT MORE](#)

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