

# ORKEESWA

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### OUR MISSION

Orkeeswa cultivates thoughtful decision-makers and creative problem solvers prepared to achieve their own vision for impact.

### OUR VISION

Young people proactively solve problems in their communities while preserving their own shared cultural values and practices.

### THEORY OF CHANGE

When young people experience learning designed to ignite their sense of purpose, they develop the life, learning and leadership skills necessary to impact their communities as engaged citizens, young professionals, and motivated leaders.



# OUR MODEL

Orkeswa develops youth who are leading themselves, leading others and leading change in their communities. Orkeswa invests in community-based learning, life and leadership skills development for young people at three critical points:

## OUTREACH

Orkeswa Outreach utilizes trained and motivated Orkeswa student and alumni leaders to run life skills, sports, extra-curricular and academic programming in local primary schools.



## SCHOOL

At the core of our model, Orkeswa School provides high-quality academics, robust co-curricular programs, student wellness services, and community-based leadership through a holistic secondary school experience.



## INCUBATOR

Orkeswa Incubator supports the ongoing impact of alumni through professional development, higher education support, and small grants and mentorship for entrepreneurs.



# OUTREACH

8 partner primary schools

8,345 primary school students impacted to date

486 Orkeeswa student-mentors trained to date



## Foundational Learning Skills

In 2023, only 46% of 4th grade students across 8 government primary schools met standards of numeracy for their grade. After 30 days of working with our student-mentors using a curriculum called Teaching at the Right Level, now 72% of 4th graders are meeting standards. That's **134 students who are no longer falling behind in class** – an outcome that leads to improved confidence, better learning outcomes and a greater chance for these students to continue on to secondary school!

Led by Orkeeswa students and alumni and in collaboration with local government primary schools, Orkeeswa Outreach takes a holistic approach towards the development of primary school students.

Orkeeswa Outreach programming includes:

Sports & Extra-Curricular Activities for Primary Students

Life Skills Education for Primary Students

Academic & Learning Support for Primary Students

Experiential Leadership Training for Orkeeswa Students



“Orkeeswa mentors brought a lot of changes to our students. Our students have become friends with Orkeeswa students so that they are free to talk to them. A lot of students were not active or excited when they came to school but now that they sing songs, play a lot of games during class time and play sports after school, we can see how cheerful and excited they have become. It has made it easier for us teachers to work with them when we go to class. This has improved the school attendance. Students do not skip school like they used to. They all want to work with Orkeeswa students. Some of them have improved their social lives by interacting with students from other schools during sports on Saturdays. They are now very outgoing, interactive and confident.

We have seen a lot of improvements in individual students’ academic learning. Some of our students could not read, write or count properly. The Orkeeswa team made small groups and brought a lot of activities, songs and games that helped the students learn better.

Life skills sessions have helped our students a lot, especially the girls. They have developed a growth mindset since they started attending these sessions.

In the past when we talked about issues like pregnancy or marriage, they would see it as a taboo and inappropriate to talk about. Seeing other girls drop out of school because of pregnancy and recognizing the little knowledge they had about it, they have come to realize the need for them to learn about these things. They have learned to take care of themselves. They have learned about menstruation and personal hygiene. They have also started to take care of their environment more. They make sure their school is clean, including their classes and the grounds they play on. It is very impressive to see these changes.

**For us teachers, we are learning a lot from Orkeeswa students and mentors. We are learning that spending more time with individual students helps to get to know the student better and their needs. It forms a good bond between the teacher and the student so when they are facing a challenge they can easily open up to you. Working with Orkeeswa students and mentors has made our work easier.”**

**–Marry Paulo  
Monduli Juu Primary School  
Assistant Head Teacher**



“I transferred to Monduli Juu Primary School when I was in 4th Grade. I was surprised to hear from other students that mentors from Orkeeswa School would soon be volunteering at our school. I would ask other students how it is possible that they would be teaching us while they are not teachers. They said they would be coaching sports, teaching life skills and helping our teachers in classes. This got me excited though I did not know what life skills would look like and in my old school, there were no sports played.

At my old school, I had a lot of friends. But it was hard for me to adjust to a new environment and make new friends. Some students were seeing me as an outsider and they wouldn't talk to me or play with me. When Orkeeswa mentors showed up, things changed. They first put us in small groups. These groups were for discussions, preparing group presentations and other assignments. Finally, I started making friends from our group and made more when we were moved to new groups.

I wanted to attend life skills classes so badly. I was curious to know what was taught in those sessions. The first day, we were taught family planning. I asked myself so many questions: Why are they teaching us these things? Are we old enough to be hearing this? What would my mom think when I tell her what they are teaching us? Thinking about the community I live in, one family may have 20 children but some of them are sent to graze cattle, others are sent for marriages, and some suffer from malnutrition. I felt they had a good reason for teaching us about family planning so we can pass on the knowledge to our families but also we can use that knowledge ourselves. Through life skills I have learned about the menstrual cycle. I was taught how to take care of myself when I get my period and keep my body clean and comfortable at school and at home. At first I thought I would just skip school when I get my period. I also learned about human rights. This topic was interesting, I learned in depth about my rights and what to do when they are denied. It also gave me confidence that I can speak to

my parents and other people about my rights. In our community, there are a lot of cultural practices like female circumcision, early and forced marriages. Learning about our rights in life skills sessions will help some of us girls to fight against these practices. We can politely talk to our parents about the effects when these rights are denied and why it is important that a girl is given the opportunity to go to school.

**Orkeeswa mentors are our role models. I am inspired by the fact that they are from the same community as ours but they did not choose to go elsewhere to volunteer. They are sharing the knowledge they got from school with their communities. I want to make a difference in someone's life too. It may not be the same way they did to me, but I am positive that I will help others. I want to study hard, finish school, then come back home to help my community.”**

**- Elizabeth, 6th Grade Student**



# SCHOOL

Orkeeswa offers a holistic, community-based secondary school that shifts the singular focus of education from passing national exams to hands-on, project-based, and practical learning within the context of community life. An Orkeeswa education encourages our students to discover their sense of purpose and catalyzes the development of life, learning, and leadership skills. Orkeeswa School's core programming includes:

High-Quality Academics

Co-Curricular Programs

Student Wellness Services

Community-Based Leadership Opportunities

## Project-Based Learning

In 2023, our students initiated dozens of community-based projects through our new Projects curriculum where they built skills in problem-identification, problem-solving, research, facilitation, advocacy, community organizing and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, through an increased investment in our academic program, our students are getting opportunities to put their education into action through projects related to each academic subject.

**357** students on campus

**68%** of student body is female

**100%** pass rate on National Exams





“In our community, there is a water shortage and the only water source is the dam. Growing up, I have seen people fetching water directly from the same source where animals drink and where most other activities like washing are done. They use this water for cooking and drinking after adding ashes to make it clean. This is still not healthy for humans, ashes does not sufficiently treat water. Drinking this water may result in diseases like cholera, bilharzia and typhoid. So, in Physics class, we created a water pump that can transfer water from one point to another. Instead of animals drinking from the same source or doing the washing from the dam, this water pump can move water from the dam to different points where animals can drink freely and people can fetch clean water for domestic use.

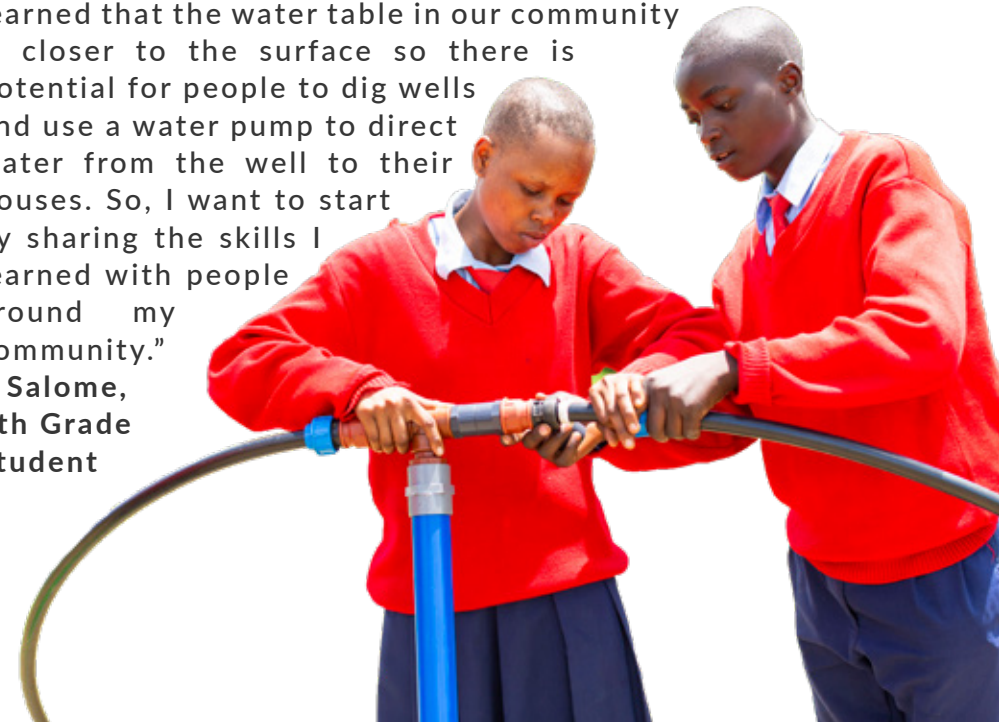
This project required us to use our creativity and problem solving skills. I learned the different parts of the pump and how they each work. We had 2 PVC pipes, a reducer and a nipple valve. We connected the pipes to a three sided T connector, one side for sucking water, the other for pumping water out and we connected a nipple to the third side and the pump was ready to work.

We applied the concept of pressure difference to make the pump work. In class we learned that water moves from a region of high pressure to a region of low pressure and a region of high pressure requires a very small surface area. We connected materials with different surface areas to create a difference in pressure, and this is what allowed us to control the movement of water.

At the end of the activity, we brainstormed about alternative materials that could be used to create a pump with resources that can be found in our environment. We learned we could use local materials like a wooden stick as an alternative to a plunger or a handling case and use a shoe as a nipple valve by cutting it into a circular shape.

**This project taught me that learning by doing things improves my understanding about them. It has also given me confidence and the urge to solve challenges in my community. I started thinking of other challenges that my community faces and how I can help.** This water pump does not only pump water from a dam but even from a well. I learned that the water table in our community is closer to the surface so there is potential for people to dig wells and use a water pump to direct water from the well to their houses. So, I want to start by sharing the skills I learned with people around my community.”

– Salome,  
8th Grade  
Student





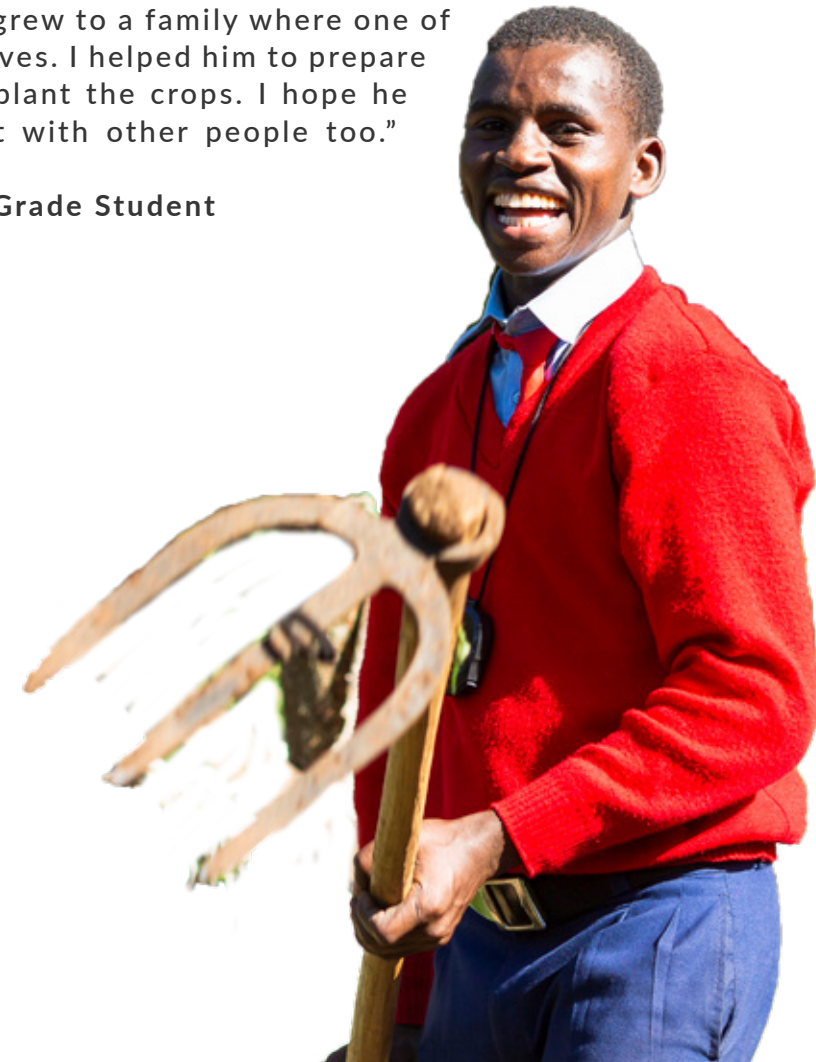
“In Agriculture class, we learned how to make natural pesticides with resources found in our environment. A group of my classmates in Projects Class and I decided it could be a great business idea for this community. We decided that we would make our own natural pesticides, plant some crops in a small piece of land and test the pesticides on the crops we’ve planted to demonstrate for the community how effective they can be. We live in a community where crops are highly affected by pests leading to low yield of crops and the farmers prefer the use of chemicals over natural pesticides. We thought the use of natural pesticides is better over artificial ones because it is environmentally friendly, it is affordable and it has no harmful effects on humans.

We got a piece of land in the school garden where we planted maize and beans. As these crops grow up, we are observing the kind of pests attacking the crops and experimenting with different kinds of natural pesticides that we’ve made to see what can be the most effective. After this experiment, we will be in a position to determine the kind of pests that our pesticide can kill. We will be going around the community educating people about natural pesticides and how to make them.

Eventually, we are hoping to turn it into a business where we make our own pesticides and sell them to farmers at an affordable price.

Throughout this project I am learning more about time management skills, creativity and teamwork. Natural pesticides work effectively when they are used under certain time limits. If not used on time, there is a high chance for it to affect crops. I am also applying this principle in my day to day activities. At home I do a lot of farming. I planted crops like bananas, potatoes and vegetables. I used the skills I learned in school to change my home by improving our diet and income. I also share these skills with other people. I remember taking some of the crops I grew to a family where one of our students lives. I helped him to prepare a garden and plant the crops. I hope he can share that with other people too.”

**-Bariki, 11th Grade Student**





# INCUBATOR

**320** Orkeeswa alumni

**84%** are in or completed higher education

**30%** of Orkeeswa staff are alumni

Orkeeswa Incubator supports the ongoing impact of alumni by activating the tools, resources, and skills needed to start businesses, implement projects, pursue careers or enroll in higher education that fulfills their vision for their community. The program fills a void of post-secondary support for many graduates, creating new pathways to apply their education for the benefit of the community. Orkeeswa Incubator programs include:

Higher Education Scholarships

Career & College Counseling

Professional Development Training

Grants & Mentorship for Entrepreneurs

## Community-Led Development

Orkeeswa alumni make up roughly 30% of our staff, a number that is growing each year, and 67% of our staff are from the local community. With many alumni serving in leadership positions in the organization, we are creating a sustainable model for youth-led development where decision-making is in the hands of the community. They are responsible for nurturing the next generation of young leaders and shaping the future of their community.



“Growing up, I wanted to be a pediatrician. I like spending time with kids so I knew by pursuing a health course I would learn about their psychology and I would understand them better. Before I came to Orkeeswa as a student, I was not sure if I would have an opportunity to continue to the 11th grade because of my financial situation. When my uncle informed me about my acceptance to Orkeeswa, I was very happy. It was the most precious time for me. I knew that there were people behind me who wanted me to succeed.

In college, Orkeeswa covered my school fees. After college, I was volunteering at a hospital when I heard about the job opening for the Health Coordinator at Orkeeswa. As an alum, I knew I had an advantage in the application process and when I was asked to come for an interview, it felt like it was fate. Now, I work at Orkeeswa as the Health Coordinator, Counselor and Life Skills Facilitator.

When I was a student at Orkeeswa, I faced difficult times and I would have made bad decisions if it weren't for the Student Wellness team. Through counseling I was able to overcome the challenges I was facing and that made me brave. I learned that the only way to stop a problem from happening again, is to face it and not run away from it. With all the challenges I faced, I am glad I was listened to. I am using this tool today as a counselor. I believe letting out what troubles you, is one way to help yourself. I try to give students room to talk about anything they feel comfortable to share without judging, interrupting or questioning. This has created an environment where students feel safe to talk to me, to share things that they wouldn't have shared with their parents. When we talk, I put my title away, I let that student see me like a sister, or a friend and I put myself in their shoes.

Sometimes I visit students at their homes. These visits can be planned but sometimes they are unplanned, too. When I pass near a students' house, I tend to go ask how they're doing. This also makes them feel cared for. These visits have improved my relationship

with the students, parents and community members. I once visited a student unexpectedly. By the looks of things I learned that the student was going through a difficult time at home that she could not speak about. I knew that she was always late to school and her teachers were concerned. One day I finally asked her why she was coming to school late. She left me speechless after learning about what she was going through all alone. From there, I learned how important it is to visit the students at their homes so we can know how to support them when there is a challenge. We finally found a way to help her because we knew what the issue was.

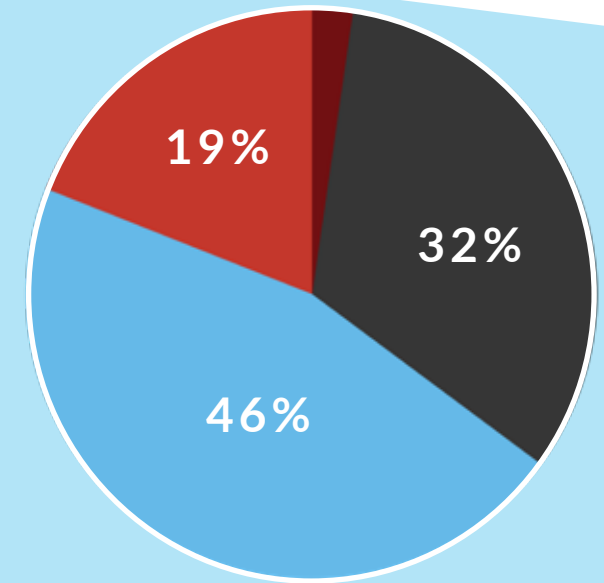
**My life has changed so much since I started working at Orkeeswa. I have learned and discovered a lot about myself and I came to believe anything is possible. I want all the students that I mentor to achieve their goals regardless of what life throws at them. I am looking forward to seeing girls stand up for themselves and show the world what they can do. I want to see them be who they want to be. I want them to work hard and be role models to the younger generation so when they look back and reflect on themselves, they can confidently say 'anything is possible'. As an Orkeeswa Alum and now staff member, this is the most important thing to me - to shape the next generation of leaders in this community.**

**-Doreen, Orkeeswa Alum & Health Coordinator**

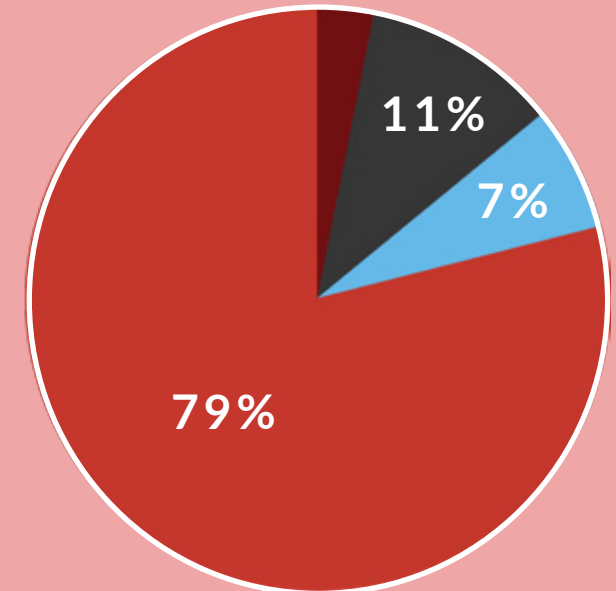


# 2023 FINANCIALS

<b>Class Partnerships</b>	<b>\$274,400</b>
<b>Individual Donations</b>	<b>\$654,545</b>
<b>Grants &amp; Foundations</b>	<b>\$458,375</b>
<b>Capital</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,412,320</b>



<b>Program</b>	<b>\$1,159,113</b>
<b>Operations</b>	<b>\$98,654</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$164,172</b>
<b>Capital</b>	<b>\$41,017</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,462,956</b>



\*Revenue & expenses included here are reported upon a cash basis. Please refer to Orkeeswa's 990 and/or audit for accrual basis reporting.



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[www.orkeeswa.org](http://www.orkeeswa.org)