Last year, we had a series of exciting firsts, hosting our FIRST alumni day, attended by 72 graduates, our FIRST Kenyan fundraiser, a golf tournament that raised K426,000 ($4,200), and we hired our FIRST full-time Executive director. We also:

- In 2016, our Vocational Program students who took their Government Trade Test III achieved an 80% pass rate
- We worked with 20 parents and caregivers to expand Jitegemee’s vegetable garden as part of our Parent Empowerment Program in 2016, and started supplying vegetables to the feeding program
- We arranged health screenings for 197 children and caregivers over the course of 2016, including HIV testing and counseling
- So far, in 2017, we provided school fees, school uniforms and textbooks for 65 primary school students, 18 secondary school students, and 11 university students
- We welcomed 45 students to our vocational class of 2017
- In April, we hosted our first Jitegemee Open Day, where we welcomed hundreds of guests from the community, including government officials, representatives from schools, and churches, and other non-profit organizations
- Our students were featured in a song and music video about Jitegemee by a local musician Kyalo Maingi - also known as Machakos Kyalo
- And finally, two new staff joined our team - Joshua Muema, Social Worker, and Lucy Mutisya, Teacher. Recent Jitegemee university graduate, Peter Muasya also joined us for part-time financial consulting
Meet Felicitas. She’s the third born in a family of six. She was raised by a single mum in Mjini slum outside Machakos. She dropped out of school at the end of primary school and started doing odd jobs so she could buy food or clothes.

“My friends, girls I grew up with, were street children. They would sniff glue, sleep on the streets, because they didn’t have homes. Some ran away because they were hungry, some because they were sexually abused. They found it hard so they went to the streets to find food.

“I went to school up to the end of primary school. Although primary schooling is free in Kenya, the school still required KSh300 (around US$3) per term, which was a struggle for my mum, and often we would get sent home because we couldn’t afford it. We’d pay 50 bob (US0.50) at a time until we’d paid off what we owed.

“We’d go to school with empty stomachs. Other kids at school – they would be fed and come to school with snacks. We would envy those children. It was hard to focus when we were so hungry, but we knew we had to work hard to get out of the kind of life we were in.”

After dropping out of school and being a domestic worker for two years, Felicitas found out about Jitegemee and asked for a place in the vocational training program.

“I spent 6 months in the rehabilitation program, where I learned many things: I learned people skills, how to do public speaking, how to relate with people. After those six months we were told to pick a trade. I picked hairdressing. I had never done hairdressing before, but I naturally liked beauty so I thought it would be a good choice.

“On my first day on the job I earned 83 shillings! I thought, wow, I never thought I’d earn so much money! If I can earn 83 shillings on my first day, that means if I work harder I can get more clients, and I will earn even more.”

From there, Felicitas joined the most successful salon in Machakos, where she worked for five years. After that, she partnered with three colleagues to open their own salon. This went well for more than a year, until Felicitas went on maternity leave and had a falling out with her partners. Instead of seeing this as a setback, Felicitas saw an opportunity. With her baby girl at only 4-months old, Felicitas opened the doors of her own salon – G-Creations – and is now running her own successful business.

“I thank God for Jitegemee. Since I went there, I have had no regrets. Because of them I found my mum a real home. I provide for my three younger siblings and pay for their secondary school fees. Jitegemee gave me life. Jitegemee gave me a chance to be a good person; to be who I am today.”

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