



Rafiki

HELPING CHILDREN
WITH BURNS e.V.

Report

Kenya Mission Trip
May 17–24, 2025

Background: Mathare Community.

Mathare is one of the oldest and most densely populated informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya. Home to over 500,000 people, the community is characterized by extreme poverty, overcrowded living conditions, limited access to clean water, and minimal healthcare infrastructure.

Healthcare services in Mathare are stretched thin, and many residents live with chronic untreated conditions, including burn injuries and wound complications. Domestic fires caused by kerosene stoves or unsafe electrical wiring are common, often resulting in severe injuries, especially among children. Social and economic marginalization means that survivors of such injuries often lack the resources for sustained medical care or reconstructive treatment. Gender-based violence and poor maternal care are also pressing concerns in this context. It is within this backdrop that Rafiki Organization's mission finds both urgency and purpose.



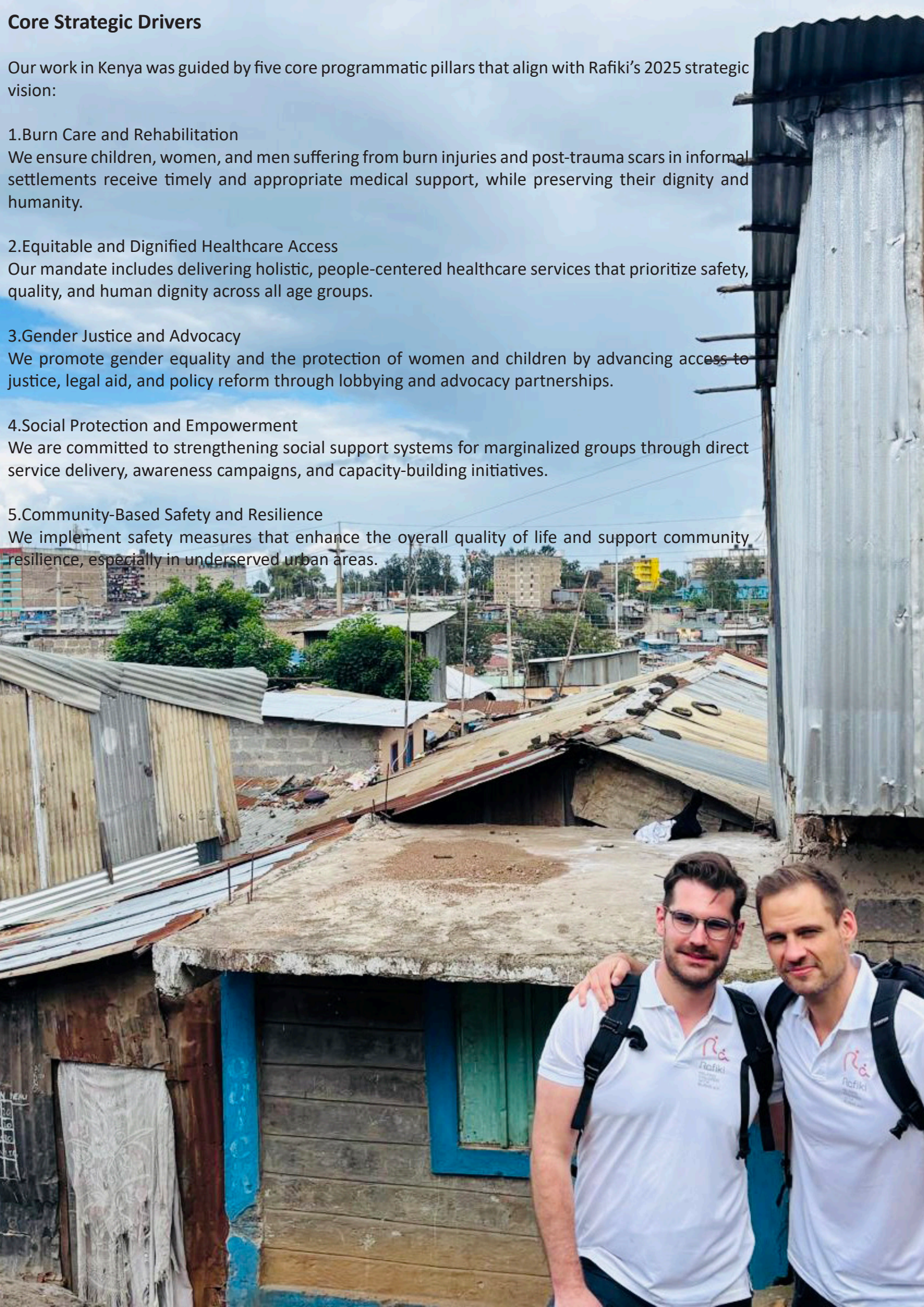


Introduction

Rafiki Organization embarked on a week-long medical mission trip to Kenya from May 17 to May 24, 2025. The mission's focus was on providing wound care and minor reconstructive surgery for burn survivors, many of whom reside in marginalized and underserved communities such as Mathare. The team collaborated with local health facilities and partners to deliver care, conduct training, and explore avenues for sustainable impact.

The 2025 mission to Kenya marked a significant milestone in Rafiki Organization's journey towards achieving our long-term strategic goals. This trip reflected the organization's unwavering commitment to healing, dignity, and justice for vulnerable communities, particularly in informal settlements such as Mathare, where access to healthcare and social protection remains a challenge.

Our work during this visit was driven by our mission to empower and support children, youth, women, and men affected by burn injuries, chronic wounds, and the aftermath of gender-based violence. We also explored opportunities to deepen partnerships and engage with grassroots health workers and justice advocates. This report outlines key outcomes of our seven-day field visit to Nairobi, captures lived experiences, and highlights critical lessons and recommendations moving forward.



Core Strategic Drivers

Our work in Kenya was guided by five core programmatic pillars that align with Rafiki's 2025 strategic vision:

1. Burn Care and Rehabilitation

We ensure children, women, and men suffering from burn injuries and post-trauma scars in informal settlements receive timely and appropriate medical support, while preserving their dignity and humanity.

2. Equitable and Dignified Healthcare Access

Our mandate includes delivering holistic, people-centered healthcare services that prioritize safety, quality, and human dignity across all age groups.

3. Gender Justice and Advocacy

We promote gender equality and the protection of women and children by advancing access to justice, legal aid, and policy reform through lobbying and advocacy partnerships.

4. Social Protection and Empowerment

We are committed to strengthening social support systems for marginalized groups through direct service delivery, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives.

5. Community-Based Safety and Resilience

We implement safety measures that enhance the overall quality of life and support community resilience, especially in underserved urban areas.

Overview of Visit Activities and Achievements

Mission Objective: To strengthen partnerships, provide specialized medical care, and promote community healing through collaboration between Rafiki Global and local health actors in Mathare.



Day 1 – May 17, 2025: Arrival in Nairobi.

The team arrived in Nairobi at approximately 9:00 p.m. after a long journey and was warmly received at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by Augustine and his colleague George. Despite the fatigue from travel, the group's spirits were lifted by the warmth and hospitality extended by their hosts. This initial welcome established a sense of safety and optimism that was crucial for the success of the mission.



Day 2 – May 18, 2025: Logistics and Setbacks

Following a much-needed day of rest and orientation, the team regrouped in the evening to run key errands in preparation for the week's engagements. They withdrew funds, procured essential medical and personal supplies, and discussed the outline of activities. They also shared a meal at a local restaurant using the moment to strengthen team bonds. However, the evening took a turn when Augustine's phone was stolen during dinner, a setback that underscored the need for vigilance. Despite the incident, Augustine remained composed and focused, embodying resilience and leadership under pressure.



Day 3 – May 19, 2025: Partnership Engagement at Baraka Health-Net.

The mission officially began with a visit to Baraka Health-Net, a well-established community health center in Mathare supported by German Doctors. Dr. Janet, the facility's medical director, welcomed the team with a comprehensive briefing on Baraka's history, operational model, and key challenges. She emphasized the facility's focus on dignity-centered care for low-income populations.

The team toured the facility, which included general consultation rooms, a wound care station, a pharmacy, and a nutrition counseling center. They spent the remainder of the day working alongside local and international health workers, providing care to patients, many of whom were suffering from chronic wounds or burn injuries. The day concluded with a strategic meeting with Baraka's CEO, which opened the door to future collaboration and knowledge exchange between Rafiki and Baraka Health-Net.

Day 4 – May 20, 2025: Expanding Medical Reach.

The team returned to Baraka Health-Net for another intensive day of clinical work. They supported the care for patients, offering services such as wound dressing, scar care, silicone sheet replacement, and follow-up consultations. The majority of patients were residents of Mathare and surrounding informal settlements, including children and elderly individuals with limited access to specialized care.

The day offered deeper insight into the long-term impact of burns and untreated injuries in low-resource settings. That evening, the team was hosted for dinner by the German Doctors' Nairobi team, creating an opportunity for cultural exchange, reflection, and peer learning.

Day 5 – May 21, 2025: Complex Cases and Community Interaction.

The day began with a clinic-wide meeting in which each department presented updates on patient caseloads, resource needs, and clinical trends. This holistic perspective enriched the team's understanding of the facility's integrated care model. Following the meeting, the team treated patients, including several children and adults with complex burn contractures and hypertrophic scars requiring minor surgical procedures. In addition to clinical work, the team engaged directly with caregivers, mostly mothers and grandmothers who shared emotional stories about navigating care for loved ones in harsh socio-economic conditions. These conversations were both humbling and energizing, reminding the team of the broader psychosocial elements involved in healing.





THUASNE



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EARS HEADBAND

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2

65% VISCOSE/BIOSSE
37% POLYESTER
9% ELASTANE/ELASTANE
ELASTAN



Day 6 – May 22, 2025: High-Volume Medical Outreach.

This marked one of the busiest days of the mission. The team, in collaboration with local nurses, community health workers, and international volunteers, provided care for patients. They encountered a range of conditions, from infected wounds and post-burn deformities to untreated trauma-related injuries.

The high patient volume illustrated the overwhelming need for specialized wound care in informal settlements and reinforced the importance of sustainable partnerships and training initiatives. The team noted a significant number of return patients, which demonstrated community trust in the Rafiki-Baraka collaboration.

Day 7 – May 23, 2025: Cultural Immersion and Team Rejuvenation.

Recognizing the importance of rest and cultural integration, the team spent the day on a guided game drive at Nairobi National Park, organized by Augustine and George. The group had the opportunity to observe wildlife such as giraffes, zebras, and lions, while also learning about Kenya's conservation efforts. This cultural immersion served as a time of reflection, bonding, and mental recharge. The natural beauty of Kenya and informal conversations with local partners helped renew the team's commitment to their mission and reminded them of the healing power of connection both with nature and each other.

Day 8 – May 24, 2025: Community Visit and Departure.

On the final day, the team visited Augustine's home in Lucky Summer, a densely populated neighborhood in Nairobi. Over shared tea and snacks, they connected with his family and community members, strengthening the personal bonds that sustain Rafiki's work beyond borders. Before heading to the airport, the team visited the Kenyatta International Convention Centre and local craft markets to purchase souvenirs. The evening was spent packing, debriefing, and sharing closing reflections before their departure. They left Nairobi with a renewed sense of purpose, deeper relationships, and a commitment to expanding Rafiki's model of community-driven, trauma-informed care.



Overview of Medical Services Provided.

Locations Visited:

oBaraka Health-Net in Mathare (in partnership with the German Doctors)

Services Delivered:

- oWound care: cleaning, dressing changes, and infection control
- oPressure therapy and silicone application for hypertrophic scars
- oPatient consultations and referrals for reconstructive surgery
- oBurn scar contracture assessment and management

Capacity Building & Collaboration

- Collaborated with Baraka Health-Net's nurses to train on burn care protocols
- Provided hands-on mentorship on wound dressing techniques.



Key Achievements

60+ patients reached, including burn victims, children, and elderly community members.

Throughout the initiative, patients were directly served, reflecting the program's wide-reaching impact across diverse and vulnerable groups. This included individuals suffering from severe burn injuries, young children requiring specialized care, and elderly members of the community with chronic wounds or trauma-related conditions. The outreach efforts demonstrated the initiative's commitment to inclusivity and addressing the unique needs of all age groups.

Minor surgeries conducted free of charge for select critical cases.

To alleviate immediate health burdens, a number of minor but essential surgical procedures were performed at no cost. These interventions targeted critical cases where timely surgery could prevent complications, promote faster healing, and reduce long-term disability. Providing these free services helped bridge gaps in access to surgical care within underserved populations, showcasing the program's dedication to equity in healthcare delivery.

Strengthened partnerships with Baraka Health-Net and the German Doctors team.

Collaboration was a key factor in the initiative's success. Strengthening existing partnerships with Baraka Health-Net and the German Doctors not only enhanced resource sharing but also improved service coordination. These alliances allowed for pooling of expertise, joint outreach, and more comprehensive care delivery, ensuring patients benefited from multidisciplinary approaches and a broader network of support.

Demonstrated community trust and demand for expanded wound care and trauma services.

The positive response from the community underscored a significant unmet need for specialized wound care and trauma services. High patient turnout and follow-up engagement indicated growing trust in the program's providers and a willingness among community members to seek timely medical attention. This demand signals potential for program expansion and further investment in these critical healthcare areas.

Established groundwork for a future memorandum of understanding (MoU) with local providers.

Recognizing the importance of sustainability and formalized collaboration, the initiative laid the foundation for a forthcoming MoU with local healthcare providers. This agreement aims to institutionalize partnerships, streamline referral pathways, and enhance continuity of care. The MoU will support shared goals of improving wound care management and trauma services within the community, ultimately contributing to stronger health system integration and better patient outcomes.



Case Study: Salma's Story – A Journey of Healing and Hope

Name: Salma

Residence: Kosovo Village, Mathare

Condition: Severe burn contractures on her Right arm and forearm

Cause of Injury: Accidental fall into a cooking fire at home

Date of First Visit: May 20, 2025

Salma is a bright, playful young girl who lives with her grandmother in a tiny one-room shack in the Kosovo section of Mathare. She sustained third-degree burns when a charcoal stove tipped over while she was playing inside. With limited access to formal healthcare, Salma's wounds were treated with home remedies for several weeks, resulting in severe scarring and loss of hand mobility.

When she arrived at Baraka Health-Net during our mission visit, Salma was shy and in visible discomfort. Our team, in collaboration with Baraka's nurses and the German Doctors, immediately initiated care. We cleaned her wound, with a deeper wound treated by Baraka. It was a perfect time after four weeks to offer therapy with silicone and compression. We also offered her grandmother guidance on long-term rehabilitation and connected her with a follow-up physiotherapy plan.

By the end of the visit, Salma's pain had reduced significantly, and she gifted the team one of her rare, radiant smiles. .

"I never thought someone would come to help us without asking for money. You gave my granddaughter hope again."

— Salma's Grandmother.

Key Remarks from Beneficiaries

“Before this team came, my wounds had been untreated for months. They did not just clean them—they spoke to me with dignity.”
— James, 32, burn survivor



“I have lived in Mathare for over 20 years. I have never seen such compassion from outsiders. They worked tirelessly, and it gave us courage.”
— A local elder and community liaison

“You showed that even scars can be treated with respect. We hope you come back soon.”
— A teenage mother treated for wound infection.





Challenges Encountered

- Limited time constrained the number of patients we could serve and the scope of training we could provide
- Shortage of specialized wound care materials, including silicone sheets and burn dressings
- Language barrier, especially when interacting with older clients without translators
- Urban insecurity, highlighted by the phone theft incident, though it did not deter our efforts.

Recommendations.

Extend future visits to 14 days to allow for training workshops, community forums, and more comprehensive service delivery.

Increasing the duration of future outreach visits to two weeks will enable the program to go beyond immediate clinical care. This extension provides valuable time to conduct in-depth training workshops for local healthcare workers, enhancing their skills in wound care and trauma management. Additionally, organizing community forums will facilitate dialogue between providers and residents, fostering health education, awareness, and trust. Longer visits also allow for a broader range of medical services to be offered, improving overall quality and continuity of care.

Procure and pre-position wound care supplies ahead of missions to avoid shortages.

Ensuring a steady and sufficient supply of medical materials is critical for uninterrupted service delivery. By procuring and strategically pre-positioning wound care supplies before each mission, the program can mitigate risks of stockouts during field visits. This logistical planning helps maintain efficient operations, reduce delays, and guarantee that essential treatments are available when patients need them, particularly in remote or resource-limited settings.

Engage local translators or Swahili-speaking volunteers to assist with patient communication.

Effective communication is fundamental to delivering patient-centered care. Recruiting local translators or volunteers fluent in Swahili will bridge language barriers, ensuring patients fully understand their diagnosis, treatment plans, and follow-up instructions. This approach also strengthens cultural sensitivity, builds rapport, and encourages community members to actively participate in their own healing process.

Formalize partnerships through MoUs for sustainability and resource mobilization

To foster long-term collaboration and program sustainability, formalizing relationships with local health providers and partner organizations via Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) is essential. These agreements will clarify roles, responsibilities, and shared objectives, facilitating coordinated efforts and efficient resource allocation. MoUs can also unlock opportunities for joint funding, training, and infrastructure support, thereby enhancing the initiative's impact and scalability.

Explore mobile clinics to reach remote settlements with similar burn and trauma care needs

Many affected populations live in hard-to-reach areas with limited access to healthcare facilities. Deploying mobile clinics equipped for burn and trauma care can overcome geographic barriers and extend vital services directly to underserved remote settlements. Mobile units offer flexible, on-site treatment, community education, and follow-up, ensuring that vulnerable groups receive timely interventions without the burden of travel.



Next Steps.

- **Conduct a detailed needs assessment for supplies and logistics.**

Compile a comprehensive report identifying required medical supplies, equipment, and logistical support for the next outreach trip, including stock levels, gaps, and procurement timelines.

- **Facilitate a debrief workshop with the Rafiki Germany team.**

Schedule and lead a structured workshop with all Rafiki Germany stakeholders to review outcomes, challenges, and best practices from the recent mission, and document actionable lessons learned.

- **Engage in regional forums on child health and burn injury response.**

Identify and register for upcoming regional conferences or workshops focused on pediatric health and burn care to strengthen knowledge, partnerships, and visibility.

- **Develop a detailed plan for the next medical outreach and stakeholder engagement in Kenya.**

Prepare a comprehensive operational plan targeting early 2026, outlining key activities, timeline, roles, budget, and partner coordination for the next outreach visit.

Sustainability and Long-Term Strategy.

- **Establish and formalize a referral network with local hospitals for surgery candidates**

Create a clear, documented referral pathway connecting outreach services with local surgical centers to ensure timely treatment of patients requiring reconstructive surgery.

- **Maintain and expand partnerships with Operation Smile and other reconstructive surgery providers**

Continue collaboration with established surgical partners, exploring opportunities to increase patient access to free or subsidized reconstructive procedures.

- **Assess the feasibility of a permanent burn care and wound rehabilitation clinic in Mathare.**

Conduct a feasibility study including needs assessment, cost analysis, stakeholder consultation, and potential funding sources to explore establishing a dedicated clinic for burn and wound rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The mission reaffirmed Rafiki Organization's unique and essential role in serving marginalized communities such as Mathare. Despite facing several operational challenges, the impact made was clear and deeply meaningful.

The work extended beyond physical healing, it restored dignity, resilience, and a sense of hope for burn survivors and vulnerable members of the community. The visit laid a strong foundation for expanding burn recovery and gender-based protection programs across Kenya. Partnerships were strengthened, and valuable lessons were learned that will guide the scaling up of these vital services.

Gratitude was expressed to donors, partners, and local hosts, whose support made the mission possible. Together, the efforts were seen as building a future where no one is left behind due to lack of access to proper care.

Looking ahead, Rafiki Organization is committed to deepening its work in Kenya and beyond by strengthening referral networks, exploring permanent care solutions, and engaging communities to ensure sustainability and lasting impact. With continued support, Rafiki planned to keep advancing its mission of bringing healing, hope, and opportunity to those who need it most.