



Arthur Waser
Foundation

Education, Social, Culture



2025

Annual Report

Arthur Waser Foundation AWF, 19 June 2026

Cover photo: Agro-Mechanization Course in Lipilipili, Ruvuma Region,
Tanzania, as part of the Agricultural Programme.

Photo: Sr. Scolastica Tesha, November 2023

All images and graphics used in the 2025 Annual Report are, unless
otherwise indicated, the property of the Arthur Waser Foundation
and protected by copyright.

Content

25 Years Arthur Waser Foundation: Foreword by the Founder	5
Reflections and Outlook by the Managing Director	8
Preschool and Primary Education	
Montessori For All: Child-centred Education in the Public School System	14
Technical Education	
Secondary and Tertiary Education in the Context of Social Tensions and Conflicts	20
Overview of Activities 2025	
Programmes and projects	26
Key figures	27
Urbanisation and Architecture	
A Vision of Communally Built Living Spaces	28
Agriculture	
From Dependence to Sovereignty: The Transformation of Tanzanian Agriculture	34
Central Switzerland	
Using Available Resources Wisely and Sustainably: Support in the Social Field	41
Arts & Culture Funding	44
Grants/Expenditures 2025	50



25 Years Arthur Waser Foundation

Arthur Waser

At their best, foundations are not merely grant-giving, but sense-giving, meaning, they do not simply fund causes. For me, it is ideas, values and knowledge, but above all people, that give a foundation its purpose. With these thoughts in mind, I founded our foundation 25 years ago, and I look back with great satisfaction at how it has grown and where it stands today.

Let me be clear: the foundation does not exist for the founder's gratification. Also, the idea of using it to build personal reputation was, and remains, foreign to me. Instead, I think of this: in a world of enormous material inequality, there are hundreds of millions — indeed billions — of people who cannot develop and live their human potential, who have no access to basic public services, and who cannot unfold their entrepreneurial talents. That is an enormous waste, and a failure of society. I see our foundation's work then as a question of justice as well. I was born in Switzerland and had the best possible conditions to seize my opportunities, take on responsibility, and make decisions freely. Not all my decisions were good ones, but they were my decisions. I had a choice. Millions of people, by contrast, have no choice and no chance. I am not saying that money makes you happy. It's not about money, and perhaps not even about happiness. What I am saying is that the ability to shape one's own life consciously and responsibly should be available to all human beings. That is what motivated me to establish my foundation 25 years ago. That is its *raison d'être*.

I do not wish to go into the details of the various stages of our foundation's development, whether in Central Switzerland nor in the African focus countries. That retrospective is provided by the foundation's Managing Director David Keller in the following article. But from my perspective as founder, I would like to set out the following:

1) I believe it is better to start a foundation in good time. Many foundations were established too late, and the founder was no longer able to follow and shape their development. Some well-known examples from recent years show what can go wrong. I therefore want to encourage those entrepreneurs who think about establishing a foundation: when the ideas are ready, found it! The life of an entrepreneur is demanding, and business success in a free-market economy may feel like the ultimate achievement for many. But the life of a foundation founder is equally demanding, opens up new worlds, and the sense of fulfilment is just as great. Personally, I would have founded my foundation just the same, even if I had not remained childless.

2) In its early years, my foundation tested many different activities and tried out new approaches. This seems to me important and legitimate, above all when lessons are drawn from the different experiments. Developing effective strategies and strong approaches takes time. Over the years, convictions become clearer and stronger, and what might be called the founder's

Arthur Waser with Sister Elistaha in Sanya Juu, Tanzania, during a visit to the Ushirika wa Neema avocado plantation in November 2022.

will also take shape and solidifies. But I would warn against setting that intent in stone. Today I rely on a highly capable board of trustees, some of whom have accompanied me for a very long time. Future generations of trustees will also need room to shape things and adapt to changing realities, and broadly framed foundation purposes must allow for that.

3) The thread running through our Africa strategy might be described as «education at all levels, with complementary measures» within a tightly defined geography. I would highlight the example of early childhood education in Tanzania. Here, we were able to build on a very strong foundation of teachers trained in Montessori pedagogy. The more than 6,000 educators active today were trained primarily by the Baldegg Sisters, their successor congregations, and other Christian religious congregations. They form the largest pool of Montessori educators in Africa. We took this potential as our starting point, carrying Montessori pedagogy from private preschools into public kindergartens and, later, into public primary schools. This is a unique experiment worldwide, and the challenge is considerable. The goal is to change the school system itself, in close collaboration with the relevant ministries. I have no illusions: it may take a generation before we see results. But there is no alternative to replacing the authoritarian school system. This also includes school architecture, because Africa needs new school buildings. Architecture and construction have interested me throughout my life. We have therefore produced a comprehensive handbook for child-centered school design and have built several model schools. This new thinking in school construction provides a foundation to build on, in my view.

Finally: in technical education in Ghana and Tanzania, and in tertiary education, we focus strategically almost exclusively on solar technicians. This is based on a firm conviction that solar energy is the energy source of the future on the African continent — where else, if not in Africa? Demand for solar technicians will grow accordingly, and the technicians being trained today will find employment tomorrow.

4) We support independent and self-reliant local partners who develop African solutions for African problems. This local approach seems to me essential for any foundation wishing to work internationally. Our Montessori training partners in Tanzania were, almost inevitably, the religious congregations with whom we had the privilege of working. There were six Montessori teacher training centers run by congregations. But the question then arose of how these rapidly growing congregations would sustain themselves financially in the future, since the congregations in Switzerland and across Europe, due to their ageing, are no longer in a position to support their African sisters. Together with the African sisters, we therefore developed an agricultural strategy as a complementary measure. After careful training in sustainable farming, we financed the entrepreneurial development of their — in some cases very large — agricultural enterprises on the basis of business plans. This annual report covers that in more detail. What was decisive, however, was this: the religious congregations are, in every respect, highly reliable and self-confident social enterprises that place their work for Tanzanian society at the forefront. I find it remarkable that, with our focus on collaboration with African congregations, we have created something of a unique position in the Swiss foundation landscape.

5) Twenty-five years ago, we decided to engage as meaningfully as possible in Central Switzerland as well. On one hand, we do this in the social field, because Switzerland now has 700,000 people living in poverty, and the public sector sometimes appears overwhelmed. On the other hand, I regard the rich arts and cultural life of Central Switzerland, at both the excellence level and in its breadth, as highly worthy of support. We now support the events of 150 smaller and mid-sized organisations every year. We also support the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and the Lucerne Festival, whose directors over the past twenty years have achieved great things for Lucerne and for Switzerland. I have also witnessed great performances at the Lucerne Theatre from its various directors over the years. As is well known, our foundation co-financed the competition for the new theatre building, but we lost the vote on the winning project in February 2025. We regret and accept that of course, because we are democrats. More than that: our engagement in arts and culture is precisely aimed at preserving and promoting Switzerland's great democratic tradition and the work of the many volunteers in civic associations.

Perhaps I have an old-fashioned understanding of work, shaped by the post-war years. But I had a choice, and I made my decision: at the age of 96, I remain committed to my businesses and my foundation, and feel alive and motivated — even as the moment of letting go draws inevitably closer.



Arthur Waser

About the Founder

Arthur Waser was born in 1930 in Lucerne, where he spent his entire life.

Shortly after completing his Matura at the Kollegium Schwyz, he founded his first company in the mineral oil trade at the age of twenty, before beginning to invest in real estate in the 1970s. Today, his diversified investment portfolio includes properties in Switzerland as well as securities and equity stakes worldwide.

In 2000, Arthur Waser established his foundation in Lucerne, designating it as the sole heir to his estate.

Retrospective and Outlook

David Keller, Managing Director

I am taking the Arthur Waser Foundation's 25th anniversary as an occasion to look back and venture a look ahead. My retrospective covers the past eight years, which I have personally experienced as Managing Director. My outlook concerns the next few years, which in our time of disruptive change borders on the speculative.

With an estimated capital of over CHF 160 billion, Switzerland holds the world's top position in «foundation capital per capita». This is due to liberal foundation and tax law and the country's general stability. Foundations pay for these freedoms with the relevance of what they do for society, and how they do it.

Retrospective

1. Starting Point and System Analysis

Due to particular circumstances, the Arthur Waser Foundation was without operational leadership from July 2017 to April 2018. In Tanzania, a project run in collaboration with the international Montessori Federation in Amsterdam (AMI) gave 45 Montessori teachers the opportunity to deepen their training through an international diploma course in Dar es Salaam. In Ghana, the Foundation supported a secondary-level technical vocational school and its mentoring by the Bern University of Applied Sciences, which made this school one of the best technical secondary schools in the country.

Two surveys in Tanzania, covering the then seven Montessori training centers and a sample of 400 Montessori teachers, highlighted the enormous «human capital» of up to 4,500 Montessori teachers. Trained by the Baldegg Sisters and their successor congregations, and holding a national certificate, these teachers offered early childhood education in private «nursery schools» at a high standard, and at a price affordable even for poorer families. The other survey highlighted teachers' demand for further training, renewal of Montessori materials, renovation of nursery schools,

and participation in annual conferences, which were unaffordable for most. An impact study in Ghana, on the other hand, reached the sobering conclusion that a third of graduates from one of the country's best technical schools were still unemployed five years after graduating.

2. Building the Partner Base

A key insight from these surveys, then as now, was that a systemic approach can only succeed with a partner base in which all important stakeholder groups are represented. Starting in 2019, the number of the Arthur Waser Foundation's local partner organizations was expanded from two to fourteen in Tanzania and from one to five in Ghana. In a clear decision against setting up local branches, we established two local, independent organizations in Tanzania, which became our «coordination partners».

These coordination partners are largely financially dependent on the Arthur Waser Foundation and coordinate programmes and projects with the partner organisations. At the heart of the partnership concept are joint system analysis, joint agenda-setting processes, joint strategy- and joint learning processes. What differs is the division of roles. The Arthur Waser Foundation holds the capital and sees itself as a participatory learning and knowledge platform with methodological expertise and clear ideas about approaches and philosophy. Our partners and coordination partners together hold contextual knowledge, implementation capacity, and access to all other stakeholder groups, in particular government bodies.

The underlying idea of the partnerships formed since 2019 was to build and continuously adjust a basis of mutual trust. This was reinforced through a monitoring process, but to no small degree also through the promotion of self-control and «peers control» mechanism. Since the long-term progress of our Tanzanian partners, who notably include Christian congregations, depends heavily

on developing entrepreneurial revenue models to strengthen their self-financing, the promotion of entrepreneurial responsibility and the corresponding capacity building also became essential.

In Ghana, we established a partnership with the Salesians, arguably the world's most competent congregation in the field of technical education. Together with them and other partners, we built a network of 17 technical schools and enabled their teacher training in solar technology with the Salesians. In tertiary education, we first invested in establishing a joint master's programme between ETH Zurich and Ashesi University, and then directly in Ashesi University projects. Finally, the partnership with Swisscontact brought us closer to the goal of making technician training more demand driven. This is described starting on page 19 of this annual report.

Our partnership logic culminates in a newly created Trust Fund in Tanzania, which we report on in detail in this annual report (from page 30). We decided to give our congregation partners interest-free loans to enable the entrepreneurial development of their agricultural operations. The loans are to be repaid to this Tanzanian Trust Fund. The trust is a «revolving fund» that can independently decide on further loans, with the recipient organizations themselves also serving as trustees on the board. In doing so, we not only promote the entrepreneurial responsibility of our partners in the Global South but also delegate decision-making power over part of the financial resources to them.

3. Strategic Focus

Our strategy development was strongly shaped by «emergence». In their influential 1985 essay (Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent), Mintzberg and Waters distinguished between deliberate and emergent strategy. To stay with the example of preschool and school education in Tanzania: our education strategy was deliberate in that the Arthur Waser Foundation's frame of reference was the fourth of the 2015 Sustainable Development

Goals (SDG 4). Unlike the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, which postulated merely «access to education», this goal calls for improving the quality of education. In fact, over 95 percent of children in Tanzania today have access to education, yet the quality in overcrowded classrooms with authoritarian teachers is unsatisfactory across large parts of the country. The practice of emergent strategies proves its worth especially in complex, dynamic contexts. In such contexts, the predictable logic of causes producing specific effects fails, or put differently: multi-year strategies built on causal assumptions can quickly become obsolete in unstable contexts. What is needed instead is local knowledge and adaptive management. What can be measured must of course be measured. But more decisive are steep and fast learning curves that allow emergent patterns and changes in context to be recognized quickly and responded to.

In the case of our education strategy in Tanzania, we tried to adapt our strategy to the existing social capital and to recognize the opportunities within the country's shifting national education strategies. We analysed and involved all stakeholder groups across the entire education system, and ultimately also factored the forces resisting any change into our emergent strategies. The samurai principle of «aiki and irimi,» translated as «harmonise, then enter», captures this well: our local partners were able to overcome the initial resistance of the large body of non-Montessori teachers by convincing them that a child's need to learn is innate and merely needs to be allowed to unfold. This was, and remains, the central and compelling core message of Montessori training. The Montessori teachers' association also succeeded in bringing the relevant government ministries on board, to introduce child-centered pedagogy into public kindergartens and later into public primary schools.

In summary, the Arthur Waser Foundation pursues an education strategy across all levels of education, starting with early childhood and primary education, through technical education focused exclusively on training solar technicians, up to the tertiary level.



Visit to the Maua Sisters in Sanya Juu: climate change is leaving its mark on the agricultural landscape.

This education strategy is complemented by the already mentioned strengthening of our congregation partners (who are engaged in education) in their income-generating activities, that is, primarily on their farms.

4. Conclusion: A Systemic Approach and Rational Bets

In summary, the Arthur Waser Foundation, together with its local partner organizations, practices a locally-led, systemic approach with the following elements:

- Working not on symptoms but on root causes, on changing mental models, and on transforming systems
- Delegating responsibility to partners who are connected to the Foundation over the long term and networked with one another, with a focus on African solutions for African problems
- Joint analysis of systems through fast, steep, participatory learning curves
- Trust in partners as a foundation, reinforced through monitoring, self-measurement, and peer measurement, paired with measuring effectiveness, wherever that makes sense.

The success of our approaches and strategies is not guaranteed. We regard the most important strategic decisions as rational bets. The rationality of such bets is essentially common sense. They are often grounded in the experience of knowledge holders and reflect the fact that «locally-led development» is not only an exact science but also contains a substantial element of art. These aspects are also expressed in a new book we plan to publish in 2026. The book is a North-South dialogue between two architects and an account of their experience. It describes the collision between a modernist urban planning project conceived in Switzerland and an Ethiopian community of small farmers' claim to self-determination (the full account begins on page 28).

After eight years of work, the most important rational bets we are pursuing together with our partners are:

1. The bet on child-centered pedagogy, including in public schools
2. The bet on child-centered school buildings
3. The bet on solar energy in Africa and the solar technician training it requires
4. The bet on sustainable agriculture, including on larger areas of land, and on the entrepreneurial responsibility and capabilities of our congregation partners
5. The bet on the social, transformative power of our partners, including African sisters' and brothers' congregations

5. Our Engagement in Central Switzerland

A key difference between our funding activities in Central Switzerland and our international engagements is that our funding logic here at home is not proactive but reactive. We have set priorities in cultural funding and in the social sector. Following the 2025 strategic revision of our goals in the arts and culture field, we placed quality criteria and artistic self-standards in the foreground, and we will continue to support cultural life and volunteer engagement in associations. We have defined artistic avant-garde as a priority, but our funds are also allocated to «high culture» and the established music and theater institutions. Of course, it generally makes no sense for grant-making foundations in the arts and culture sector to exert direct influence on the programming of the many institutions, associations, cultural producers, and protagonists involved. We claim to have «funding competence» based on cross-comparison of submitted applications and years of experience, but we do not claim artistic «programming competence».

What has just been said applies similarly to the social sector. In principle, it would be possible to outsource certain decisions to a «peer group»

of competent organizations in a given subfield, which could then distribute the funds among themselves independently. Organizations that work with people affected by addiction, for example, usually understand more about the quality of work with this group than a foundation board and management team would. On the other hand, centralizing decision-making power at foundation boards often leads to more neutral decisions that tend to be free of vested interests.

Outlook

1. Starting Point

There seems to be a consensus that we are in a period of major upheaval. Perhaps never before in human history have so many radically convinced enthusiasts encountered so many radically convinced prophets of doom. The latter view the situation more pessimistically than ever. Here are some of the problem areas:

- **Climate change:** human-caused climate change is unstoppable, causing sea levels to rise, leading to more extreme weather events, reducing biodiversity, degrading the quality of soil and water, intensifying the energy crisis, and causing food shortages.
- **Technology:** artificial intelligence radically challenges humanity's exclusive claim to intelligence, the decoding of DNA opens up the possibility of creating life, and robotics allows for the «embodiment» of artificial intelligence.
- **Social divide:** the gap between rich and poor is widening, demographic developments are reinforcing inequalities, and migration flows are one of the consequences.
- **War:** armed conflicts over resources and ideologies are increasing worldwide.
- **Crisis of democracy:** polarization is intensifying, people are seeking simple solutions and increasingly vote for autocrats, and the totalitarian surveillance state is becoming possible.

- **Government debt:** the massive government debt of the United States could lead to a devaluation of the world's reserve currency and ultimately to state bankruptcy, which would not occur without massive global conflict.
- **Truth:** the concept of «objective truth» is under attack, «fake» and «news» are barely distinguishable anymore, and the manipulation of truth dominates politics and the media.
- **Philosophy:** the concepts of human being, life, intelligence, society, nature, and technology, as defined during the Enlightenment, are no longer sufficient today.

«When a tsunami comes, you cannot keep building sandcastles.»

Frank-Jürgen Weise, former head of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany, FAZ 2015

2. What Has Proven Itself and What Is Obsolete

We are simply not in a position to objectively assess the bleak scenarios and their enthusiastic alternatives. Yet if one assumes that epoch-making, disruptive changes are taking place, then the question of the relevance of Swiss foundations' purposes arises today more urgently than ever.

The «dogma of the founder's intent» obliged foundations until 2024 to defend even obsolete purposes. One example: decades after dowries for marriage had fallen out of use, there were still foundations meant to finance such a «dowry for women from poor backgrounds». Consistent with this, according to the Federal Supervisory Authority for Foundations (ESA), dozens of «dead» foundations were dissolved in 2025 because they were no longer structurally viable; many of them had purposes that had lost their meaning. Future-proof foundation purposes are therefore those that can respond flexibly to societally relevant developments and upheavals.

3. Emergency Law in the Face of epochal Changes

Suppose that within three to five years Switzerland finds itself in a war between NATO and Russia, something part of the Swiss military leadership now considers not just possible but likely. Would foundations then be able — contrary to their stated purposes — to commit themselves to protecting the population or even to Switzerland's rearmament?

It is conceivable that, in the event of war breaking out, foundation law could be changed via emergency law at an «un-Swiss» pace. In the case of climate change, however, emergency law is considerably harder to apply, because in dealing with slow-moving developments we are about as sluggish as frogs in slowly warming water. However, if the looming upheavals in the areas mentioned above turn out to be as severe as many fear, the federal state may well seize Swiss foundations' assets through confiscation. Let us hope, then, that these fears do not come true.

4. Resilience and Preparedness

With our rational bets in our focus countries in Africa, we are already aiming today at strengthening the resilience of our partner organizations and their «preparedness» for disruptive developments.

On one hand, we try to cushion the effects of climate change through sustainable agriculture. This strengthens resilience to extreme weather events and the population's food security. It also improves biodiversity and counteracts the worldwide loss of fertile soil. We see the effects of climate change in farm water management as well. Tanzania today is marked by a constant pattern of either «too much» or «too little» water. Our partner congregations are strengthening their resilience by storing heavy rainfall on their land so they can draw on reservoirs during periods of drought. These efforts are supported through the promotion of entrepreneurial initiative.

In the field of education, the correlation between girls' and women's education and declining birth

rates has by now been demonstrated in major studies. However, our rational bet on high-quality education at all levels aims at economic development and stable democracies, not the side effect of declining birth rates. Moreover, child-centered pedagogy, together with the corresponding school buildings, fosters not only free self-development but also responsible and critical thinking of children as future citizens. At the tertiary level, we promote ethical leadership for business and society. Acting with integrity is one of the highest, overarching learning goals at Ashesi University in Ghana and creates the foundation for a cascading effect of ethical principles. Finally, our focus on technical education for the solar sector promotes renewable energy, which will hold a leading position worldwide and directly counteracts climate change.

Still, we expect the greatest resilience and strength of our African partners to come, in general, from consistently empowering them as partners to develop their own systemic solutions and find their own answers to the disruptions ahead. The potentially epoch-making changes mentioned above are unfolding differently in the African context, and the answers to them must be African answers.

In Central Switzerland, increasing resilience and preparedness means to enhance Switzerland's democratic cohesion, since the arts and culture foster reflection, participation, and community. In the social area, artificial intelligence might eventually lead to major job losses predicted by many. This could mean that the affected population, beyond the immediate financial problems, would also no longer be able to pay taxes, which in turn would lead to a crisis of legitimacy in political participation. Further education and preventive work with the unemployed and those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, as well as with younger and elderly people without work is already a strong focus of the Arthur Waser Foundation's social sector activities.

Preschool and Primary Education

Benjamin Brühwiler, Programme Manager

Montessori For All: Child-centred Education in the Public School System

In Tanzania, around 1.5 million children attend a public kindergarten. More than 16,000 teachers teach these children, often under challenging conditions. A good half of these teachers have no specific training in early childhood education. Teaching is characterised by whole-class instruction, discipline and teacher-centred methods. As a result, creativity, independent learning and children's individual development are promoted only to a very limited extent.

Over the past ten years, the Government of Tanzania has made important progress, for example by providing free access to kindergarten and primary school. At the same time, the quality of early childhood education in many public schools remains inadequate. Children from rural areas and disadvantaged social backgrounds in particular often do not receive an education that truly prepares them for school and life.

Our work currently focuses on preschool education; primary school is envisaged as the next area of development. At the centre of this work is the Community Rooted Education programme, CoRE. CoRE builds on internationally tested Montessori principles. The Montessori Community of Tanzania, MCT, has adapted the approach to the Tanzanian context, initially for public kindergartens, and implements it as a locally legitimate coordinating partner.

CoRE systematically brings Montessori principles into public kindergartens. Local trainers, the CoRE Facilitators, train government teachers on site and

accompany them in the classroom over a longer period of time. In this way, child-centred teaching becomes practically implementable within the local reality.

The 2025 pilot year showed that CoRE can also be implemented effectively within the public system. Teachers received further training and support, children learnt in transformed, child-centred learning environments, and teachers adopted the approach in practice using locally available materials. The opposite page provides an overview of the CoRE pilot as well as its consolidation and scaling.

CoRE is designed as a systems approach. Over the next five years, we aim to reach a critical mass of at least 4,000 trained teachers. This corresponds to around 25 per cent of the approximately 16,000 teachers working in the public kindergarten sector. Such a critical mass can change the system. Trained teachers, together with parents at CoRE schools and committed individuals within government structures, can help ensure that CoRE training courses eventually become part of government-funded teacher professional development. In Tanzania, this system is called MEWAKA. If this integration succeeds, the lever will shift from external support to government ownership.

Cooperation with Government Structures as a Key Issue

CoRE is aimed at the public school system. Cooperation with government structures is therefore a prerequisite for access to schools, the involvement of teachers and authorities, and the long-term safeguarding of the approach within the public system.

CoRE in Tanzania: Pilot 2025, Consolidation 2026 and Scaling from 2027

The map shows the 2025 pilot regions in dark brown, which will move into Phase 2 in 2026, as well as the expansion areas in light brown, which will begin Phase 1 in 2026. In 2026, the focus will not be on rapid expansion, but on consolidating capacity, in particular by developing certified CoRE Facilitators as the basis for scaling from 2027 onwards.

2025: Pilot Phase

115 public kindergartens reached, 177 teachers trained and supported, 37 facilitators-in-training developed, 13,323 children reached, 172 classrooms transformed.

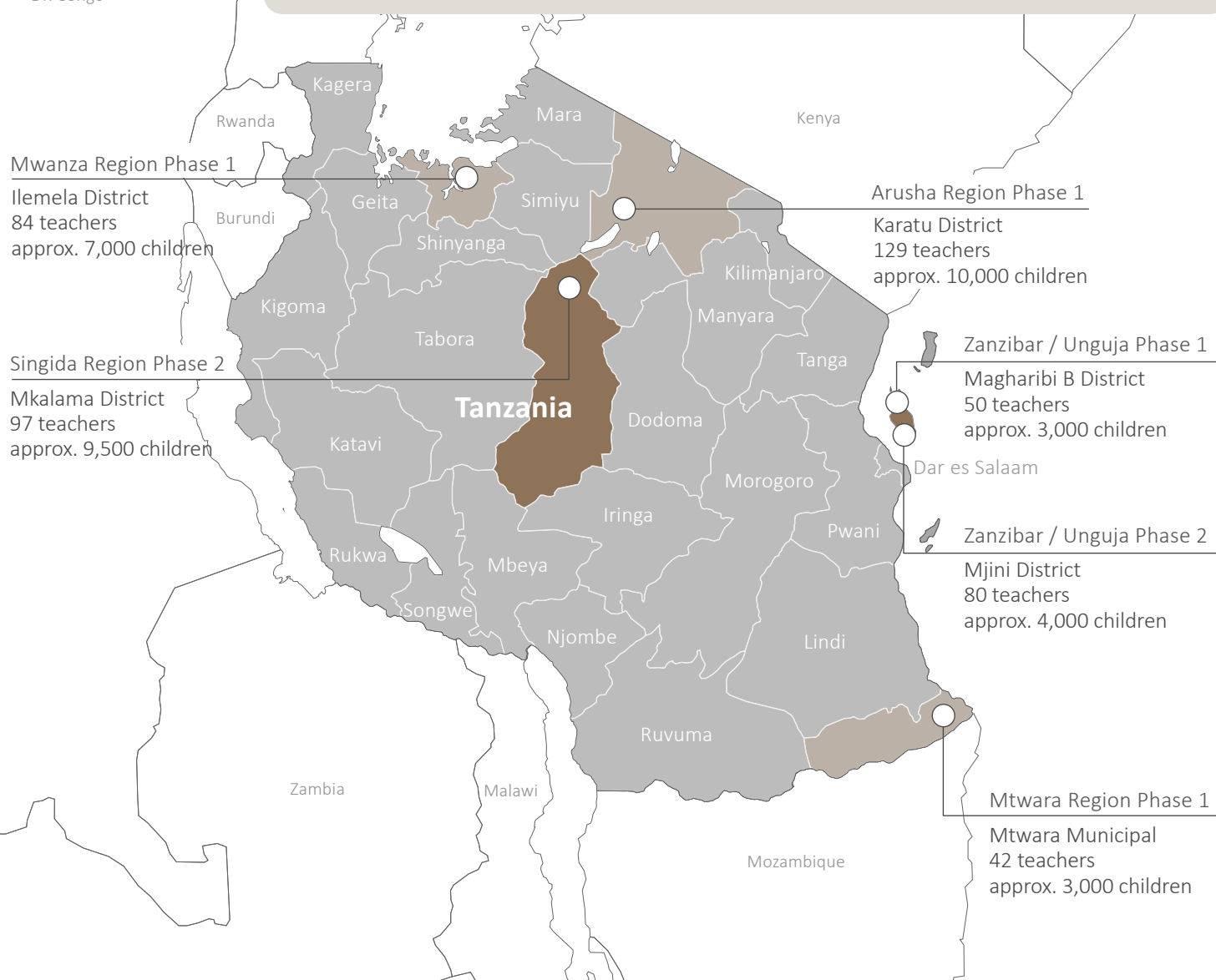
2026: Consolidation

Continuation in Mkalama and Unguja, expansion to Ilemela, Mtwara, Karatu and Northern Unguja. The focus is on

consolidating capacity. By the end of 2026, at least 25 AMI-certified CoRE Facilitators should be available, 305 public kindergarten teachers should have received further training, and more than 18,300 children should have been reached. In addition, 30 government specialists are to be involved in supervision and quality assurance.

2027 to 2030: Scaling

Deployment of certified CoRE Facilitators in additional districts and regions, with decreasing dependence on external technical support and stronger integration into government training and support systems. In the long term, the goal is to reach a critical mass of 4,000 trained teachers and to anchor CoRE in government-funded professional development structures.



In dynamic political and institutional contexts, such cooperation is particularly demanding. Developments around the national elections at the end of October 2025 once again showed how important reliable relationships, established trust and clear roles are. Where government institutions are central to reach and sustainability, the question becomes all the more urgent of how cooperation can be shaped in a way that enables impact and strengthens local responsibility.

This question concerns not only CoRE but also exemplifies the challenge of how foundations can engage responsibly in public sectors. Cooperation with government bodies can create considerable leverage. At the same time, it must be designed in such a way that local actors remain visible, existing coordination processes are strengthened and responsibility is not shifted outwards. In practice, this is decided in very concrete ways, namely in access to schools, in time slots for training, in coordination at district level and in the trust between school leaders, local authorities, communities and MCT.

It is also important that the government is already making a substantial contribution. Teachers continue to receive their salaries during CoRE training. Government bodies make schools and rooms available for training. In some cases, transport costs are also shared. The 2025 CoRE pilot therefore shows that cooperation does not exist only on paper but is expressed in concrete resources and shared responsibility. Impact arises through the interplay of local support, continuous classroom-based assistance and implementation that is backed by government bodies.

CoRE is not designed as a one-off workshop. Teachers are accompanied over the course of an entire year. Facilitators regularly visit teachers on site in the classroom, observe, coach and support the implementation step by step. This support is a key reason why new practices are more likely to

endure in everyday school life. In the 2025 CoRE pilot, teachers reported visible changes away from discipline based on punishment towards respectful, child-centred forms of teaching. At the same time, learning among colleagues became more important. CoRE practices were also passed on to teachers who had not yet participated directly in the programme. Teachers showed a high level of motivation to teach in a more child-friendly way and experienced that children learn better when the learning environment and forms of interaction change.

The endorsement of the Association Montessori Internationale, AMI, is also significant. In the Montessori field, AMI stands for high training standards and international professional recognition. At the same time, AMI has recognised that African solutions are needed in order to reach many children and make Montessori education more widely accessible. The fact that CoRE is supported by AMI therefore strengthens both the quality and the legitimacy of an approach that deliberately seeks to have an impact within the public system.

Localisation as a Fundamental Decision

The topic of locally-led development is currently on everyone's lips in international cooperation. For us, localisation is not primarily a technical question of implementation. We understand it as a fundamental decision about where priorities are set, who carries responsibility and who remains capable of acting in a changing context.

In the field of preschool and primary education in Tanzania, we put this principle into practice through our coordinating partner, Montessori Community of Tanzania, MCT. Rather than steering programmes from Switzerland or building our own structures in Tanzania, we invest in a Tanzanian-led organisation that brings actors together, coordinates and implements programmes, ensures quality and enables learning from within the local context.

«Also the relationships with the relevant ministries have changed. [...] In the past, we had to actively ask ministries for support; today, government bodies sometimes approach us and seek co-operation.»

Sarah Kiteleja
Executive Director
Montessori Community
of Tanzania



This is linked to a clarification of roles that is crucial for cooperation with government bodies:

- AWF does not work directly with the Tanzanian state in the field of education.
- In our education work, cooperation with government bodies takes place through MCT.
- For us, MCT is not merely an implementation partner, but a locally legitimate coordinating partner that works independently in professional terms, sets priorities and has its own access points within the education ecosystem.

This distinction is particularly important in public education. Where external funders shape contact with the state, there is a risk that local responsibility is weakened and steering capacity is shifted outwards. Our approach aims at the opposite: the development of local coordination and steering capacity, even if this may appear slower and less controllable from an external perspective.

For us, localisation is also a matter of trust, reliability and mutual responsibility. In education, it is difficult to build an independent financial base. MCT therefore needs long-term funding. Conversely, in our preschool and school programme, we are professionally and institutionally dependent on MCT as a local partner. It is precisely for this reason that we have made a long-term ten-year commitment to MCT. MCT submits annual budgets, and the programmes are developed jointly.

This reliability is an important prerequisite for local institutions such as MCT to mature, retain qualified staff and maintain long-term relationships within the system. Against this background, MCT's voice is particularly revealing.

«After the elections [in October 2025] there was a great deal of uncertainty. At the same time, the overall situation in the country is calm, and the work continues. As far as cooperation between MCT and government bodies is concerned, I believe we remain in a good position. Since several donors have withdrawn, the government has made greater efforts to find partners who make a concrete contribution in the field of early childhood education. Over the past year, MCT was invited by the government to various discussions because our work is perceived as relevant.»

Relations with the responsible ministries have also changed. In my view, this is connected to the fact that MCT supports the government's efforts in early childhood education to a significant extent. Our experiences and approaches now feed more strongly into professional discussions, for example into the strategic plan to promote literacy and numeracy skills in kindergarten and in Grades 1 and 2. In the past, we had to actively ask ministries for support; today, government bodies sometimes approach us and seek cooperation.»

MCT's professional recognition is evident not only in the implementation of CoRE, but also in its contribution to the longer-term development of training and curriculum. An important milestone was the government recognition of the Montessori curriculum for the training of Montessori teachers at preschool level in November 2025. This means that the corresponding certificate and diploma programmes are officially recognised and can be linked to the wider system. For the six Montessori Teacher Training Colleges in Tanzania, this opens up new prospects; for MCT, it strengthens credibility and visibility and facilitates the inclusion of CoRE and other short courses within a recognised training framework.

Conclusion

AWF's engagement in education follows three strategic guidelines, which are exemplified in the CoRE programme:

1. Systemic impact: We do not support isolated individual projects. Leverage arises where approaches are embedded in existing structures, carried by local actors and reflected in routines of training, supervision and planning. Cooperation with government structures is part of this impact.
2. Local responsibility: Change becomes sustainable when local actors set priorities, assume

responsibility and continue learning from their own experience. For this reason, we focus on long-term partnerships and the development of local capacities.

3. Thinking about quality and reach together: The CoRE programme is not about quality instead of quantity. It is about further developing high-quality, child-centred education in such a way that it can also have a broader impact within the public system. Quality and scaling therefore belong together.

The CoRE programme shows how closely these three guidelines are connected. The experiences of 2025 made clear the pedagogical potential of child-centred education within the public system, and how decisive local relationships of trust and intelligently designed cooperation with government structures are in demanding contexts.

For foundations that wish to have a responsible impact within the public system, the challenge therefore lies not only in the quality of an approach, but also in shaping cooperation with government structures in such a way that it enables impact without weakening local responsibility. We do not rely on direct steering from Switzerland, but on strengthening locally legitimate coordination. With MCT as a partner, CoRE can have a broader impact within the public system and, in the long term, be carried by Tanzanian actors.

Right: CoRE facilitators provide further training for kindergarten teachers in Zanzibar.



Technical Education

Ueli Jezler, Programme Manager

Secondary and Tertiary Education in the Context of Social Tensions and Conflicts

Sub-Saharan Africa's population is remarkably young: 60% are under 25, and by 2050 the cohort of 15- to 24-year-olds will grow to nearly 400 million. This demographic trend, often referred to as a youth bulge, is widely seen as a societal asset, but it also carries significant risks for countries in the region that are coming under increasing pressure. Economic crises, limited employment prospects and rising living costs are deepening structural imbalances and fuelling social tensions among young people, dynamics that can escalate into violent conflict.

Unemployment is widely recognised as a key driver. Research also shows, however, that factors such as social exclusion and limited political participation are equally decisive. In this report we reflect on these phenomena and examine how effective education can be as a response. Our partners at the Salesians of Don Bosco, Ashesi University and ETH Zurich approach the subject from different angles, yet reach broadly similar conclusions.

ETH Zurich: Education as Conflict Prevention

The Arthur Waser Foundation and ETH Zurich have been working together for five years. In partnership with Ashesi University and Swiss industry, ETH is developing a Master's programme in Mechatronics and Ethical Leadership in Ghana. This partnership is built on academic excellence, economic expertise and a deep understanding of African realities.

Medinat Malefakis is a lecturer at NADEL, ETH Zurich's continuing education centre for international cooperation professionals. Her research focuses on terrorism, violent conflict and peace-building. She observes how exclusion and a lack of prospects increase young people's vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Violent extremism does not arise from ideology alone; it emerges where marginalisation, weak social networks and unequal access to education converge. When young people are denied the opportunity to imagine a professional future, extremist groups sometimes fill that space, offering narratives that promise answers to questions of identity and agency.

Data from global studies, including research by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), confirm that countries with higher secondary school completion rates are, on average, more peaceful, and that the youth bulge heightens the risk of conflict above all in settings where educational attainment remains low.

«Vocational training without complementary measures has little lasting impact on violence prevention.» ETH4D

According to Andina Rom, Director of ETH4D, the ETH centre for development-oriented research and innovation, studies confirm that vocational training is a necessary but not sufficient condition for violence prevention. It only delivers results where real employment prospects follow. What works is the combination of skills development and concrete opportunities, in post-conflict regions for example through targeted cash or in-kind transfers.

Right: An overcrowded secondary school classroom in Accra.
Photo: Ato Aikins





An example of education and employment pathways: In Ghana, young solar entrepreneurs receive targeted support after completing their training at Don Bosco to set up their own businesses. The project is implemented by Swisscontact in collaboration with the Salesians of Don Bosco in Ghana.

Don Bosco's Preventive System

The partnership with the Salesians of Don Bosco dates back to 2019 and includes the development and expansion of secondary-level training in solar technology in Ghana and Tanzania. At the Solar and Renewable Energy Center in Ashaiman, in Greater Accra, teachers, electrical technicians and working professionals from Ghana and West Africa receive initial and continuing education, with active support for their career development. The centre acts as a hub from which solar training spreads across Ghana and across Africa.

Markus Burri, Director of Don Bosco Jugendhilfe Weltweit in Beromünster, and Raphael Bejarano, Vicar General for Youth Pastoral of the Congregation in Rome, place the Salesians' educational engagement in context, tracing it back to the congregation's origins in Turin in the 1850s.

Giovanni Bosco, founder of the congregation, consistently understood the situation of young people in relation to their social circumstances. During the industrialisation of Northern Italy, he responded to poverty and limited opportunity

with educational provision and a supportive environment, guided by the ambition to create immediate, tangible impact. Over thirty years of work with young people, Don Bosco developed the Preventive System, which, unlike the dominant approaches of the time, did not rely on control and punishment but on relationship and accompaniment. It was designed to enable young people to integrate into society and build a life project of their own.

Today, too, young people suffer not only from economic hardship but from the difficulty of finding meaning and belonging, which can lead to disorientation and, in extreme cases, to violent conflict. The Salesians therefore embrace it as their core mission to address all the relevant conditions that shape young people's lives. They place an education at the centre that treats the whole person, and vocational training as a pathway to self-sufficiency and social participation. At the same time, the Salesians acknowledge that their predominantly practical approach needs to be complemented by engagement with the structural causes of diminished prospects in today's world.



Don Bosco Reach in Africa

118 technical schools in 34 countries
45,000 students
(out of 85 million 15- to 18-year-olds in total)

20 Solar Centres in 12 countries
1,700 solar graduates

Angola	Ghana	Senegal
Benin	Guinea	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Kenya	South Africa
Burundi	Liberia	South Sudan
Cameroon	Madagascar	Sudan
Côte d'Ivoire	Malawi	Tanzania
Central African Rep.	Mali	Togo
Chad	Mauritania	Uganda
DR Congo	Mozambique	Zambia
Eswatini	Niger	Zimbabwe
Ethiopia	Nigeria	
Gabon	Rwanda	

«The coming leaders in business and government — the professionals, engineers, and managers who will be responsible for tomorrow's infrastructure, education, health care, and other sectors — are sitting in a college classroom today.»



Patrick Awuah, Founder and President, Ashesi University

Ashesi's Ethical Leadership

Stable political and economic conditions are an ongoing process in Africa's still-young nations. Patrick Awuah, founder and president of Ashesi University, sees nation building, the deliberate construction of state institutions, shared identity, social cohesion and democratic structures, as one of the most pressing challenges. For him, a rising Africa is not a matter of geography or ethnicity, but of pan-African economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological growth together.

Patrick identified one of the main causes of unstable nations in an education system that gave little encouragement to critical, independent thinking. He therefore founded Ashesi University in 2002 with the vision of producing a new generation of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders of exceptional integrity, leaders who would drive innovation, growth and prosperity across Africa and enable peace and dignity for its people. Ashesi pursues a distinctly systemic approach. The goal is not to build a large university, but to transform the continent and unlock the immense potential of a very young, change-oriented population.

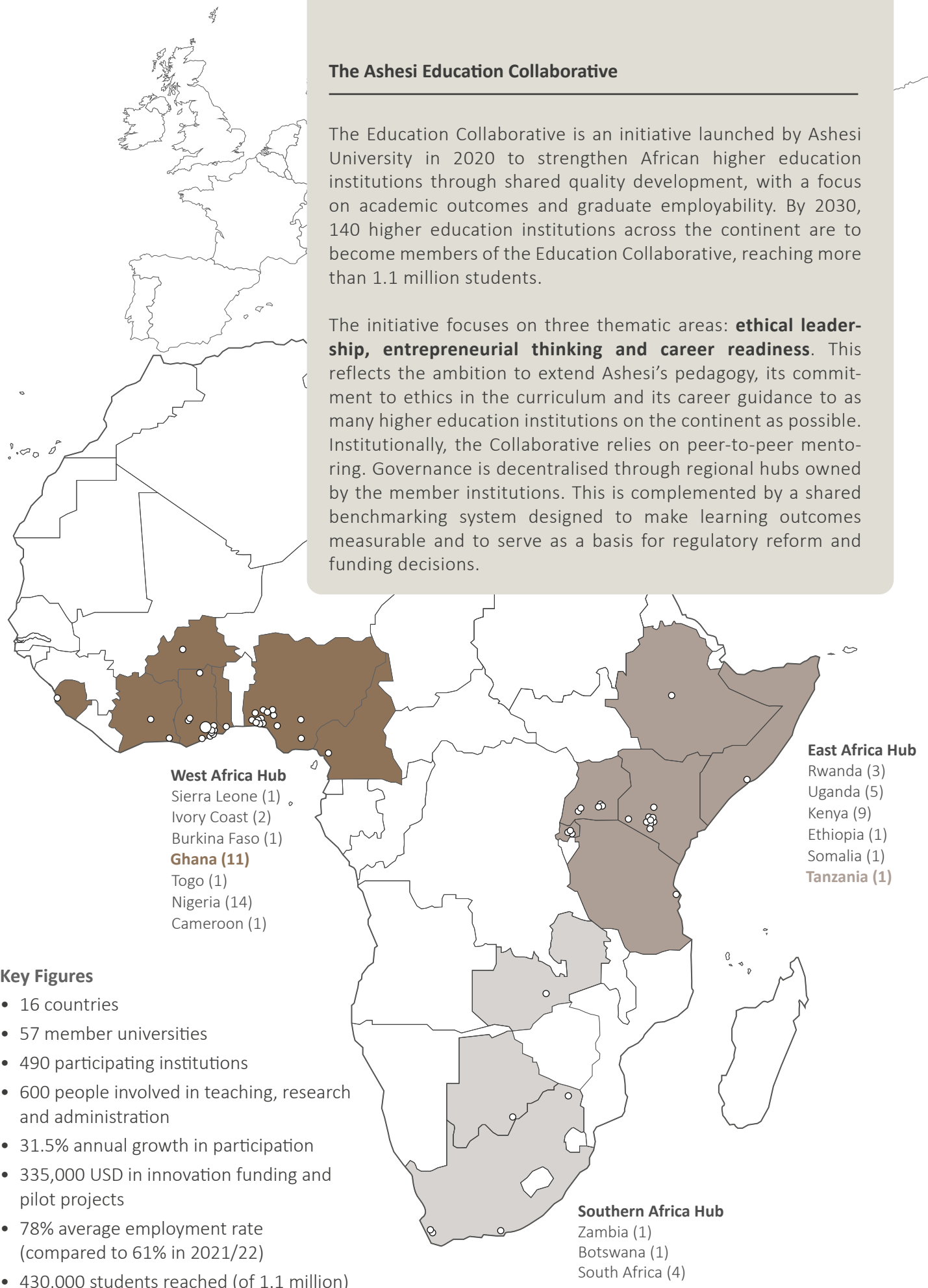
Conclusion: The Arthur Waser Foundation Supports More Than School Completion

Education contributes to peacebuilding where it is coupled with employment prospects and social participation. It can reduce the risk of violent conflict, strengthen trust and offer recognition. What matters are holistic approaches that take seriously all the factors that shape young people's lives. Don Bosco's Preventive System embodies this thinking. The Salesians' create spaces where young people can access learning opportunities, receive active guidance in their professional development and thereby find their place in society. For career paths to succeed, young people also need a functioning economic and political environment. Crucial to this are institutions that uphold and promote ethical conduct. Ashesi University demonstrates, through the Education Collaborative, how this can be achieved at the higher education level: by building, across the continent, a critical mass of leaders who act with integrity and initiate systemic change. Our partners have established successful education and career programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, and we are well positioned to continue strengthening these approaches in the years ahead.

The Ashesi Education Collaborative

The Education Collaborative is an initiative launched by Ashesi University in 2020 to strengthen African higher education institutions through shared quality development, with a focus on academic outcomes and graduate employability. By 2030, 140 higher education institutions across the continent are to become members of the Education Collaborative, reaching more than 1.1 million students.

The initiative focuses on three thematic areas: **ethical leadership, entrepreneurial thinking and career readiness**. This reflects the ambition to extend Ashesi's pedagogy, its commitment to ethics in the curriculum and its career guidance to as many higher education institutions on the continent as possible. Institutionally, the Collaborative relies on peer-to-peer mentoring. Governance is decentralised through regional hubs owned by the member institutions. This is complemented by a shared benchmarking system designed to make learning outcomes measurable and to serve as a basis for regulatory reform and funding decisions.



Programmes and projects 2025

Preschool and primary education	CHF 878,656
Quality assurance in early childhood education at day-care level (6 projects)	Refresher courses for Montessori teachers, scholarship fund for students, renovation fund for day-care centres, annual meeting of the Montessori Community of Tanzania, regional Montessori Hubs
Improving the quality of education in public kindergartens (2 projects)	In-service training for government kindergarten teachers (CoRE programme), international AMI 3-6 Montessori diploma course
Improving the quality of education in public primary schools	International AMI 6-12 Montessori diploma course
Structural costs of Montessori Community of Tanzania	Funding of five staff members in Dar es Salaam and seven regional coordinators
Training and further education at partner organisations (3 projects)	Training, college and university scholarships
Technical Education	CHF 852,706
Solar Programme West Africa (2 projects)	Training and continuing education for teachers, students and professionals in solar technology in Ghana
Solar Network Ghana	Development of a nationwide network of solar schools
Engineers for Sustainable Development in Africa	Development of a Master's programme in Mechatronics and Ethical Leadership at Ashesi University in Ghana and ETH Zurich
Solar and Mechatronic Innovation Award	Fostering an enabling environment in the solar sector for young Ghanaian entrepreneurs at Ashesi University
Teacher Education in Dodoma, Tanzania	Training and continuing education for teachers, students and professionals in solar technology
Don Bosco KIITEC in Arusha, Tanzania (2 projects)	Expansion of infrastructure and educational programmes at a leading technical training institution in Arusha, Tanzania
Electrical Engineering Training in Arusha	Establishment of two electrical technician training programmes
Swisscontact	Enterprise development in the solar sector
Urbanisation and Architecture	CHF 226,918
MCT Challenge Fund	Planning and construction of ten model nursery schools in Tanzania
Collaborative Montessori School Dodoma	Preliminary design project with the City Council in Dodoma
Agriculture	CHF 983,630
Market analysis for organic and agroecology	Sokoine University of Agriculture and FiBL: Investigation of value chains and marketability of products
Conference participation	Participation in conferences on mechanization and agroecology in Tanzania
Organic sisal & macadamia cultivation	Loan to the Maua Sisters in Moshi: Cultivation for export integrated with cover crops for local markets
Sunflowers & poultry farming	Loan for the cultivation and marketing of sunflowers, construction of an oil mill, integration with poultry farming
Budget establishment Kilimo Afya Trust	Financing of the start-up phase, office infrastructure in Dodoma, governance structures, capacity building
Preliminary work for the establishment of the Trust for sustainable agriculture	Conducting a workshop with the project partners, legal expert opinion and drafting of the Trust Deed
Feasibility study for water management systems at Maua Sisters	Expert report by SAT and specialized engineers: Improved water management and prevention of erosion
Complementary Topics	CHF 104,649
Training Fund	Cross-programme education and professional development at partner

Key figures 2025

Preschool and Primary Education

177 teachers at 115 public kindergartens

received further training through the CoRE programme, reaching a total of 13,323 kindergarten children.

348 participations in refresher courses

for Montessori teachers, reaching 12,079 children. Since 2020, refresher courses have been delivered for 1,939 teachers.

41 scholarships

awarded for training at a Montessori training centre. Since 2020, 202 scholarships have been awarded.

28 Montessori day-care centres

renovated. Since 2019, 100 day-care centres have been renovated.

511 teacher participations

in the annual meeting of the Montessori Community of Tanzania. Since 2019, 2,858 people have taken part in annual meetings.

4 Montessori-Hubs

conducted for 1,910 people. Since 2022, a total of 3,648 people have been reached.

497 teachers

at 280 Montessori day-care centres were inspected by MCT coordinators. Since 2022, 2,557 teachers at 1,479 Montessori day-care centres have been visited by MCT coordinators.

Urbanisation and Architecture

Montessori Architecture

handbook and website enable independent designs for child-centred schools.

Network of local Montessori architects

established, 3 large model schools completed, two of which nominated for international architecture awards.

Geography-relevant standard plans

for modular, child-centred small schools developed. First state-run Montessori school in development — as a replicable model.

MCT Challenge Fund

Structural prerequisites for the financing, planning, construction and maintenance of nursery schools established.

10 model nursery schools

under construction in various regions of Tanzania. Fundraising campaign to finance a further 100 Montessori nursery schools underway.

Agriculture

2 business plans

financed with loans totaling CHF 457,600. Since 2020, 9 farms have received loans totaling CHF 1,732,600.

253 participants

in 11 agroecology training courses. Since 2020, 73 courses have been conducted for 1,966 people.

17 advisory visits

by agronomists. Since 2020, 110 multi-day consultations have been conducted on the farms of the 10 participating congregations.

2 agricultural strategies

developed. Since 2020, 9 congregations have developed agricultural strategies.

4 test plots

established. Since 2020, more than 40 test plots have been established on farms.

Technical Education

1 new solar school

in Ghana. Since 2020, the network has grown to 17 schools, two of which are dedicated girls' schools.

115 teachers

trained at secondary level since 2019.

2,700 solar qualifications

awarded at secondary level since 2020, of which 530 to young women.

550 continuing solar training courses

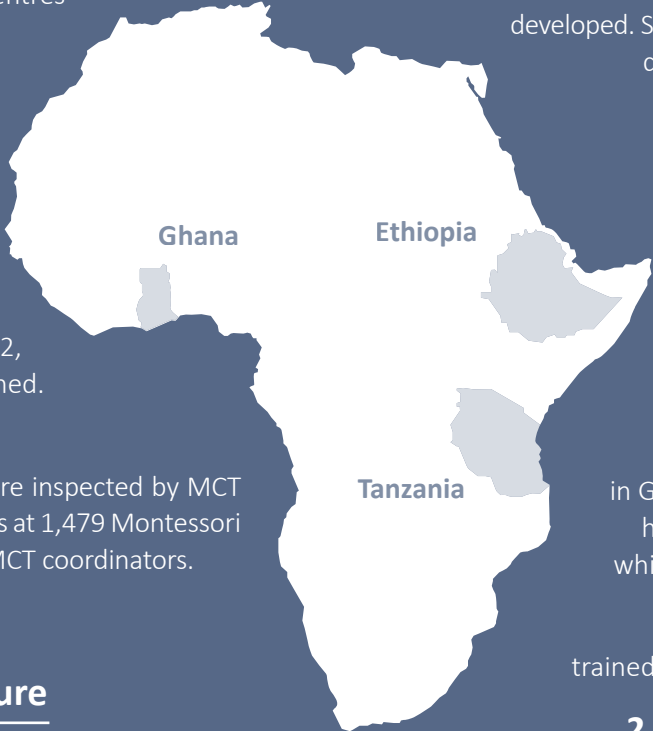
completed by working professionals in the energy sector since 2021.

74% of graduates

were employed in the solar sector three months after graduation (2025); 19% continued into higher education.

104 students

enrolled in the Mechatronics and Ethical Leadership Master's programme since 2022. The first two graduating cohorts achieved a 100% employment rate.



Urbanisation and Architecture

Benjamin Stæhli, Programme Manager

A Vision of Communally Built Living Spaces

In the same year that Haile Selassie, the last emperor of Ethiopia, was overthrown, a young architect by the name of Franz Oswald became, at only 36, Professor at ETH Zurich. This was unusual: he had no professional experience to speak of, and only a teaching experience at the distant Cornell University in the USA. Years later, he learned from a friend on the selection committee that his appointment had been a political manoeuvre. Following the student upheavals of the 1960s, the university wanted to present a new colleague from America — an ideal projection surface for a young generation of architects hoping for change and demanding greater participation. From 1974, he taught architecture in the midst of a period of global social transformation.

While in 1991 the brutal military junta in Ethiopia finally collapsed after a 17-year civil war, Franz was appointed head of the newly created Chair of Architecture and Urban Planning. Shortly afterwards, he published a book together with chemist Peter Baccini entitled «Netzstadt», which aimed to establish a new understanding of city and landscape as one metabolic and morphological system. A partnership between the ETH and the new government in Addis Abeba finally brought Oswald to war-torn Ethiopia at the start of the new millennium.

In 2010, the population of the East African country stood at 90.5 million which was three times the figure of 1974. The development of new small towns in rural areas was intended to help divert migration from collapsing cities, in particular the capital Addis Abeba. In the manner of former rebel commanders in a planned-economy state, the «Regional Urban Planning Institutes» were sent out by the government to identify suitable

locations. Convinced that he could finally change the way urbanity is understood through a real-world example, Franz agreed on request to design such a model town in the north-western Amhara Regional State. The «Amhara Model Town» was to be called Buranest (a combination of the original village name «Bura» and the acronym for New Ethiopian Sustainable Town). At the time, the involvement of the people living in Bura was not on the agenda.

After a pompous inauguration in October 2010, at which the then President of Amhara together with Franz and two representatives of the Addis Ababa University ceremonially placed an engraved marble slab on a prepared concrete base, fierce resistance soon formed in the community. When the authorities eventually withdrew silently from the project, they left behind an unfinished project site with a bridge without an access road, a water channel without connection to the river, an unfinished school without teachers, a workshop without an operator, and a somewhat bewildered population.

In this situation, two architects involved in the project — Zegeye Cherenet from Ethiopia and I — attempted to use the vacuum left behind to create, together with Franz and outside of politics, an alternative urban model. Working directly with the traditional local authority (the so called «Woreda») voluntary cooperatives were to take on the development of self-built and self-financed infrastructure and housing.

The assessment of the 15-year history of Buranest is the aim of a book completed at the end of 2025 entitled «Grassroots Urbanisation: A Handbook for Town-Communities». Alongside the experiences of Franz and Zegeye (the latter today Associate Professor at the University of Addis Abeba), it tells the story of a farmer from Bura.

«We dream of an urbanisation that grows from below — of open communities that build, protect, and maintain their own living spaces; that acquire knowledge, sustainably transform resources, and exchange; that govern themselves. The socio-spatial reorganisation of Africa must begin at the grassroots.»

Dr. Zegeye Cherenet,
Architect and Urbanist
from Ethiopia



Extract from «Grassroots Urbanisation: A Handbook for Town-Communities in Ethiopia»:

«Twenty years ago, when Tilahun was still a young man, his future life prospects were bleak. As the second son of a peasant father, he had little to no hope that he would ever plough his own land or build a home for his own family. Time and again, secretly, he listened to a song by Sayed Khalifa about his love for Khartoum and dreamt of a life beyond the woreda — of the big city, in his mind, a melting pot of opportunities for people like him, a place where he could pursue and hopefully become what he was always supposed to be.

One night, after he had gathered enough restlessness and courage, Tilahun packed his bits and pieces, and joined a group of four daring men from Bura. Under the cover of darkness, they set off northward, bound for the Sudanese capital. At the former slave-trading town of Metemma, they paid a middleman to ensure the police would look the other way while crossing the border river of Atbarah. But the fellowship never made it to Khartoum. Just reaching the

other side of the river, they were apprehended by an armed gang of traffickers. Two of Tilahun's friends were shot fatally; the others were robbed and forced back into the water, swimming for their lives to return to the Ethiopian shore. Stripped of everything, Tilahun returned to Bura humbled and defeated.

Back home, he first worked his brother's fields and, after his elder sibling had died of Kala-Azar (black fever), began to cultivate his father's land. Although his livelihood improved over the years — he got married and became father of two children — he never stopped dreaming of another life in the narrow alleys of old Khartoum, where he might have been a shopkeeper, and not merely a farmer. When in 2010 the President of the Regional State announced that a model town would be built in Bura, the dream seemed to be coming true for Tilahun in an unexpected way.

Not everyone shared Tilahun's secret enthusiasm, and hardly any of his neighbours agreed with the heavy-handed approach of the foreign government officials...»

Grassroots Urbanisation, Part One: Understanding the Human Habitat

Part One of the handbook is a conversation between Franz and Zegeye — an open North-South dialogue between two urbanists and university teachers of different generations from two continents about the assessment of the Buranest experiment, the condition of Ethiopia in today's world, and the formulation of «Grassroots Urbanisation» as a new political, spatial, and economic strategy from below.

Extract from Chapter 3: Responding to Reality:

Franz: «At the turn of the millennium, the challenges called for a new imagination that was not to be found in Ethiopia, and for a new model of the human habitat that would ensure survival and flourishing. That has essentially not changed to this day.»

Zegeye: «Have you ever asked yourself why we architects should be the right people to operate uninvited in such complex realities? Even in Ethiopia, we architects have made ourselves irrelevant to the realities of our own country by copying models from the Global North. Instead, we should learn from the people who are directly affected by the challenges.»

Franz: «That is naive. You cannot learn from people who distrust each other, who even try to destroy each other, as soon as they are confronted with the act of survival. Someone must first create the environment in which something new can emerge.»

Zegeye: «You mean like in Buranest? Against this background, the new model must be based on the motivation of people who want to take their fate into their own hands. We should call it Grassroots Urbanisation — a spatial, societal, and economic strategy that aims to reorganise the grassroots into small, voluntary small towns, from which others can learn.»

Woredas

Woredas are the third level of the administrative divisions of Ethiopia after zones and the regional states. In contrast to the lower subdivision of kebeles, which were introduced by the military dictatorship to control the population, the boundaries of woredas can be traced back to historical kingdoms and other traditional communal areas. In the current legal framework, the Woreda is the lowest administrative entity with its own people's representation, executive organ, and public budget.

Grassroots Urbanisation, Part Two: Strengthening Traditional Local Representation

One of the central lessons from the Buranest experiment is that the organisation of the human habitat can be neither dictated by federal nor by regional-state institutions. Rather, it should be anchored at the lowest political level, where institutions and communities know one another and are mutually accountable. In Part Two, «Grassroots Urbanisation» provides practical guidance on how Woredas, within Ethiopia's current institutional framework, can initiate, accompany, and legally secure the formation of Town-Communities.

Like Maria Montessori, we consider a calm and stimulating learning environment an essential part of early-childhood education. Together with the Montessori Community of Tanzania, the MCT Challenge Fund was established, to support committed Montessori teachers and architects in building.



Children on the town square of Buranest. In the background two of the terraced houses built after the government's withdrawal.

Extract from Chapter 5: Woreda Networks of Towns:
 «The disengagement of inhabitants from the affairs of their own Woreda has become more common in the last couple of decades. An imported political system has established a top-down structure for planning, implementation, and evaluation processes across almost all issues. The central government hands down decisions through the regional officials and then down to the political appointees at the lowest level. Since the central command economy was established in the 1970s by the then military

government, the culture of disregarding the local population could not be broken despite various attempts from above.

A strengthening of the Woredas is the logically necessary counterpart to self-sustaining and autonomously acting Town-Communities. The central principle is subsidiarity — the principle that a higher level of government should only take on those tasks that cannot be fulfilled at the local level.»

«Africa, and particularly Ethiopia, has all the conditions necessary to explore new forms of co-existence and to become a place to exhibit better ways. My sincere hope is that Ethiopia would become a model for the rest of the world.»

Prof. em. Franz Oswald,
Architect and Urbanist
from Switzerland



Grassroots Urbanisation, Part Three: Learning from Experience

Once the conceptual and institutional foundations have been laid, Part Three addresses the pioneers of future small towns directly written from the perspective of someone who, on behalf of ETH Zurich, lived on site for six years, designed and built with the farming families in Bura, failed, and began again. A critical reflection on the experiment and its consequences, good and bad, becomes a credible guide for future Town-Communities. The handbook presents the key steps: from the analysis of their surroundings, the planting of trees, their own town plan as a multigenerational task, the design of their own houses, the learning of skills, through to financing and self-managed construction. Together, the three parts form a handbook that grew out of lived experience.

Extracts from Part Three:

«Today, Tilahun's family enjoys a good life. They have their terraced house with spacious rooms to welcome neighbours, to celebrate, to work, to study, and to rest. They can turn on the lights when it's dark and they have a shop, opening into a covered arcade, from which they sell cold refreshments, sweets, and airtime cards to passers-by. In the backyard, they have a beautifully lush garden with colourful fruits and

vegetables, a subterranean rainwater cistern with a hand-pump that provides them with ample water year-round. They have a shed for their cattle and an adjacent plot of horticultural land which feeds the family and produces a surplus for sale at the nearby market.»

Publication

The handbook, produced by the Arthur Waser Foundation, is addressed directly to motivated communities, their Woredas, and responsible architects and planners in Ethiopia.

The literal contrast of experiential worlds — of an Ethiopian smallholder like Tilahun Muluaem and a Swiss university professor like Franz Oswald — forms both the starting point and the limitation of development aid and cooperation since the end of colonialism. The top-down strategies on which approaches from the Global North for the development of Africa have been based have largely failed or underperformed. The handbook is therefore also a plea and a guide for the locally led-approach.

With «Grassroots Urbanisation», the insights from over a decade of action research will be made accessible to a broad public. Alongside the various Ethiopian languages, it will therefore also be published in English.



Montessori Architecture and the MCT Challenge Fund

Like Maria Montessori, we consider a calm and stimulating learning environment an essential part of early-childhood education. Together with the Montessori Community of Tanzania, the MCT Challenge Fund was established, to support committed Montessori teachers and architects in building nursery schools based on the principles of Montessori Architecture and to bring child-centred education to their communities.

Participating teachers contribute a plot of land and cover around 10 per cent of the construction costs of CHF 50,000. This gives rise to inspiring learning spaces that not only foster independent learning but also strengthen local employment, individual responsibility, and community spirit.

Following the successful completion of ten pilot projects in different parts of Tanzania, the MCT is seeking partners who share the vision of equal access to child-centred education.

Picture: Model school based on the principles of Montessori Architecture in Ngabobo, north of Arusha, Tanzania
For information on Montessori Architecture and the Challenge Fund please visit the website: montessori-architecture.org

Agriculture

Anton Kuchler, Programme Manager

From Dependence to Sovereignty: The Transformation of Tanzanian Agriculture

Education in organic farming, agroecology, and entrepreneurial thinking forms the core of our commitment to the sustainable development of agriculture.

Although agriculture employs the majority of the population in many African countries, it often cannot adequately feed its own population. Land and labor productivity in agriculture in Africa is currently low. However, we see its outstanding importance as having enormous potential to become the engine of development for the continent. The Arthur Waser Foundation's (AWF) agricultural programme in Tanzania builds on this insight, which the Berlin Institute for Population and Development formulated as early as 2018.¹

Historically, a clear pattern emerges: In early industrialized countries, as well as later in developing and emerging economies, the improvement of primary production was at the beginning of the socio-economic development process. In our work, however, we avoid a linear modernization logic: Food sovereignty, ecological regeneration, resilience, local knowledge systems, and socially responsible agriculture are just as important for enabling greater prosperity as fostering entrepreneurial thinking and increasing productivity.

Paradigm shift: Locally-led approach

What distinguishes AWF's work from traditional development cooperation is its consistent locally-led approach: Local actors take the lead in decision-making, resource allocation, and implementation. The local partner organizations

«With the Kilimo Afya Trust, the congregations in Tanzania can develop their agriculture sustainably. After the use of chemicals damaged our soils and the living beings in them, it is our duty to restore God's creation.»

Sr. Elistaha Mlay, Mother Superior of Ushirika wa Neema and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Kilimo Afya Trust
Photo: James Festo



themselves identify the challenges and potential around sustainable business cases on their farms. Solutions and business plans are developed with the support of local experts and are not dictated by AWF.

By providing repayable loans, we are already transferring responsibility for the successful use of the funds to the partner organizations. From 2026 onward, the Kilimo Afya Trust (Trust for Agriculture and Health, KAT) will receive the repayments and reinvest them in projects as a revolving fund. The gradual transfer of decision-making power to Tanzania is central to our work and distinguishes it from traditional impact investing.

Social Control and Measurement for Building Trust

The key success factor of our programme is the learning process in agroecology and entrepreneurial thinking. Mutual social control is intended to contribute to motivation and commitment. Similar to the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for organic farming, which is common in countries

«Investments with a long-term commitment to research, innovation, and also capacity building are urgently needed to unlock the great potential of an agroecological transformation of food systems in low-income countries.»

Gurbir Singh Bhullar, Professor
of Sustainable Agroecosystems
BFH-HAFL



like Tanzania, the partner organizations are meant to learn from each other's experiences and thereby motivate each other to act transparently.

The business plans and the associated loans have a term of 10 years to bring about a lasting transformation that promotes economic self-sufficiency as well as ecological and social conditions on the farms and in their surrounding areas. Having a long-term perspective reflects an entrepreneurial approach common to many Swiss foundations, which have a disproportionately high number of board members from the business world. The fact that this long-term perspective also entails a risk for the invested capital is something the entrepreneurial-minded trustees are well aware of.

The trust monitors the performance of the businesses and will also collect data on their environmental and social impact in the future. The methodology for this measurement still needs to be developed. It could be based on the performance measurement practices used in impact investing, such as those implemented by the Elea Foundation.²

Two Pillars of Transformation

The 10 partner organizations—all religious congregations to date—manage 35 medium and large farms totaling 7,500 hectares. These farms are spread across the country, ranging in size from 3 to 3,000 hectares. We are deliberately focusing on farms that offer potential for scaling but face different challenges than smallholdings.

The core of AWF's agricultural programme consists of two pillars: an educational programme in agroecology and organic farming, including the development of a community of practice, and the financing of economically viable branches of operation on the partner's farms.

One of the greatest challenges on the African continent is the lack of access to capital. By providing investment funds on favorable terms, we aim to initiate precisely these learning processes, which would otherwise be impossible in an environment characterized by high entrepreneurial risk and corresponding interest rates on commercial loans of 10–30%.

Mechanization Based on Agroecological Principles

Professor Gurbir Singh Bhullar from the Bern University of Applied Sciences for Agriculture, Forestry and Food Sciences (BFH-HAFL) in Zollikofen, together with a team from Sokoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro (SUA) led by Dr. Nelson Makange, is overseeing an innovative mechanization project within the framework of the AWF agricultural programme. This project aims to prepare the large farms of the congregations for the dwindling availability of labor by enabling them to perform labor-intensive tasks such as weeding and composting using agroecological, yet mechanized, methods.

Before joining HAFL, Professor Bhullar was responsible for the SysCom trials at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). These long-term trials have been comparing different farming systems in Kenya and other tropical countries for almost 20 years. The evaluation has shown that organic farming achieves economically comparable results. A decline in production during the first few years of conversion is critical, until the restored soil fertility noticeably increases yields.³

Mechanisation is currently a major issue in Tanzania and many other African countries, promoted by national governments together with the African Union and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The cooperation with HAFL and SUA aims to ensure that, in the long term, agroecology and organic farming are integrated into the mechanization of African agriculture.

Footnotes and references on page 38

Focus on Medium and Large Farms

The educational programme is designed to build expertise in agroecology, permaculture, and organic farming. It is based on a vibrant community of practice that connects farms with each other and with local, national, and international experts. Organic farming and agroecology are knowledge-intensive agricultural practices. A deep understanding of how the agroecosystem functions is essential, but this knowledge must also be continuously adapted to new challenges. This also applies to the area of mechanization (see box on the left).

There is a general need for improvement in organic research: A 2020 study by Biovision and other organizations⁴ shows that in recent decades, only a small portion of research funding in the development context—and in agricultural research in general—has supported ecological transformation. Therefore, we are specifically addressing the gaps in knowledge and practical experience in organic farming and agroecological systems in Tanzania. Other key areas of focus in the educational programme include water management, agroecological cultivation trials, and the availability of weather data. These topics are particularly relevant for larger farms.

Promoting Entrepreneurial Thinking

The goal is for farms to be able to sell products of higher ecological quality at competitive prices in local and national markets. To achieve this, they should be able to better monitor their production costs. This secures their market access as long as there is no established domestic market for organic products. This realistic setting aims to foster entrepreneurial thinking: instead of accepting handouts, the congregations should improve their investability.

One example is the Lutheran Deaconess Congregation Ushirika wa Neema (Community of Grace). Since 2022, they have been cultivating organic avocados on 4 hectares in Sanya Juu at the foot



Janet Maro, CEO Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania

«One of the most important grains imported to Tanzania from Russia and Ukraine was wheat, which caused the price to skyrocket. Although we had no direct involvement in the conflict, it still had repercussions. Organic farming and agroecology have great potential for promoting peace and conflict resolution by reducing dependence on imported fertilizers and pesticides and instead developing local and environmentally friendly alternatives.»

of Kilimanjaro, combined with animal husbandry and intercropping. The avocados are delivered to the nearby exporter Africado. After initial difficulties in establishing the plantation, a first small harvest was sold in 2025. The trees will reach full yield in the coming years. The business plan was supported by AWF with a loan of CHF 200,000. The loan must be repaid by 2033.

Another example is the St. Vincent Sisters in Mbinga, near Lake Malawi. They own six farms with a total of over 2,500 hectares, a large portion of which was previously underutilised. Since 2025, the farm in Lipilipili has been converting approximately 100 hectares of arable land to agroecological principles and integrating it with animal husbandry. AWF provided a loan of CHF 114,750 for this purpose. Additionally, mechanised composting is being tested there. The loan must be repaid by 2035.

The success of our projects lies in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Loan repayment is a key indicator of this learning process. Another indicator is the willingness and ability to recognize and address entrepreneurial challenges and to discuss these challenges openly with other stakeholders.

Ecological and Social Perspective

The further development of African agriculture should avoid mistakes made in Europe and elsewhere during intensification: groundwater pollution from chemical additives, social problems due to high farmer debt, biodiversity loss, etc. The AWF is convinced that its partner organisations have the prerequisites for «leapfrogging», that is, skipping conventional intensification to agroecology and organic farming.

The global interconnectedness of agricultural markets is strongly felt in countries with low material living standards and threatens food security. Janet Maro, CEO of our implementation partner SAT, pointed out during a panel discussion at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2024 that organic farming and agroecology can reduce dependence on imported fertilisers or pesticides.

This also has a positive impact on the social dimension: added value should not flow to other parts of the world but should have an effect locally. This requires entrepreneurial initiative to process raw materials or produce additives, and can create attractive jobs in rural areas and provide new impetus for regional development.

Conclusion

The experiences of 2025 confirm our conviction that fostering entrepreneurial thinking and building a community of practice are systemic approaches that enable sustainable change. The crucial difference between our locally-led approach and traditional impact investing lies in the gradual transfer of decision-making power to local partners in Tanzania, who can decide how the revolving fund is used.

The Kilimo Afya Trust, as well as our other partners, possesses the necessary expertise to establish profitable organic farming operations in Tanzania. This approach aims to demonstrate that sustainability and profitability need not be opposites, but can be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

For 2026, the full implementation of the Kilimo Afya Trust (KAT) and its revolving fund is the focus of our work. We are confident that this approach will not only sustainably strengthen our partner organizations but also contribute to the overall development of organic farming in Tanzania. In doing so, KAT also prepares the ground for the socio-economic development process towards greater prosperity.

¹ Klingholz, R. et al. (2018): Food, Jobs and Sustainability. What African Agriculture Needs to Achieve. Berlin-Institut, Berlin.

² Schüele, A. & Wüthrich, F., 2024: The Impact of Impact Measurement. elea Foundation, Zurich.

³ FiBL, 2024. Cultivating change with agroecology and organic agriculture in the tropics: Bridging science and policy for sustainable production systems. Forschungsinstitut für Biologischen Landbau, Frick.

⁴ Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & IPES-Food, 2020. Money Flows: What is holding back investment in agroecological research for Africa? Biovision Foundation for Ecological Development & International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, Zurich & Brussels.

Right: Experimental agroforestry garden in Sanya Juu (Kilimanjaro) at the Maua Sisters. Photo: Meddy Njusi



Agricultural business plans from partner organizations supported by the Arthur Waser Foundation. All business plans are based on the principles of agroecology and organic farming.

Partner	Businessplan	Loan CHF	Status
Dada Wadogo	Vegetables and fruits for local markets in Dar es Salaam	20,000	Operational since 2022, sales targets not yet achieved
Mkombozi Sisters	Poultry and eggs for local markets in Mtwara	14,000	Operational since 2021, sales targets not yet achieved
Ushirika Wa Neema	Avocado production integrated with animal husbandry for export	200,000	Implementation since 2022, expected to start generating profit in 1 to 2 years
Mahenge Sisters	Cocoa for export	430,500	Implementation since 2023, expected to start generating profit in 2 to 3 years
Huruma Sisters	Cultivation and processing of sunflowers and pulses for national markets	240,000	Implementation since 2023
St. Gemma	Wine production for national markets and export to neighboring countries	255,000	Implementation since 2025
St. Vincent	Integration of animal husbandry and arable farming for local and national markets	114,750	Implementation since 2025
Usambara Sisters*	Cultivation and processing of sunflowers, integrated with chicken farming for local and national markets	277,600	Approved September 2025
Maua Sisters	Sisal and macadamia cultivation for export, integrated with intercropping for local markets	180,000	Approved November 2025
Don Bosco	Still pending	ca. 100,000	In preparation for 2026

*In 2022, a business plan for the cultivation and processing of maize and cassava was approved. In 2024, the Usambara Sisters decided not to implement this business plan because it seemed too risky. In 2025, a new business plan was submitted and a loan was approved.

Tragwerk Luzern: Counselling,
income management, outreach
and family support services

Photo: Jakob Ineichen



Central Switzerland

Using Available Resources Wisely and Sustainably: Support in the Social Field

Gerhard Fischer, Consultant

«The Arthur Waser Foundation supports institutions in the social field that occupy important niches that are not (or not sufficiently) funded by the state.» This is the opening sentence on the website for the social sector. This «social field» is not easily defined or delimited. This is also reflected in the applications submitted to the Arthur Waser Foundation in this area. The Social Funding Concept seeks to provide orientation.

The various funding priorities clearly illustrate the breadth of the «social field». The aim is to open up prospects for children and young people from difficult or disadvantaged backgrounds, moving towards equal opportunities. People affected by hardship are to be supported in living a dignified and, as far as possible, self-determined life. Prevention work against addiction and violence of all kinds is to be supported. Voluntary work, as a sustaining and meaningful part of a healthy society, is to be promoted.

Arthur Waser has set sustainability as an explicit goal of his foundation. For a small organisation (such as a self-help group for people with addiction issues, or a Scout or youth group), this means something quite different than for larger organisations such as Tragwerk (Association for Church Outreach Work), Caritas, or Tischlein deck dich. Careful assessment of applications and regular reporting for multi-year support contribute to sustainability.

Both aspects belong to the history of the Arthur Waser Foundation and the expressed intention of its founder: the support, greatly valued and often urgently needed by many smaller organisations, frequently provided over several years. But also the «large», long-standing projects that might be described as «lighthouse» projects or partnerships. For all these smaller or larger organisations, support from the AWF represents a substantial

contribution towards realising their very concrete social projects. The often deeply moving letters of thanks from organisations show how important support from the Arthur Waser Foundation is.

«With gratitude and joy, we would like to thank you for your generous support. Your help directly contributes to showing young people a path away from crime, empowering them and proactively helping them avoid difficult life trajectories. We hope this shows you that our organisation is in a phase of intensive development, ensuring that the funds granted benefit the people we serve in a targeted and effective way.»

From a letter of thanks by an organisation supported.

A central task of the Board of Trustees is to engage with the foundation's funding strategy. How can sustainability be achieved? How can the focus shift from merely treating symptoms to deliberately investing in addressing root causes and prevention?

A review of all support provided in 2025 shows that around half falls under «social welfare in the narrower sense», with approximately 20% each at the interface of Social & Health and Social & Disability. Encouragingly, close to 20% of the roughly 35 applications approved in 2025 support a preventive approach. A major theme that unquestionably belongs to the broad social sector is poverty reduction.

Poverty Is More Than Financial Hardship

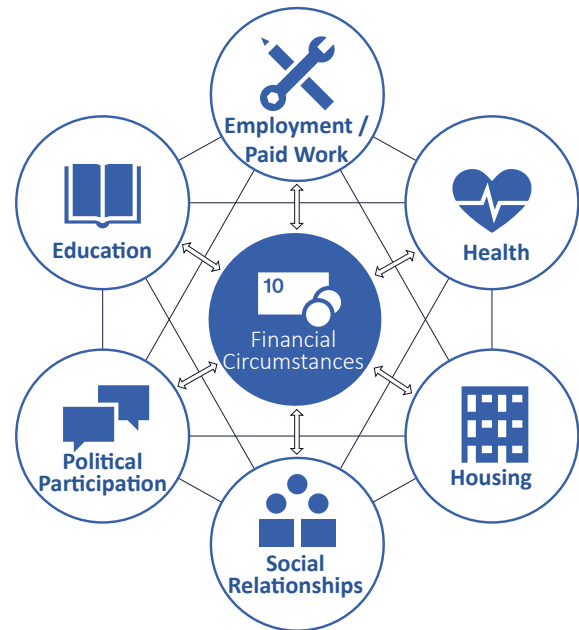
Switzerland has very good instruments for addressing poverty, such as well-developed social services. Nevertheless, around 8% of people in Switzerland live in poverty. That is over 700,000 people, including more than 100,000 children.

The 7 Dimensions of Poverty

The monitoring follows a multidimensional understanding of poverty. In addition to financial circumstances, which form the core of the poverty definition, six further areas are taken into account: education, employment/paid work, health, housing, social relationships and political participation.

These dimensions are understood both as central areas of life and as policy-relevant fields of action in the fight against poverty, all of which are closely interrelated. The first monitoring report examines the dimensions of education, employment, and material subsistence in depth. The remaining dimensions will be addressed in future monitoring cycles.

Source of text and illustration: www.armutsmonitoring.ch



This is shown by the first national poverty monitoring report, conducted by the Federal Social Insurance Office and presented in 2025.

The poverty monitoring report identifies specific risk groups. Disproportionately often affected by income poverty are those not in employment, single parents, large families, people living alone, people with low levels of education, and foreign nationals. Around half of people living in income poverty suffer from chronic illness. Individual characteristics do not fully explain poverty. Structural conditions play a decisive role in shaping the opportunities and development prospects of those affected. Poverty is not one-dimensional; it always involves multiple factors, very often in interaction.

Poverty leads to greater difficulty in social integration and social withdrawal, and is very often associated with feelings of shame and guilt. This makes it clear: poverty is more than a lack of money. The poverty monitoring report also shows that those affected often lack awareness of support entitlements they have a right to claim.

The poverty monitoring report was one of the central themes of the forum recently organised by Caritas Switzerland under the title «Together Against Poverty». Particularly striking were the contributions of a woman affected by family

poverty. She described how, as a single mother of three children with disabilities, alongside her efforts to maintain as high a workload as possible in her professional life, she copes with the stress, the burden, the anxieties, and the shame that a poverty situation brings with it over many years. How she would wish not to have to explain her situation from scratch at every turn, to have to expose herself. How difficult it is to preserve one's own dignity in that situation.

Combating poverty in Switzerland is a shared task of the federal government, cantons, and municipalities. Various NGOs (non-governmental or non-profit organisations) make important and extensive contributions to poverty reduction. They implement state service mandates, but are independent and largely funded by foundations. The Arthur Waser Foundation also supports various NGOs, as well as smaller, more locally focused organisations working on behalf of people affected by poverty.

The «social field» will remain difficult to delimit in the future. Around 30% of all supported applications already concern poverty reduction, in a wide range of forms. In the coming years, the focus of support from the Arthur Waser Foundation is likely to shift further towards the various dimensions of this area, with the full awareness that poverty is far more than a lack of money.

Projects Social Sector 2025

Partnerships		CHF 100,000
Stiftung Breitensport		Breitensport Zentralschweiz
Small and Medium Applications		CHF 435,500
People with disabilities		
aphasie suisse		Aphasie Jodelchor
Casa Farfalla		Betreute Kurzeitaufenthalte
Epi-Suisse		Sozialberatung
Novizonte-Sozialwerk		Infrastrukturbeitrag
Pension Zihlmatt		Erneuerung Pension Zihlmatt
Pro Infirmis LU/OW/NW		Entlastungsdienst
Schweizer Paraplegiker-Stiftung (SPZ)		ParaWork und ParaSchool
Tagesstätte Pilatusblick – Leben mit Demenz		Musik+Bewegung nach Jaques-Dalcroze
Verein Wärbrogg		Infrastrukturbeitrag
Yacht Club Rigi		Segeln für alle
Child and youth work, parental protection		
IGL – Islamische Gemeinde Luzern		IRU – Islamischer Religionsunterricht Luzern
Gefangene helfen Jugendlichen		Auf Augenhöhe
Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz Kt. LU		Kinderbetreuung zu Hause
SRK Unterwalden		Kinderbetreuung zu Hause (KBH)
ROCK YOUR LIFE! Schweiz GmbH		Mentoring-Programm LU+Umgebung
Tragwerk (ehem. kirchliche Gassenarbeit)		Paradiesgässli LISTO/LISTINO
Verein Elternnotruf		Rund um die Uhr Notfallberatung, Kt. LU
Schweizerischer Katholischer Frauenbund SKF		Solidaritätsfonds für Mutter und Kind
SpFplus Zentralschweiz		Sozialpädagogisch begleitete Familienferien
Addiction		
Alanoverein Zentralschweiz		Suchtfreier Begegnungsort
Lungenliga Zentralschweiz		Kinder+Jugendliche ohne Nikotin
Education, community building, public interest		
Pro Senectute Kanton Schwyz		SeniorInnen-Anlässe
Stiftung Schweizer Tafel		Belieferung sozialer Institutionen
Verein Sentitreff, Luzern		Basisangebote, Kindernachmittage
Health		
GLEICH UND ANDERS Schweiz		Genesungsbegleitung
Krebsliga Zentralschweiz		Unterstützungsfonds für Einzelfallhilfe
Ronald McDonald Haus Stiftung Luzern		Ein Zuhause auf Zeit
Other and transdisciplinary topics		
Caritas Luzern		KulturLegi
Fachstelle für Schuldenfragen Luzern		Sicherung der Beratungen
LUEG JETZT		Beratungsstelle
Stiftung LZ Weihnachtsaktion		LZ Weihnachtsaktion 2025
Tischlein deck dich		Tischlein deck dich Zentralschweiz
Treffpunkt Stutzegg		Weiterentwicklung Treffpunkt Stutzegg
Verein LISA		Lebens- & Arbeitsbedingungen von Sexarbeitenden

Arts & Culture Funding

Laura Amstutz, Programme Manager

The importance and legitimacy of arts and culture are increasingly debated in the public sphere. In times of public budget cuts, culture is fundamentally questioned, and artistic work faces growing pressure to demonstrate its practical value.

Especially in recent years — not least during the cancellation of many events throughout the Covid-19 pandemic — it became clear how essential arts and culture are to social life and community building. Cultural activities create spaces where people can come together and connect across social and political differences. Whether through theater, music, or community organizations, culture fosters dialogue at a time when polarization is increasing and differing viewpoints are often given less room.

Supporting arts and culture in Central Switzerland is therefore a key priority of the Arthur Waser Foundation. Through its funding approach, the foundation supports arts and culture both at the highest professional level and at the grassroots level. Its goal is to strengthen cultural diversity, social cohesion, and democratic traditions.

Specifically, the foundation supports major cultural institutions such as the Lucerne Festival, the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, the Lucerne Theater, the Lucerne Festival Strings, as well as Le Piano Symphonique — a piano festival that the foundation has supported and championed since its founding. At the same time, it also funds small- and medium-sized projects that showcase the cultural diversity of Central Switzerland.

During the 2025 reporting year, the funding strategy was further developed and refined. The goal was to establish clear thematic priorities while increasing transparency for applicants and ideally reducing their administrative burden, so that as many resources as possible can be directed toward cultural work rather than administration. The foundation's previous funding practices were not fundamentally changed, but rather further

New Funding Priorities of the Arthur Waser Foundation

Cultural Flagship Institutions

Renowned institutions with influence and visibility beyond the region

Artistic Avant-Garde and Creative Industries

Contemporary and innovative art across all disciplines

Community-Based Arts with High Artistic Standards

Strengthening participation and engagement

Arts Education and Emerging Talent Development

High-quality cultural education initiatives

Arts and Cultural Associations in Rural Areas

Artistic and cultural work driven by volunteers

Cross-Cultural and Special Initiatives

Exchange formats, particularly in the foundation's focus countries

developed and clarified. In addition, clear guidelines were established regarding which projects are not eligible for support.

As a result of this strategic process, the foundation's thematic focus now places greater emphasis on volunteer engagement, avant-garde approaches, and continued support for cultural outreach and community arts organizations.

At the same time, the previous discipline-based structure has been dissolved in order to create appropriate space for interdisciplinary and inter-media forms of artistic expression and to better reflect the realities of cross-disciplinary projects. For statistical purposes, however, the traditional categorization by artistic discipline will remain in place. The revised funding criteria are available on the AWF website in both German and English.



The BaBeL Strings orchestra in concert, 2025: Children and young people from the Basel-/Bernstrasse neighborhood in Lucerne perform music together and gain access to the world of (classical) music. Photo: Daniel Steiner.

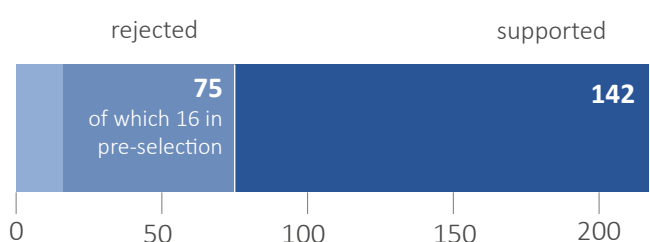
Figures and Analysis — 2025 Reporting Year

The number of applications has increased by 16% in recent years. The majority of supported projects continue to come from the fields of music (52%) and performing arts (21%), with most projects originating from the canton of Lucerne (77%).

Another notable focus identified in the analysis is the area of cultural outreach and engagement, which aligns closely with the AWF strategy. More than 70% of the supported applications include an outreach or educational component. This includes, among other things, projects aimed at children and young people, initiatives focused on supporting emerging musicians, and programmes designed to improve access to arts and culture.

Overview of Applications 2025

During the preliminary review process, applications are excluded if they clearly do not meet the AWF criteria (for example, with regard to geographic relevance, scheduling requirements, or because the proposal does not fundamentally qualify as a cultural project).



Projects Arts & Culture

Partnerships	CHF 770,000
Festival Strings Lucerne	Strukturförderung
Lucerne Festival	Music for Future 2025
Luzerner Sinfonieorchester LSO	Entwicklungspartnerschaft & Le Piano Symphonique
Luzerner Theater	Kompetenzzentrum Junges Luzerner Theater
Arthur Waser Price	CHF 134,833
Arthur Waser Stiftung	Arthur Waser Förderpreis 2025
Small and Medium Applications	CHF 515,847
Music applications	
Aktion Kultur Willisau	Sponti Trash Fest 2025
AmadeusChor Küssnacht a.R.	Farben des Nordens
Bach Ensemble Luzern	Frank Martin und J.S. Bach
Blasorchester Neuenkirch LSEW	Luzerner Solo- + Ensemblewettbewerb 2025
Brassband Bürgermusik Luzern	Konzertgala 2025 Brass & Sports
Brundibar	Peter und der Wolf
CANTAMUS Chor der Seepfarreien	Adventskonzert im KKV Vitznau
Chor der Nationen Luzern	Jahreskonzert, Best Of: We've Come a Long Way I-III
Chor inkognito	Echo, inkognito-o-o durch die Alpen
ChorTon Vokalensemble	Barock! 2025
Collegium Musicum Uri	Konzert Collegium Musicum Uri 2025
Collegium Vocale zu Franziskanern Luzern	20-Jahre-Jubiläum 2025
Donne Cantabile	Feuer und Flamme
Duo Baratta Jetzer	RARETÉ – Konzerttournee
Ensemble Le Grand Trianon	heimwē
famm	döreschnuufe
Fokus Gitarre	Lucerne Guitar Concerts Festival 2025
Förderverein Luzerner Kantorei	Jahresprogramm 2025
Four Forest Strings	Jahresprogramm 2025
Genepi Quartett	Konzerte 2025
Gesellschaft für Kammermusik Marianischer Saal	Kammermusik Saison 2025
Händel-Chor Luzern	Fanny & Felix 2025
Harmonic Minds	Thank you for the Music Vol.6
IGNM Zentralschweiz	Ensemble Montaine 2025
InCanto Chöre Oberseetal Verein VmJO	Kindermusical Felicitas Kunterbunt
Intercity Jazz Orchestra	Intercity Jazz Nights 2025
Jazzchor Not4Sale Luzern	Adiemus Colores
Jugendblasorchester Oberer Sempachersee	Musical «Z» 2025
Jugendstreichorch. LU Landschaft JSOLL	Frühlingskonzerte und Übungswoche 2025
JVM Productions	TOTÄMÄSS 2 – Ein schweizerdeutsches Requiem
Kammermusikfestival Zwischentöne Engelberg	Kammermusikfestival 2026
Kirchenchor St. Michael, Zug	Jubiläumskonzert 135 Jahre
Klassik und Kultur für einen lebendigen Alltag	Abendbier zum Klavier / Musik & Geist 2025
Konzertreihe Mehrklang Seetal	Mehrklang Seetal, Saison 25/26
Kultur im Graben	Saison 2025/2026
Kultur im Graben	Kultur im Graben Saison 24/25
Kultur im Zehntenhof	Kultur im Zehntenhof, Saison 2025
Kulturlaube Sempach	Konzertreihe 2025

Laura Spichtig	Ellipsis
Lucerne Blues Festival	Lucerne Blues Festival 2025
Luzerner Kantorei	Konzertprojekte 2025
MaiHofChor Luzern	Passionskonzert 2026
Männerchor Eintracht, Emmenbrücke	Projektchor Querbeet
MauritiusChor Ruswil	Vorhang Auf
MGD3.ch	Luzerner Kantonal-Jugendmusikfest 2026 Dagmersellen
molto cantabile	winterlich
molto cantabile	himmlisch 2025
Moving Singers Küssnacht a. Rigi	Sound of Cinema
Musik und Kultur in der Franziskanerkirche	Abendmusiken 2025
NeSTU Netzwerk Schweiz-Transkarpatien/Ukraine	Ukrainischer Kammerchor CANTUS Hoffnung
Orchester Emmen	Karfreitagskonzert, Sieben Worte 2025
Orchester Emmen	Konzert Game-Musik 01.2026
Queens Land Classics	Hans Huber, Lenz- und Liebeslieder
Rigi Musiktage	Liebe und Leben
Schweizer Vokalconsort	Konzertsaison 2025
Serge Rachmaninoff Foundation	Vermittlungsprogramm 2025
Sinfonisches Blasorchester aulos	Konzerttournee & Swiss Conducting Days
Singalong Luzern	Luzerner Singalong 2025
Singkreis Sursee	Simeliberg
Stadtmusik Willisau	Cinema in Concert VI 2025
Stadtorchester Luzern	Frühlingskonzert mit Haydns Schöpfung 2025
Stiftung Schweiz. Jugendmusikwettbewerb	50. SJMW 2025
Tätsch Trio	Konzert Ranggä Ruglä Rodä
Theatergruppe Eigägwächs	Musical CATCH ME IF YOU CAN
Ukrainisches Kulturzentrum Prostir Luzern	Gedenkkonzert 2025
Urschweizer Kammerensemble	Beethoven-Schubert-Projekt
Verein Andermatt Folk	Konzertreihe Andermatt Folk 25/26
Verein boxopera	Carmens Vermächtnis
Verein B-Sides	B-Sides Festival 2025
Verein Castle Classics	Castle Classics 2025
Verein Echolot	Echolot Festival 2025
Verein für Musik und Kunst Vitznau	Konzertreihe MuK
Verein Grind Stone Festival	Grind Stone Festival 2025
Verein Jazzkantine Club	Herbstprogramm 2025
Verein Kunst.Kultur Ebikon	Keramikkonzerte 2025
Verein Musical Plus	Wie im Himmel 2025
Verein Musik am Hof	Jahresprogramm 2025
Verein Othmar Schoeck Festival	Schoeck Festival #7, Investment Culture 2025
Verein Pro Tramhüsli Emmen	Kultur im Tramhüsli 25/26
Verein Sprungfederation	Sprungfeder 2025
Verein Stall & Lauch	Kultur auf dem Lande 2025
Verein Stanser Musiktage	Stanser Musiktage 2025
Verein Volkskulturfest OBWALD	OBWALD 2025
Verein Voxpop	Voxpop Vocal Festival Luzern 2025
Verein WERFT	Konzertreihe 2025/26
Vidas Chor	In Bloom Performance-Projekt 2025
Vokalensemble i-Cantanti	Vespere und Konzert 2025

Vokalensemble Luzern	Produktionen 2025
Vokalensemble Sursee	ESC 1725 in Sursee
Vokalensemble the quire	Konzertprogramm 2025
Zentralschweizer Jugendchor ZJC	Frühlingsprojekt 2025
Zentralschweizer Jugendsinfonieorchester ZJSO	Auftakt V
Zuger Sinfonietta	Dichterliebe
Performing arts applications	
Cie caruso+avila	raising flags
company never mind	AGE OF DESIGN
ecco RONDO junges theater luzern	wirr wahr
Fetter Vetter & Oma Hommage	Hamlet
Fetter Vetter & Oma Hommage	Richtig gute Arbeit, Leute
IG Tanz Zentralschweiz IGTZ	Profitraining & Workshops Zentralschweiz 2025
Jugendtheater TG Willisau	AT:Wotsch schlegle? Eifach schnuufe
Jugendzirkus Tortellini	Hört ihr uns?
Kammertheater Spektakulum Dunjascha	Mme Pylinska & das Geheimnis von Chopin
Konzertchor Klangwerk Luzern	Opern-Kuriositäten
KUKA Kinder- und Kulturatelier	KUKA Kinder- und Kulturatelier 2025
Kulturmühle Horw	Wundertüte
Küssnacht Theaterleute	Freilichttheater: Nach Troja. Eine Revision
luki*ju Theater Luzern	Prinz*in 2025
Luzerner Bewegschafft	SPACE ZwischenRaum und ZwischenZeit
Luzerner Spielleute	Produktionen 2025
Musikverein Goldau	Tierpark-Musical 2025
OHNE ROLF	Unter Druck
Steiner/Stierle/Clavadetscher	Drei neue Nasen – Schein, du crazy Diamant 2025
Südpol Luzern	YES – Young Ensemble Südpol 2025
Swiss International Youth Dance Company (SIYDC)	Dornröschen
Taurus Produktion	Die Müllers, 4. Staffel, 2025
Theater Altishofen	Honig im Kopf
Theatergesellschaft Buochs	Vogelfrey 2025
Theatergesellschaft Malters	Auf Ned/Ted! – Wenn 6 Zahlen Leben verändern
Theatergesellschaft Sarnen	Volksfeindin 2025
Theatergesellschaft Sempach	Il Segreto Dell'Amore
Theatergesellschaft Willisau	Die goldene Gans
Theaterprod. A. Windlin / Verein BigBang	Der dritte Morgartenkrieg
TheaterWärch Stans	Macbeth 2025
Tropfstei Ruswil / Nomol Theater	Blütenträume
Upcoming Filmmakers	Upcoming Filmmakers Festival 2025
Verein Kraftprotz	Au clair de la lune
Verein Passionsspiel 2025 Ruswil	Passionsspiel 2025 Ruswil, DIE PROBE
Verein Tankstelle Bühne	Tankstelle Bühne 2025
Verein Tanzmehr	Tanzmehr anderes festival commun 2026
visch&fogel. theater unterwegs	Terre des Girafes
WAEXE	Obsolescence

Visual and media arts applications	
akku Kunstplattform	Malerei 2025
Franziska Furrer / Angel Sanchez	Eis von gestern
Fumetto Comic Festival	Fumetto Comic Festival 2025
Fumetto Comic Festival	Fumetto Comic Festival 2026
Haus für Kunst Uri	Herbstprogramm 2025
Haus zum Dolder	Pia Fries – Farbwirtschaft im Fleckenhaus
Museum Bruder Klaus	Frieden – MIR
Radio 3FACH	Mitschnitt 2025/26
Stiftung Fotodokumentation Kt LU	Ausstellung Seitenblicke 2025
Verein Filmcamp Luzern	Filmcamp Luzern 2025
Visarte Zentralschweiz	Will I be missed
Literature applications	
Die Predigt c/o Das Theaterkolleg	Die Predigt – Staffel 6
LiteraturGesellschaft Luzern LGL	Literarische Lesungen 2025
Schweiz. Institut f. Kinder- & Jugendmedien SIKJM	Schweizer Erzählnacht 2025
Cultural/Arts education	
Artes Liberales	KiKu Festival Einsiedeln 2025
Förderung des Brauchtums und der Kultur	Volksmusik Ächt Äntlibuech- 25-25-25
Helvetiarockt	Music Lab – Aktivitäten in Luzern 2025
Katharina Werk	Sounds of Palestine 2025
Kleintheater Luzern	Vermittlungsprojekte 2025
KUNST + BAU Kommission Visarte Zentralschweiz	Kunst + Bau Tage 2025
Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz	Theaterherbst 2027
Renata Nunes & Regina Meyer	Lia Flamenco
Stiftung World Band Festival Luzern	Der Orchesterclown – Familienkonzert
Superar Suisse	Superar Suisse am Lucerne Festival 2025
Theater im Burghbachkeller	Vom Zuschauen zum Mitdenken 2025
Verein BaBeL Strings	BaBeL Strings 2025
Verein Kunsthalle Luzern	Jahresprogramm 2025
Verein Zoomz	Zoomz Filmwoche Luzern 2025
Other and transdisciplinary topics	
Butterplace Productions	Die Grosse Menschenschau 2025
Kulturverein Ermitage	Gedenkjahr Isabelle Kaiser 2025
Luzerner Stachelbeere	Jetzt erst recht! 2025
Neugass Kino AG (Bourbaki Kino/Bar)	Renovation Kinosäle Bourbaki
OK Schweiz. Trachtenchorfest 2026 Sursee	Schweiz. Trachtenchorfest 2026 Sursee
one and many-dpa	Dissonance Symphony
Quings Akademie	Jahresprogramm 2025
Sinfonietta Lucerne	Orion Concerts 2025
Verein Entwicklung Magazin: Die Notbremse	Heftproduktion 8-11
Verein Helferherz	Karma Lama, Kultur erleben – Wirkung entfalten
Verein Kulturbildung für Kinder Luzern	KulKids 2025
Verein Tanzlager Luzern	Tanzlager 2025
Verein Weltformat	Weltformat Graphic Design Festival 2025
Miscellaneous small applications	

Grants/Expenditures 2025

International	CHF
Preschool and Primary Education	878,656
Technical Education	852,706
Urbanisation & Architecture	226,918
Agriculture	983,630
Complementary topics	104,649
Central Switzerland	
Social Institutions	535,500
Arts & Culture	1,420,680
Project Support Costs	468,145
Total Project Costs/Grants	5,470,885
Administrative Costs	595,296
Administrative Costs as % of Grants	10.9%



The 2025 Arthur Waser Prize, endowed with CHF 25,000, went to Argentine violinist Pilar Policano.



Arthur Waser
Foundation
Education, Social, Culture

Arthur Waser Foundation
Bellerivehöhe 9
6006 Luzern
foundation@arthur-waser.ch