

## Annual Report 2025



June 2026

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## Foreword

Dear friends of Mineke Foundation,

We are proud to share what your support made possible in 2025. It was a year of consolidation and growth. At Damiefafa School, we built on the previous year's rapid expansion, reached full junior high school for the first time, and were recognised as a national examination centre. Our Women's Club more than doubled in size, with more women than ever building businesses, saving, and supporting one another.

None of this happens in isolation. Behind every figure in this report is a teacher who stayed late, a mother who took a first loan, a volunteer who gave their evenings, and a donor who chose to believe in Dabwe Town. Thank you.

This report tells you, in brief, what we did and what it meant. We hope it leaves you as hopeful about the year ahead as we are.

With warm regards,

On behalf of the Board,

**Tonia Dabwe, Chair**

## About Mineke Foundation

Mineke Foundation works to give children and women in Dabwe Town, Liberia, the education and economic opportunities they need to build better futures. Our work rests on two pillars – quality education through **Damiefafa School**, and women's entrepreneurship through the **Women's Club** – supported by a shared **Resource Center**.

In Liberia, Mineke Foundation is registered as an NGO and accredited vocational training centre, and runs Damiefafa School as an accredited private school. Our staff are paid in accordance with Liberian labour laws.

Mineke Foundation is supported by a small volunteer-run support organisation based in the Netherlands, which assists the work in Liberia with fundraising, communication and capacity building. The people who carry out this support work are volunteers and receive no payment.

**Our objective** is to support good-quality education for disadvantaged children in our community; to improve access to essential services; and to support local social and economic development, with particular attention to women and girls.

## 2025 at a glance

### Damiefafa School

- † Reached **full junior high school** (nursery through Grade 9) for the first time
- † Recognised as a **national WAEC examination centre**, hosting more than 350 students from other schools for their national exams
- † Strengthened **teacher capacity** through internal and Ministry-led training
- † 2024/2025 school year: around 390 students enrolled, with 290 completing the year with full fees paid
- † 2025/2026 school year: 374 students enrolled (school year still in progress)

### Women's Club

- † Membership more than doubled: from 106 to 271 members (around 92% women)
- † 164 microloans disbursed across the year (2024: 66)
- † 100% microloan repayment rate maintained
- † 80% of members reported an improved financial situation
- † Active savers grew to 128 women (2024: 94)

## Damiefafa School

Damiefafa School offers affordable education under the Liberian national curriculum, enriched with reading, art education, agriculture and digital skills. 2025 was a year of consolidation: after the dramatic growth of the previous school year, the focus shifted to deepening quality, supporting teachers, and reaching a full junior high school.

### A full junior high school

In the 2025/2026 school year, Damiefafa School expanded to offer education from nursery all the way through Grade 9 – becoming a full elementary and junior high school for the first time. This is a significant milestone: students who once had to leave us for upper grades elsewhere can now continue their education within the school community they know and trust.

### A national examination centre

One of the proudest moments of the year was Damiefafa School's official approval by the **West African Examinations Council (WAEC)** to serve as a national examination centre. In May and June, the school hosted more than 350 students from surrounding schools sitting their national exams, and welcomed the WAEC monitors who oversaw them. Hosting the exams ran smoothly and significantly raised the school's visibility and standing in the community – a mark of trust in our facilities and our team.



## Investing in our teachers

Quality education depends on quality teaching, and in 2025 we made teacher development a priority. Teachers received in-class coaching and monitoring throughout the year, took part in internal capacity-building workshops, and were selected to join Ministry of Education refresher training alongside teachers from other schools. Topics ranged from lesson planning and classroom management to reading instruction, spelling and effective communication. Our international volunteers continued to work with teachers remotely to strengthen the Art Education programme.



This sustained investment matters because rapid growth brought many students from schools with weaker foundations. To help them catch up, teachers introduced a peer-learning approach – stronger students supporting classmates – alongside extra support in areas like reading and math.

In addition, due to the rapid growth, we also hired new teachers. Teacher training education in Liberia is of (very) variable quality. This means that we are developing our own teacher training programme to maintain the quality of education at the Damiefa School at the desired level.

## A rich curriculum

Beyond the national curriculum, Damiefa School continued to offer the programmes that set it apart:

- † Reading comprehension (Liberia Reads!): Our partnership continued in the early grades, and an official evaluation early in the year praised our teachers' commitment and our students' progress.
- † Art Education: Refreshed through volunteer-led teacher workshops, with students increasingly creating and experimenting on their own.
- † Digital skills: Students continued to receive basic computer training using the refurbished laptops in our Resource Center, building foundational digital skills from an early age.
- † Agriculture: Students learned hands-on gardening and crop care, with many proudly applying what they learned in home gardens.

- T Social Club & life skills: Weekly after-school sessions on health, hygiene, volunteering, confidence and values, including sessions for teenage girls in partnership with the Women's Club.

### Joining the dots: our integrated approach to learning

At Damiefa School, learning rarely stays inside one classroom. A lesson on hygiene and health in science class is picked up again in Art Education, where students reflect on how to improve life in their own communities and express their ideas creatively.

In 2025, this led them to a problem close to home: the uncollected rubbish in their home communities. In groups, they drew what their communities would look like if this problem were solved.

After that, they decided to take action. Guided by their teachers, our students organised a clean-up campaign in Dabwe Town and engaged residents about the importance of hygiene. A great example of how the school is giving back to its community while also making sure that education is connected to real life and empowers young people to act.



### Community and recognition

Parent engagement remained strong through regular PTA meetings – well attended throughout the year – and ongoing contact by phone, WhatsApp and home visits.

Students also took part in wider opportunities, including the KEEP Liberia leadership mentorship programme, in which three of our students were selected and one was elected to a leadership role among her peers. During recess, she now organises sessions with other students to teach them what she has learned about leadership.

Our students also took part in the national Spelling Bee for the first time. While they did not advance beyond the first round, it was a valuable experience and one we are determined to build on so we can do even better next time.

### Towards a financially sustainable school

We are encouraged that fee payment by parents continued to improve in 2025, thanks to consistent communication and follow-up. At the same time, this remains an area of strong focus. Our goal is for school-fee income to reach the level the school needs to become minimum-viable – able to cover its own core operating costs. Reaching that point matters greatly: it means donor support can be directed towards *upgrading* the school's facilities and the quality of education, rather than being needed simply to keep the school running.

### Looking ahead

In 2026, Damiefa School will focus on stabilising enrolment, continuing to strengthen teaching quality, and improving its facilities. Priorities include expanding sanitation facilities, creating a proper cafeteria space, and completing the perimeter fence to keep students safe.



## Women's Club

The Women's Club supports women in Dabwe Town and surrounding communities to build sustainable livelihoods and stronger lives. 2025 was a year of remarkable growth, as word spread of what membership could mean.

### Membership more than doubled

The Club grew from 106 members at the start of the year to 271 by its end – far surpassing the goal of 200. Around 92% of members are women. New members increasingly bring friends and family, drawn by the combination of training, coaching and access to finance. With growth came real challenges – larger meeting spaces needed, more materials, more planning – which the team managed while keeping participation high. On average, 76% of members took part in at least three-quarters of all activities.



### Entrepreneurship: skills, coaching and microloans

The entrepreneurship pillar equips women with practical, market-relevant skills and access to finance.

- † Vocational skills training: Through the year the Club ran hands-on trainings in skills with strong local demand – including liquid soap and bleach production, tie-and-dye, sewing, air fresheners, and bread and pastry making. The most popular were repeated to reach more women. 83 women started or expanded a business using these skills.
- † Business training and coaching: All women receiving a microloan complete business training, but the greatest impact comes from one-on-one coaching at women's places of business. In 2025 the team refined this into a clear path – loan application, business assessment, business training,

loan, and at least monthly coaching thereafter – increasing coaching when an entrepreneur struggles.

† Microloans: Our microloan fund continued to be the Club's biggest draw. In 2025 the Club disbursed 164 microloans (2024: 66), and maintained a 100% repayment rate, as it has since microloans began. Where repayment is delayed – usually due to illness, accident or bereavement – the team works with the woman to restructure supportively rather than punitively.

### Education: health, rights and community

The education pillar strengthens women's knowledge, confidence and wellbeing through workshops on women's health, rights, leadership and safety. In 2025 these included sessions on women's rights, menstrual and maternal health, mental wellbeing, and career development.

The Women's Club also organised two forums on gender-based violence in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender – with men explicitly included – and partnered with an American NGO and a Liberian maternal-health initiative to deliver a two-day newborn and maternal health training.

### Saving and lending together

Many members save through the Club's Savings Club, which also lets women lend small amounts to one another for personal needs such as school fees, rent or emergencies. These peer-to-peer loans are deliberately kept separate from the Mineke Foundation microloans which are for business use only. Active savers grew to **128 women** (2024: 94), reflecting growing financial confidence and stability.



### Results that matter

At year's end, **80% of members** reported an improved financial situation – through better business management, increased savings, and access to finance. For many women, this is the first time they have run a growing business, held savings, or been able to plan ahead.

### Looking ahead

In 2026 the Women's Club will introduce a **tiered programme**. Rather than every member following the same path, women will progress through levels that match their stage of business development – starting with a foundational orientation for new members (covering the Club's values, how the programme works, and expectations such as repaying loans), and advancing to more specialised vocational and business training as their businesses grow.

More advanced courses will carry a higher member contribution, reflecting the greater earning potential of those skills. This approach lets the Club support a beginner and an experienced entrepreneur each at the right level, and guides women step by step toward more formal, commercial activity.

Alongside this, the Club intends to grow to a maximum of around 400 members which we can manage well and strengthen coaching through a mix of group and individual sessions.



## Resource Center

The Resource Center is a shared facility supporting both Damiefa School and the Women's Club, with a small library, a computer space, educational toys and art materials. 2025 was the year it came into its own.

Over the course of the year the team completed the setup – reconditioning and organising the bookshelves, cataloguing the books by category, arranging the art and play materials, and establishing a small outdoors playground. By the second half of the year, the Resource Center was in active daily use: classes visited on a rota for guided reading sessions and structured play, teachers borrowed materials such as picture books, globes and abacuses to bring lessons to life, and students engaged with puzzles, building blocks and reading in growing numbers.

In 2026, we hope to take the Resource Center further. A priority is to refresh the computers so that we can **restart basic digital-skills training for the wider community** – not only for Damiefa School students and our own staff, but for children, youth and adults from Dabwe Town and surrounding areas, where access to such training is scarce.



## Organisation & governance

Mineke Foundation is governed by a Board of three members:

- † Tonia Dabwe – Chair & strategy
- † Stanley Slagmolen – Treasury & engineering
- † Mary Leesolee – Secretary & gender programme

Board members serve on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration. Our staff in Liberia are employed and paid in accordance with Liberian labour law. Our financial records are independently audited each year.

Mineke Foundation is supported by a small volunteer-run support organisation in the Netherlands. Its role is to support the work in Liberia – principally through fundraising, communication and capacity building. Its members are volunteers and receive no payment.

## Our finances in 2025

Mineke Foundation's programmes in Liberia are funded by the generous support of donors and foundations, by parents' contributions to school fees, and – in 2025 – by income from a legacy gift. We do not receive government funding, and we keep running costs deliberately low so that as much as possible reaches our programmes and the people they serve.

### How we invest in our programmes

The majority of what we spend goes directly into our two programmes – educating children at Damiefa School and supporting women's entrepreneurship. Only a small share goes to operations and oversight.

- † Education (Damiefa School): ~29%
- † Women's entrepreneurship (Women's Club): ~36%
- † Microloans (Women's Club): ~27%
- † Operations & oversight: ~8%

We do our best to keep our operations as lean as possible. Repayments from microloans are recycled into new loans, reducing the need for repeated fundraising.

## Looking ahead to 2026

We enter 2026 with confidence and clear priorities:

- † Education: Maintain enrolment at Damiefa School, keep strengthening teaching quality, and improve facilities – sanitation, a cafeteria, and a completed perimeter fence – while moving the school closer to covering its own core costs.
- † Women's entrepreneurship: Introduce the tiered Women's Club programme, manage growth sustainably, and continue expanding access to skills, coaching and finance.
- † Resource Center: Develop it further, including restarting community digital-skills training for children, youth and adults.

### Thank you

Everything in this report exists because people chose to help – donors, foundations, volunteers, and partners in Liberia and beyond. On behalf of the children and women of Dabwe Town, and our teams who serve them every day: thank you. We look forward to walking into 2026 together.