



Increasing access to justice and security for women and girls in Nairobi and Kisumu

Women and girls across Kenya are accessing justice by simply sending the word HELP to 21094. ActionAid International Kenya is celebrating this year's International Women's Day, themed "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality," by showcasing how women and girls living in poverty and exclusion are exploring the use of technology to realize their rights.

ActionAid International Kenya is an organization that unapologetically seeks to advance women's rights in a quest to promote social justice, Gender equality and end Poverty, thereby ensuring women and girls live lives of dignity. ActionAid embraces innovations and technology that strategically facilitate positive social change within the communities where we work. It is within this backdrop that we must contribute to the discourse on this International Women's Day theme and interrogate the extent to which women and girls and their communities have embraced the digital revolution and how this then is enhancing their quest for Gender Equality as well as challenges and barriers that exist thereof.

Participation and involvement of women and communities living in poverty and exclusion in technology results in more sustainable solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet their needs and promote gender equality. Their lack of inclusion, by contrast, comes with massive inequalities. A gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can increase the awareness of women and girls regarding their rights and civic engagement. Advancements in digital technology offer immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges.

Therefore, inclusive, and transformative technology and digital education are crucial for a sustainable future. The digital age also comes with a lot of exclusion and disparity, especially for communities that lack essential services like electricity, connectivity, knowledge, and exposure to current innovations and poverty. Innovations in gadgets like smartphones, laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi connectivity in homes and schools may not be available for many communities deep in the rural and marginalized areas and, there-



Discussion with women on how to end violence against women and girls in Nyalenda Kisumu County.

fore, inaccessibility to opportunities and information that may support them to develop.

ActionAid International Kenya launched the Access to Justice and Security project in Sept 2016 in Mukuru informal settlement in Nairobi and subsequently expanded to Nyalenda in Kisumu. The project's primary goal is to support survivors of Violence Against Women Girls (VAWG) to ac-

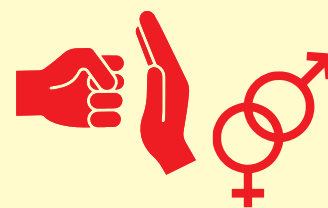
cess legal, medical, and psychosocial support while advocating for improved access to services, including women's access to economic empowerment opportunities.

The project uses innovative mobile technology (21094:SMS PLATFORM) to reach survivors and the community in general. The SMS platform is a community reporting mechanism that allows users (survivors, community) to report violations by sending the word HELP to 21094. The service also sends information on rights awareness to subscribers. Any person, regardless of the type of phone, can access this service to get support. The system utilises the referral pathway for survivors of violence to refer survivors for help and assistance. It is manned by trained community system operators who work as volunteers.

So far, we have raised awareness among over 20,000 community members in Mukuru and Nyalenda informal settlements through community forums. Three thousand three hundred seventeen cases (3317) have been reported through the platform, 456 survivors have received counseling services, 371 have received

medical support, 297 have received legal aid, 349 have been reported to the police and given OB numbers, 98 cases have been presented in court, 5 convictions, 15 cases have been referred to existing shelters, 81 cases went through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

Information is power, and technology has enabled women and girls in Mukuru and Nyalenda to harness their power within by taking charge of their lives, reporting cases of violence, and accessing justice.



20,000

NUMBER of community members that ActionAid has reached and raised awareness on gender violence in Mukuru and Nyalenda informal settlements through community forums.



Focus group discussion with women on how to end violence against women and girls.