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Alice Yaah, beneficiary EFL project from Kilifi County speaks during the close out meet held Pride Inn Azure Hotel in Nairobi

How ActionAid project restored dreams of 5,700 girls

Published on Nation Africa Website

Three 20-year-olds may have different experiences but share one story of hope and resilience.

Alice Mangi Yaah, a resident of Kilifi County, is a plumbing apprentice. The mother of one had contemplated suicide after she fell pregnant and was ostracised by her community. But an opportunity changed her life.

“When I gave birth while in Standard Six at 16, I begged

my parents to take me back to school, but they said since I was not serious the first time, there was no chance they would trust me. Because I loved football, I would attend training and one day my coach told me that one organisation was taking girls who had dropped out of school for retraining and skills building. I did not hesitate.”

In Migori County, Lucy Matete had also come across the same opportunity, which she heard about from her village elders. A mother of one, she dropped out of Standard Six. Today she is a building technology apprentice. Her esteem, which had been shattered, has been restored.

“When I was sitting at home wasting away, I felt hopeless.



Lucy Matete beneficiary EFL project from Migori County speaks during the close out meet held Pride Inn Azure Hotel in Nairobi

That is why I would go to Mjengo sites hoping to get work. I would only be paid Sh200-250 a day. And so, when I heard I could be trained, I was overjoyed. Now I can do plasters, paint and even instal tiles. I am on my way to becoming a civil engineer, and my future is bright.”

For Hafsa Abdi in Garissa County, patriarchy was the biggest hindrance to her education, but today, she runs the only hair salon in her community. “I had to drop out at Standard Four. My father believed my morals would depreciate if I became well-read. I had forgotten how to read and write. It was difficult for me as I had stayed out of the classroom for a long time. After training in hairdressing, I would still clash with my parents. They would not allow me to plait in the house, but I did not give up.”

Ms Yaah has regained her voice. She has taken her child and youngest sibling to school, and her position in the community has been elevated. Whenever she goes home, she is embraced. She encourages other girls who wear similar shoes not to give up. She shares some of the skills she has gained.

Ms Matete encourages girls who have dropped out of school to find ways to stay busy. That way, they will avoid

teen pregnancies while taking up available opportunities.

Ms Abdi has big dreams. She hopes to one day open a spa and salon in Nairobi. She has already witnessed a lot of change in her household. Her father has now allowed her younger sisters to resume learning. He is happy that her small business can support the family.

Implementation period

The three young women were among 5,700 marginalised girls aged between 10 and 19 selected for an ActionAid led programme implemented by the Voluntary Services Overseas Kenya and Leonard Cheshire, dubbed Education for Life. The initiative that ran for four and a half years in Isiolo, Garissa, Kisumu, Migori and Kilifi closed officially in March 2023. During that period, the programme engaged 70 per cent of girls who had never enrolled in school, 30 per cent who had some interface with the formal education system but dropped out without gaining basic education, and 30 per cent of girls with disabilities.

Accelerated learning for functional numeracy and literacy was adopted at catch-up centres for 6-9 months. “We conducted three classes a week for three hours at temporary centres, where English, Kiswahili and Mathematics were taught. Additionally, we offered psychosocial support, life skills, entrepreneurship training and career counselling,” said Lucky Mwaka, project officer at EFL, through partner organisation Sauti ya Wanawake, Pwani.

“Afterwards, the girls would decide whether they preferred to go back to primary school to continue with their education, to go to vocational centres of training and take up apprenticeship, or to engage in small businesses.

“The programme was also adapted to suit girls’ needs by offering childminders, a feeding plan and dignity kits. Education plans were also individualised based on entry-level assessments with learning materials ranging from the curriculum, facilitators guides, and workbooks

tailored to cater to the needs of the girls.”

Of 743 girls who chose vocational training, 36 per cent of girls graduated to self-employment. Sixty-two took non-traditional courses, while 54 took non-traditional courses under the apprenticeship pathway. These courses were ICT, computer packages, interior design, art, and design, plumbing and fitting, masonry, carpentry and joinery, electrical wiring and installation, motor vehicle mechanics, welding, building and construction, shoe making and weaving. Ninety per cent of girls of the 573 girls who went back to primary school were retained. Out of 1961 girls who opted for entrepreneurship 71 per cent are operating successful businesses as of January 2023.

With the project having closed, several recommendations were fronted to enhance the re-entry of girls to schools and their empowerment. First, the government should

adopt the catch-up centre model for implementing the accelerated education programme.

At the community level, the structures should be facilitated to support girls who have dropped out of school to avail themselves of the available opportunities. The labour market survey should establish the parameters for business coaching and career and psychological counselling at catch-up centers.

Parental or spousal involvement would create ownership of the preferred pathways for girls, as would the involvement of duty bearers in disbursing capitation, school modelling, disability, and gender inclusion training. Lastly, monthly spot-checks on the progress of girls admitted to primary schools are crucial, as well as home visits for girls who may have dropped out to help them return to school.



Hafsa Abdi, beneficiary EFL project from Garissa County speaks during the close out meeting held at Pride Inn Azure Hotel in Nairobi



Lilian Ipayo at her banana farm in Burat

Agroecology-The Game Changer for Agropastoralists in Isiolo County

Lilian Ipayo and James Rutubo are Agro-pastoralists from Burat Isiolo County. When they first heard about agroecology, they were skeptical about it. They considered the practice a foreign thing that could not be successful in their locality, considering it is categorized as ASAL (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands). The ASALs comprise up to 89% of the country and approximately 38% of Kenya's Population.

After a series of sessions with trainers, they were convinced and decided to try it, and since then, they have never regretted it. Through Agroecology, they have produced food for domestic consumption, and the surplus is sold for an income.

What is Agroecology?

Agroecology is a whole-systems approach to food, feed, and fiber production that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions rather than using inputs with adverse effects. It combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved. Inherent in this definition is the idea that sustainability must be extended globally and indefinitely in time and to all living organisms, including humans.

Lilian Ipayo never imagined she could be a serious farmer; her life revolved around pastoralism, and she depended on it with her husband and family, but with



Lilian Ipayo at her sweet potato farm in Burat

climate change, often, her livestock would perish. Her engagement with ActionAid turned her life around.

"I came to learn about Agroecology through ActionAid. I had never imagined that I would ever grow anything in this area, considering it is dry, but when we got educated, my Husband and I decided to try it. Initially, it seemed impossible, but the plants we had grown grew with time. I am a proud farmer; I grow bananas and sweet potatoes for domestic use, and the surplus we sell for an income." Lilian Ipayo, Agro-pastoralist from Burat.

She indicated that her income from selling the surplus had enabled her to invest in Village Savings and Loaning Associations (VSLA). Through these associations, they pool resources together through savings. They then use the savings to lend to each other or engage in income-generating initiatives. Profits from such industries are then plowed back into the association or shared among members as dividends.

"I invest the profit from selling bananas and sweet potatoes in my local women association. Through the association, I got funds which I invested in a cloth-selling business. In the same association, I can withdraw part of my savings at the end of the year and pay school fees for my children." Lilian Ipayo, Agro-pastoralist from Burat.

The same sentiments are shared by James Rutubo, who likes to be referred to as an agroecology champion. He has practiced agroecology for two years. During these two years, he has witnessed a transformation in his life and that of his family.

"I no longer depend on livestock alone for food and an income; I grow several varieties of sweet potatoes which I sell for an income. I have also taken it as an initiative to educate my fellow community members. The only challenge we get is water rationing for irrigation by the authorities due to the existing drought, but the little we get, we try to use it, and so far, our plants haven't dried up" James Rutubo, Agroecology Champion



James Rutubo at his sweet potato farm in Burat, Isiolo County

ActionAid International Kenya, through the Sustainable Agroecology Models of Production for ASAL of Kenya (SAMPAK) project, is improving food and nutrition for women and other vulnerable groups in Isiolo County through agroecology and other climate-resilient agriculture techniques like soil and water conservation. The project targets 7,800 agro-pastoralists and 15,900 pastoralists.

The project is funded by Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), ActionAid Italy and ActionAid International Kenya as lead; other partners include Merti Integrated Development Program (MID-P), Cesvi Foundation onlus

Stop 'Clipping Girls' Wings', Kinna Residents Urged

Female Genital Mutilation is associated with child marriages, teen pregnancies, and school dropouts. During the International Women's Day celebrations for Isiolo County in Kinna, ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) joined the county and other stakeholders in urging the community to respect girls' rights and help them realize their dreams by ending FGM/C.

Isiolo County is one of the 22 Female Genital Mutilation hot spots in Kenya. Statistics indicate that about two-thirds (65%) of girls aged between 15-19 years have undergone the practice compared to the national average of 21%. ActionAid Kenya is implementing an FCDO-funded programme, the Africa Led Movement (ALM), to end Female genital mutilation and foster respect for girls' and women's rights in the county.

"When girls undergo FGM, they drop out of school, and others get married off. I urge my community to shun this vice and give our girls a chance to be in school. When

girls get educated, they don't become 'disrespectful' as misinterpreted by many. They will come back and uplift their families. I am a living example, my parents gave me a chance to go to school, and after my education, I am back in Isiolo to enlighten my community." Diram Duba, AAIK Project Coordinator for the ALM to End FGM programme, Isiolo County

Through a speech by the Deputy Governor's wife, the county leadership reiterated its commitment to ensuring that the girl child is protected from FGM.

"As we mark this International Women's Day, I wish to reiterate the leadership commitment to support our women and protect our girls. I urge our communities to join in protecting our girls by ending Female Genital Mutilation." Stated Christine Lowassa, Deputy Governor's wife, Isiolo County

The Girl Generation programme is implemented by a consortium led by Options Consultancy Services, and ActionAid Kenya, Amref Health Africa, Orchid Project, Africa Coordination Centre for Abandonment of FGM/C and the University of Portsmouth as members.



ActionAid Kenya joined Isiolo County residents in marking International Women's Day. Also present was Deputy Governor's wife Christine Lowassa. They urged residents to end FGM/C

ActionAid International Kenya and Kisumu County Partner to Improve Livelihoods

ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) and Kisumu County Government will partner to improve the livelihoods of the vulnerable in the county; they include children, poor rural women, the youth, and persons with disabilities.

The partnership was affirmed during a meeting held at the county offices on 31st March 2023 between the county representatives led by the Chief Executive Committee Member (C.E.C.M) in charge of Water, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, Maryline Yanzar Agwa and the AAIK team led by the Executive Director Susan Otieno.



Kisumu County and ActionAid International Kenya team pose for a photo after the meeting.

ActionAid International Kenya has launched a new Local Rights Program (LRP) in Nyakach, a sub-county within Kisumu County. Local Rights Program (LRP) is an approach through which ActionAid International Kenya funds projects and programmes in a locality. The core strategy for the LRP is working in partnerships to eradicate poverty and promote access to fundamental rights and services.

ActionAid International Kenya is not new in the county. The organisation has been implementing a 5-year programme that targeted out of schoolgirls and is currently implementing another program that seeks to

increase access to justice and security for survivors of Gender Based Violence in Nyalenda, an informal settlement in Kisumu County.



Chief Executive Committee Member (C.E.C.M) in charge of Water, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, Kisumu County Maryline Yanzar Agwa and AAIK Executive Director Susan Otieno in a discussion

Why Nyakach in Kisumu County

Nyakach is one of the seven Sub Counties or Constituencies that make up Kisumu County. It has an area of approximately 357.30 square Kilometres and has a population of 133,041 (KNBS 2013). Two distinct terrains make up the land surface. There is the Nyabondo Plateau, commonly known as Upper Nyakach, and the lowland known as Lower Nyakach. There are five County Assembly Wards in Nyakach Constituency North Nyakach, Central Nyakach, West Nyakach, and Southwest Nyakach.

Nyakach was selected because it ranks high on the national poverty rating and other human development indices.



Launch of water projects in Ndhiwa Subcounty, ActionAid Kenya Board Member Pendo Mary, John Kinoti Senior Manager Finance at Mpesa Foundation and Dr Kevin Osuri (with spectacles) during the launch of the water projects.

Mpesa Foundation and ActionAid Kenya build Water Projects in Dhiwa to Benefit Two Health Facilities and the Community.

Mpesa Foundation and ActionAid Kenya, in partnership with the County Government of Homabay, built water projects in Kobodo and Kachuth in Kologi and Kwabwai wards of Ndhiwa Sub- County, in HomaBay County. The two projects will benefit two health facilities and the communities in the two locations. The project is part of the Uzazi Salama programme interventions to strengthen the capacity of the County to provide Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH).

“This water project is part of the bigger integrated Project dubbed Uzazi Salama, whose main objective is to

address maternal and neonatal indicators in Homabay County.” John Kinoti, Senior Manager Finance at Mpesa Foundation.

Uzazi Salama is a programme funded by the Mpesa Foundation and is being implemented in the Dhiwa and Suba Sub counties of Homabay County. The project is expected to strengthen the capacity of the County to provide Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) to approximately 90,000 women and children under the age of Five years. The project also improves facility service with innovations and equipment to promote safe motherhood.

“Access to clean water has been a challenge but with the launch of these water projects, the community will benefit. It will also reduce cases of waterborne diseases that have been on the rise in this region.” Dr. Kevin Osuri,



The launched water projects.

Chief Officer Health, Homabay County.

Why Homabay County?

Homabay County is one of the 15 counties in Kenya that have challenges in maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health outcomes, low coverage rates and a large, underserved population. The maternal mortality rate is projected to be 583 deaths of mothers per 100 000 live births, while the infant mortality rate is projected

to be 119 deaths per 1,000 live births; hence a great need to create high-impact interventions that would improve maternal outcomes in the County. "ActionAid Kenya was drawn to Homabay County due to challenges facing women, especially regarding access to water and maternal health services. With this water project, women from this area will easily access water and be motivated to go to health centers for their maternal health as the health centers have water." Susan Otieno

"We are grateful for the water project; access to clean water has challenged our women and the community. Women will now access water closer to them" Sofia, Chairperson Kobodo Water Project

Other partners within the Uzazi Salama Consortium include Amref Health Africa, Pathfinder and PharmAccess Foundation



Uzazi Salama Consortium members, MPesa Foundation team, and Homabay County team during the launch of the water projects.

Embracing Digital Solutions to Increase Access to Justice for Survivors of Violence

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



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

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, therefore, 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 access 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 five 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.



Pupils from Kanzokeani Primary School, their Teachers and the Fantasanremo team during the visit at the school.

Primary School benefits from Musical Instruments and Learning Materials worth 5,040 euros (Kes 700,000)

Kanzokeani Primary School in Kathozweni, Makueni County, benefitted from musical instruments and learning materials donated by philanthropists from Italy in collaboration with ActionAid Italia. The philanthropists consist of artists and event organizers, all based in Italy.

The handover ceremony took place on April 3rd at the school grounds. The school's administration received the donations, and teachers and students were grateful for the gifts.

Through the child sponsorship programme, ActionAid Kenya and its partners fund projects and programmes in a locality to secure sustained improvement in the

lives of vulnerable and marginalized children and their communities.



Pupils give a vote of thanks during the handover ceremony.

Photo Gallery



International Women's Day celebrations at AAIK GP Platform Grounds in Nairobi attended by UN Women Kenya Representatives and ActionAid International Kenya team



The International Women's Day celebration in Taita Taveta County was graced by the Deputy Governor Hon Christine Kilalo.



International Women's Day celebration in Ndhiwa, Homabay County.



Kinna residents hold hands in solidarity to end FGM




INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY
#EMBRACEEQUITY 8th MARCH 2023 Venue: Garissa County
THEME: DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality

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AAIK staff at the International Women's Day celebrations in Garissa County.

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