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*Jane Limaki at her Farm in Kadokoi,
Tangulbei, Baringo County.*

A Journey to self-reliance through Agroecology

In recent decades, extreme weather events have increased in frequency, intensity, and magnitude of drought. This has threatened and increased the vulnerability of rural livelihoods, particularly in the arid and semi-arid lands in Kenya and other parts of Africa.

Approximately 98% of Kenya's agriculture is rainfed and depends entirely on the bimodal rainfall pattern. Only 16% of Kenya's land is estimated to receive sufficient and consistent rainfall, thus considered unsuitable for crop production.

The vulnerability of the farming systems has been exacerbated by the fact that most production is done by small-scale farmers who depend on rainfed agriculture and have limited adaptive capacity. The increasing vulnerability, coupled with other underlying factors such as widespread declining soil health, high poverty levels, declining farm sizes, inadequate expertise and poor agricultural farming practices and policies, has greatly hindered the potential for yield increase. The current climate changes are already being felt and pose a significant risk to global food security and could seriously compromise the prospective of agriculture to feed people living in poverty and exclusion.

The Gender Responsive Alternatives for Climate Change (GRACC) project has been working with women in Tangulbei, modeling agroecology techniques. Jane Limaki, a 32-year-old mother to 9 children - 3 girls and 6 boys is one of the committed target women the project has been working with. A walk into her homestead in Kadokoi, Tangulbei, despite the dry conditions experienced in the area, paints a picture of the transformation simple agroecology techniques can offer rural communities in arid lands.

“Before interacting with the GRACC project, I had water challenges on my farm and would harvest very little or nothing due to limited rainfall. The crops would dry before getting to maturity and would incur a lot of losses. I have been passionate about farming, and the GRACC project assisted me in improving my skills. Before the project, I had never known I could spread, slow, and sink rainwater on my farm. Prior to attending training on Agroecology, I used to practice monocropping.”

“I was privileged to get a rare opportunity to attend training sessions on agroecology with other targeted farmers. I visited model farms in the previous year of the project in Gilgil Naivasha. The visit changed my life!”

Jane has diversified her livelihood through planting high value crops such as Tomatoes, Watermelons, Beans, Maize, Pumpkins, Beans, Avocado, Bananas, and fodder.



From Left to Right: Lucy Ntongai, GRACC Project Coordinator, Ahmad Abagana, AAIK Global Platform and Jane Limaki during a visit at her farm.

“I am thankful and happy to have interacted with and been included in different ActionAid projects and programs targeting local farmers in Baringo County. If one is hardworking and committed, gets the capacity development as I did, they will be able to make a change and sustain their livelihoods amidst other challenges within the region like me” Jane Limaki

“I have been selling watermelons from my farm to a nearby hotel. My hope for agroecology in the next year, ahead of the rainy season, is to be supported with drought-tolerant fruit seedlings, cereals, and legumes to enable her to increase the farm size and have specific sections for watermelons, pumpkins, groundnuts and identify at least 5 community members who are into farming and ready for guidance and mentorship on agroecology farming.”

Jane believes in starting with a small group to effect change and spread out within the ward.



AAIK Executive Director, Susan Otieno (second from right) during a panel discussion at the Children Devolution Conference. On the panel is Vihiga County Governor Wilberforce Ottichilo and Children reps from the counties.

Empowering Young Voices: A Decade of Devolution and the Future of Children in Kenya

This year, the country marked a decade since the devolved system of government started. The Council of Governors, in partnership with ActionAid International Kenya and other CSOs, organized the Children’s Devolution Conference, which was themed “Empowering Young Voices: A Decade of Devolution and the Future of Children in Kenya” The event took place from 3rd - 7th July 2023 at the M-pesa Foundation, Kiambu County.

The conference provided a platform for children to reflect on their experiences in the last 10 years of devolution for enhanced service delivery that is responsive to their needs. Representatives of children from the 47 counties got an opportunity to engage with leaders on matters affecting them and propose solutions. ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) supported 30 children and

chaperones from Kisumu, Baringo, Isiolo, Garissa, Kilifi, and Homabay counties.

During one of the panel discussions, AAIK Executive Director Ms. Susan Otieno highlighted how counties working with partners can create an enabling environment for child-led Climate Action. She emphasized that it requires collective effort and commitment from all stakeholders to amplify children’s voices.

“Climate change has adverse effects on children. The absence of children from school owing to a drought. This absence causes the loss of their parents’ means of livelihood, leading to an early marriage and lost educational prospects. The long-lasting effects of climate change affect the holistic development of children.” said Susan Otieno

Further, she highlighted how AAIK works with schools



ActionAid Kenya Executive Director, Susan Otieno at the Children Devolution Conference

through the 4K Clubs and urged children to utilize those spaces to advocate for climate change. AAIK works in schools to support environmental clubs in creating awareness and advocating climate justice.

The Conference culminated with a communique that will be submitted to H.E President William Ruto by the Children's Governor and Deputy Governor on 16th August 2023 during the official opening of the Devolution Conference. Further, the communique will be part of the Conference resolutions that different stakeholders will take up for implementation.

AAIK will be part of the committee that will devise strategies to ensure that the next Children's Devolution conference delivers the promises to the children.



AAIK Executive Director Susan Otieno (third from left) at the Children Devolution Conference held at the Mpesa Foundation Academy in Kiambu County



Fundraising Coordinator Hannah Munyao takes the participants through the mobile app operation.

Digitizing Child Sponsorship Communications

Child Sponsorship has been one of our key strategies in implementing our program interventions in 6 Local Rights Programs (LRPs) with support from our funding affiliates in the UK, Ireland, Greece, and Italy. The LRPs are Marafa (Kilifi), Makima (Embu County, Nyokal (Homabay), Elangatawas (Kajiado), Kathonzweni (Makueni) and Nyakach (Kisumu). Through Child Sponsorship, ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK) receives regular giving to support the Local Rights programs. This has enabled support for our work in communities and ensured alignment to our work in development towards a world without poverty and injustice.

To ensure effective child sponsorship communication, AAIK organized a 4-day TOT workshop in Malindi, Kenya, to train 12 Community Resource persons and 6 Local Rights Program staff to introduce the Sahakom Mobile App. Sahakom Mobile App is a cutting-edge mobile application developed by ActionAid. It's a real-time update platform that enables content collection and sharing with funding affiliates and facilitates sponsor communication, enabling a visual and interactive experience. The training

enabled all participants to log on to their TEST accounts and carry out all the exercises linked to the application. A visit to Garashi Primary School provided an opportunity to put the exercises into practice with children. Children are ambassadors to their communities. Donor communications play a pivotal role in building awareness amongst the supporters about the struggles of local people and the approach AAIK is taking to rebalance power and bring long-term sustainable change. By utilizing this powerful tool, we aim to create a meaningful and sustainable impact in the lives of children, empowering them to build a brighter future.



Evelyn Kaswili conducts the mobile app Test at Garashi Primary School in Marafa Kilifi County.

Adow Saves Sister from the Cut.

To beat female Genital Mutilation and cut, there must be a positive attitude shift by men and women and girls and boys alike against the vice.

With this premise, The Girl Generation support to African Led Movement (TGG-ALM) to end Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C) programme by ActionAid International Kenya has targeted pupils through the boys' and girls' forums across nine schools in Garissa County. These schools are situated miles away from Garissa town and in vulnerable, hard-to-reach areas.

*Adow, a pupil at Guyo Primary School (five kilometers from his village), started attending boys' forums in 2021, and several sessions later, his voice saved his younger sister, *Farhya, from FGM/C. He hails from Munyij village, an area that is lagging in terms of socio-economic development. Munyij is predominantly occupied by the Vulnerable and Marginalized Group (VMG) called Waliwaanas. In Adow's community, FGM/C and early (child) marriage has been the norm.

In the case of Adow, 15, who together with his two younger sisters were in the custody of their aunt, got wind that his guardian and two other aunties were hatching a plan to have Farhya cut. He sat with his aunt and convinced her to abort her mission.

"During the April school holidays, my aunt wanted to cut my little sister *Farhya. I had overheard her plan with my other two aunts. On the same evening, I approached my aunt, told her about the effects FGM/C would have on Farhya, and tried convincing her to abandon the plans. My aunt was afraid of stigma from the community if she had not cut my sister. The following morning, I went to Mama Sahara, a Kamuthe Women's Rights Network member.

"Mama Sahara, two other members of the women's network and the chief came to our home. My aunt was warned against subjecting Farhya to FGM/C. My aunt heeded their advice and is now held in high esteem, a

role model in Munyij village. Said Adow.

He noted that he gained the confidence to challenge FGM/C through the boys' forum, saying:

"I spoke out and rescued my sister. Now my sister is free from this harm. I am willing to continue protecting the girls of my community through my voice and actions."

Adow continues to say:

"In school, I get to speak against the practice of FGM/C during school debates and key international days like International Day for zero tolerance to FGM/C and the Day of African Child. The girls are our sisters. In this forum, we have been taught not to let anyone harm them. I will protect my sisters. My aunt has now joined the women's rights network. Together with her, we will continue to fight against FGM/C and other harmful cultural practices that women and girls in school and my community go through.



Salim and other school forum participants doing a poem presentation during Day of the African Child celebrations in Garissa.

"I am happy now because I see men and boys in my community advocate against FGM/C. I am also happy that girls and women are getting more support to stop cutting the girls from us, boys, and men, who are the main decision-makers in our community. It is my wish that FGM/C will come to an end in my community," future."

Boys' and girls' forums in the targeted schools feature nine to 18-year-old pupils with 14 patrons overseeing them. They engage the boys and girls separately using the forums manuals to facilitate weekly sessions.

These forums are safe spaces for the pupils; they learn more about themselves, grow their skills and knowledge

and interact with their peers. The forums are inclusive, allowing them to voice their opinions and concerns.

Through these forums, girls and boys increase their knowledge and awareness of the effects FGM/C has on the girls and women. The forums aim to positively shift the attitudes and beliefs of boys and girls against the practice of FGM/C in their communities.

The TGG-ALM programme has recognized young boys' role in ending FGM/C. Adow is an example of how the boys' forums in schools have increased the agency and willingness of boys to support girls and women to end FGM/C in their communities



School forum participants during our quarterly dignity kits distribution in schools



The group members sell their wares in Kibuye Market in Kisumu. (Photo Credit: Pambazuko La Wanawake Magharibi).

Domestic violence survivors dream to become cereals wholesalers in Kisumu.

Women in Nyalenda Kisumu City bore the brunt of domestic violence owing to their socio-economic dependence on their spouses. This changed after they started running their own businesses and contributing to their household needs.

In 2021, 14 women who had suffered violence encountered Pambazuko La Wanawake Magharibi-ActionAid International Kenya's implementing partner for the Kisumu County Access to Justice and Security programme. They got hope to redeem themselves from violent experiences. The women survivors of violence formed the Peace, Love and Hard self-help group.

Several of them had suffered major trauma from gender-based violence, mainly from their partners. Through the Access to Justice and Security programme, they underwent intensive individual and group counseling and therapy sessions to heal and stabilize their lives. After much introspection by each of the women, they uncovered that the recurring influence for the violence meted on them by their spouses was that they depended on the men financially. After the realization, they inquired from the programme staff on ways they could break the dependence.

Consequently, the programme trained the survivors on how to start and run a business. This was pivotal to helping the survivors become economically independent and break free from violent relationships pegged on financial support. After the entrepreneurship and financial management training, the women were issued with seed capital to launch their businesses.

Jecinter, the group's chairlady, said: "We have learnt a lot concerning gender-based violence and child protection. Moreover, economic empowerment has allowed us to run our small businesses more effectively, earn a living and break free from abusive relationships. Through the Access to Justice and Security project, we can sensitize other women who may be undergoing violence in their lives. We hope the project keeps running so that more women and children exposed to violence are reached," Marion, a group member, noted that they were taught how to conduct a market survey to find out the need or gap, then write a business plan, bookkeeping and basic mathematics for business.

"After the training, we did market research as group members agreed to set up a cereals/grains business. Cereals form part of everyday foodstuffs for many households. They don't get spoilt easily if dried properly and are easy to sell since they are considered basic foodstuff.

"They put their business at Kibuye Market, the main market serving Kisumu City. Both household consumers and small-scale retailers in the city and its environs shop here. All other traders from Kisumu and its environs buy

their foodstuffs from Kibuye Market. Human traffic is high at Kibuye Market, meaning the circulation of money is great," said Marion.

The group began their business with two types of beans and rice each, groundnuts, green grams, millet, and maize. After ploughing back profits into the business, they have made strides by adding amaranth, cowpeas, finger millet, and a second variety of groundnuts and beans.

Mary, the treasurer of the Peace Love and Hard Work self-help group, expressed gratitude to the programme funders and staff for rescuing them.

"We are very thankful that you gave us a chance at a better life devoid of violence. And for the seed capital to start their business, we say thank you. We did not have any platform to secure capital from, to begin the business," recorded Mary.

She added: "Had we been given the seed capital without the training first; we would have lost all the money; the training was crucial. We aspire to grow and become wholesalers of cereals in Kisumu."

The group's dedicated customer base includes neighbours, fellow church members, and food kiosks around the market and the public.

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