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## Agroecology and VSLA have propelled me to self reliance.



*Lydia Katikit watering kales at her small farm in Mokong'o village Tangelbei.*

Communities in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) have borne the brunt of the country's worst drought in four decades due to failed rainy seasons. The lack of rains has resulted in the loss of livelihood for women and their communities.

However, women in Mokong'o village in Tangelbei, Baringo County, have embraced agroecology as a solution to their food needs and are supporting their families, thanks to the training they have received from ActionAid Kenya through the Gender Responsive Alternatives for Climate Change (GRACC) Project.

Lydia Katikit, a small-scale farmer in Tangelbei, is beating the odds at her farm. After undergoing alternative economic activities training in 2016 and being introduced to agroecology, she was eager to diversify her family's diet. She looked forward to earning an extra shilling by selling surplus produce.

"In these trainings, I have been taught a lot, and after each meeting, I return home with some fresh knowledge to improve my productivity in the shamba (farm). I am now in a position where I can handle the farm activities independently and chicken rearing," said Katikit.

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Lydia Katikit feeding her chicken at her homestead in Mokong'o village in Tangelbei

"I am now in a position where I can handle the farm activities independently and chicken rearing," said Katikit. Failed rain seasons had dealt her a blow, forcing her to walk long distances in search of water for her farm, domestic use, and her goats to drink. The construction of a water pan next to her farm has lessened the burden, but she is worried that the drought might be prolonged for an unforeseeable period.

"Before the water pan was constructed, I went to fetch water very far from home, and sometimes my daughter would sacrifice her school time to come and help me fetch water. The days she attended school, we would go to fetch water in the night, which exposed us to violence and wildlife," she added.

"The drought is worsening daily, making our lives unbearable. The economy is also dipping. We are at a crossroads here," lamented Katikit, saying that she has had to fence off her farm to deter goats from grazing on her crops.

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"VSLA (Village Savings and Loans Association) has lifted me and many other women. I urge other women not enrolled in one to do so as soon as possible. There is so much unity and sisterhood in these groups. This ActionAid project has empowered me so much that I no longer depend on my husband. I am so grateful to you (ActionAid) and your supporters," added Katikit.

She is optimistic that her children will attend school well, pursue college education, and have a better future. If this happens, Katikit feels she will have a good old age. She also implores her area leaders to implement measures to mitigate climate change and its effects.

## ActionAid Kenya participates in global conference on ending FGM.



*Susan Otieno, Executive Director, ActionAid Kenya, at panel discussion at the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation, that was held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre, Dar es salaam Tanzania*

The International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Center, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It took place on the 9 - 11 October 2023 with the Theme: "Change in a Generation". The conference aimed at strengthening collaboration, partnership, capacity, and knowledge exchange, bringing together African member states, as well as regional and international partners, civil society, academia, media, and young people to reassess progress and look ahead post covid-19 -while also considering the impact of climate change and issues of fragility, including conflict and humanitarian contexts/ situations -on efforts to eliminate the practice of FGM.

This conference also builds on the success established in Ouagadougou by recognizing the efforts of Eastern African governments to halt cross-border FGM practice and achieving comparable action across the continent. The conference connected resources and programs and emphasized the necessity of data utilization. It also insisted on human rights and accountability at all levels. The conference highlighted inventions and inventors rekindled national and regional movements and created a forum to exchange knowledge and information about changing societal norms.

At the conference, ActionAid International Kenya

(AAIK), in collaboration with Plan International and UN Women, also held a side event on gender transformative approaches to ending FGM. AAIK is implementing a gender transformative, girl-centered End FGM program called 'The Girl Generation support to the African Led movement to end FGM/C.' This program is implemented by a consortium led by Options Consultancy Services and has other partners: Amref Health Africa, the University of Portsmouth, the Population Council, Orchid Project and ACCAF. ActionAid Kenya is implementing the program in Isiolo and Garissa counties of Kenya.

This work has resulted in the rescue of girls from FGM/C and child marriage, enrolment, and retention of girls in schools, increased agency and confidence for both girls and boys to advocate for an end to FGM/C and collective communal understanding and willingness to end FGM/C.



*Dorothy Mulei, Gender lead-TGG -ALM ActionAid International Kenya makes a presentation during a breakout session at the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Center, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.*



*Terasiah Warui, Programme coordinator -TGG - ALM ActionAid International Kenya, moderating the breakout session at the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Center, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.*

The side event panel included community champions from grassroots, established organic networks (Women Rights Network and Men for Change), ActionAid's Gender Lead, Plan International and UN women program leads. While community champions demonstrated the impact of Gender Transformative programming at the community level, technical leads deconstructed the strategic strategies utilized to assure Gender Transformative programming, including Girl-Centered programming, a Human-Rights-Based Approach and the involvement of Boys and men as allies.

This side event was well attended and participatory and highlighted programmers' interest in gender transformative programming and identified a gap in knowledge for many, especially around designing and monitoring gender transformative programs.

### **Key highlights of the side event**

Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C) is closely tied to unequal power relations between men and women and is a form of Gender Based Violence (GBV). As a manifestation of gender inequality, it needs to be addressed through approaches that aim not solely to eradicate the practice in and of itself but also to transform the gendered and social norms and power relations that have produced and maintained it.

This means that programs and interventions geared towards the eradication of FGM must actively examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power that advantage boys and men over girls and women. The interventions should aspire to tackle the root causes of FGM, which include unequal power relations and control of bodily autonomy. These interventions should also promote individual self-improvement among girls and women towards redressing the power dynamics

and structures that reinforce gendered inequalities. A Girl Centered Approach is critical to FGM programming since FGM/C primarily impacts girls. Therefore, the centrality of girls' voice, participation, and implementation at every stage of the Programme is critical.

Girls also present lived experiences, are powerful, and they have ideas that have not been utilized; therefore, putting girls at the center ensures that their potential is unleashed, and their voices amplified. A girl-centered approach focuses on addressing the specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of girls and empowering them by providing them with the necessary resources, opportunities, and support systems to thrive and reach their full potential. This ensures that programs have maximum impact on girls and do not perpetuate harm. Girl-centered programming also recognizes the importance of gender equality. It aims to dismantle barriers that hinder girls' progress in various aspects of their lives, including education, health, safety, and social empowerment.

Positioning the grassroots champions and survivors at the front to speak about the progress of ending FGM/C is important in advocacy spaces. Their stories showcase the impact of best practices, approaches, and interventions.

This, therefore, calls for more resources to grassroots organizations to ensure they can use their collective power and voice to advocate for change.

Strategic engagement of men and boys as partners to end FGM is critical. For a long time, most religious and cultural leaders have been men. These leaders are trusted and respected by communities. Communities follow their guidance on what to practice culturally and religiously. Young men and boys are also privileged in families and communities and seen as decision-makers. Boys and men should, therefore, recognize themselves as part of a system of domination and have their own spaces for deconstructing their notions of power and privileges and use this privilege to advocate against harmful practices. Any effort to engage boys and men should actively promote girls' and young women's empowerment and in no way undermine their human rights.

Measuring gender transformative change is crucial and should involve tracking changes in attitudes for both men and women, boys and girls towards gender equality; changes in agency and confidence of girls and women; number of women and girls taking up leadership roles; laws and policies developed that promote gender equality and equity and promote a gender-based violence-free society.



## Women take charge to avert clashes in Tiaty



*Rael Chekakee placing a newly born kid in a shade in Kitaiel village.*

Chekakee Loputakori, a mother of five, recounted to us how her family was displaced due to the insecurity in Mukutani and was obligated to take in her stepchildren after her co-wife was killed in the skirmishes. She now has 10 children, and fending for them all is difficult.

“The trauma was unbearable for the women and our children. ActionAid brought us counselors to help us in the recovery process. I must say I am thankful to them and their supporters. In June, ActionAid invited us women from Pokot, Njemps and Tugen to a peace meeting in

Marigat, and we had fruitful deliberations. At the end of the seminar, we all agreed to be on the lookout and tip the other communities whenever we learn that men from our respective communities were planning to raid our neighbours,” intimated Loputakori.

In addition, she said: “We are mentoring our children, especially the boys and young men, to refrain from acts that contribute to insecurity like cattle rustling, child marriage and theft.”





*Rael Chekakee returning home with water and washed clothes on her back in Kitailel village*

During the skirmishes, she lost 30 bags of onions, each weighing 30kg, several bags of maize, and her posho mill and house were burnt to ashes. When she returned, she could only find burnt, weak iron sheets on the ground.

The biggest challenge they are facing now in Tangelbei, she says, is hunger following erratic rains in the area. And given the declining economy and the drought, we are headed for tough times.

“The drought has made life hard, but the load would have been a bit lighter if my co-wife was alive. My husband and I are trying, though,” she said.

The burden of unpaid care work still weighs heavy on her, adding that men in her community are softening up by allowing the women time to attend meetings by ActionAid, where they gain invaluable knowledge to develop their homes and community.

Loputakori called on the area leaders to advocate for the establishment of more schools in the Tangelbei so that children do not have to walk long distances to access education. Also, they should rally parents to send their children to school. Leaders should also stress the importance of planting trees and cease cutting more trees for charcoal burning.

## IMF/World Bank meet failed to address debt distress and austerity issues that have plagued Africa for years.



*Samson Orao, Programme and Strategy Lead and Lina Moraa, Programmes Manager-Women Rights and Governance, ActionAid Kenya at the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings in Marrakech, Morocco.*

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Annual Meetings have just concluded in Marrakech, Morocco, having been held in Africa for the first time in 50 years.

The last such meeting was held in Kenya in 1973, coincidentally the year of the military coup against the democratically elected government of Allende in Chile that ushered in the dictatorship of Pinochet, laying the foundations for the rise of neoliberalism.

In the decades that followed, the IMF and the World Bank have championed this neoliberal model, rooted in colonial, patriarchal and extractive systems across Africa. Such systems have enforced variations of structural adjustment and fiscal consolidation programmes that

have profoundly undermined development and the capacity of African states to chart their own independent course.

The result of this model based on exploitation and extraction from the Global South is a rise in regular debt and economic crises. These crises have then been used to justify the imposition of harsh loan conditions and coercive policy advice on African governments, perpetuating dependency and stripping away the capacity of states through cuts to public spending.

Although some of the rhetoric has changed in recent years, in practice the Fund and the Bank are still attached to this cult of austerity, undermining progress on health, education and other public services and blocking Africa's

ability to respond and adapt to the climate crisis. As Opa Kapijimpanga, founder of the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, recently stated, giving loan after loan has become a means for 'the continued coloniality of the IMF'. After four lost decades to African development, it is time to ensure the IMF learns from its failures.

ActionAid's research has shown that IMF enforced cuts and freezes to public sector wage bills have consistently blocked the recruitment of urgently needed teachers, nurses, midwives and other public sector workers. ActionAid has documented the gendered impact of these cuts, with women being the first to lose access to services, the first to lose opportunities for decent work



*Lina Moraa, Programmes Manager-Women Rights and Governance, ActionAid Kenya at the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings in Marrakech, Morocco.*

and the first to absorb the rising tide of unpaid care and domestic work.

Without access to low-cost financing, many African governments now find themselves facing a deeper debt crisis than ever before – with UNCTAD recently finding that the amount spent on interest payments is often higher than spending on either education or health. They observe that the current ‘inequal international financial architecture’ makes access to financing inadequate and expensive, meaning countries in Africa pay interest rates that are four times higher than the US and eight times higher than Germany. Yet the IMF policy advice remains little changed despite many hoping last week’s meetings in Morocco would begin signalling a new season of change. Countries are still forced to negotiate solutions one-by-one – denying the systemic causes of the debt crisis that clearly require a collective response. It is time for a systemic solution to the debt crisis that goes beyond the common framework and that reforms the outdated international financial architecture, including through ensuring a fair representation of African countries.

Our African governments should work together to demand coordinated regional action across Africa to resolve the debt crisis - rather than allowing the blame to be placed onto individual countries. Our Ministers of Finance should follow up their bold and effective call in 2022 for a UN tax convention by making an even bolder call for collective action on debt and a new debt workout mechanism. The calls made by the African Caucus in July for ‘facilitating debt relief that is equitable, rapid, comprehensive, and sizable’ and for a transformation of the multilateral debt restructuring frameworks is welcome. Future mechanisms must be fully independent of the IMF so that governments in debt are not forced to pursue austerity policies.

There are alternatives to austerity. Indeed, a key IMF paper shows that ambitious action to expand tax-to-GDP ratios is key to financing the SDGs. But in practice the IMF does not recommend bold action on tax in Africa. The IMF continues to support regressive taxes such as

VAT, passing the burden onto those least able to pay. There are many progressive and gender-responsive tax alternatives that can focus on raising revenue for public services from the wealthiest individuals and companies. Earlier this year ActionAid produced a policy brief on the Vicious Cycle linking the debt crisis and climate crisis. Indebted countries are forced to earn foreign currency rapidly and do so by investing in fossil fuel extraction and industrial agriculture – thereby accelerating the climate crisis. At present, the IMF and World Bank make matters worse by continuing to subsidise fossil fuels and by failing to recognise how debt is undermining progress on climate adaptation.

Our governments should recognise these connections and make debt cancellation and debt renegotiation a priority in climate finance negotiations at COP28 and in other international spaces. Climate finance, including for loss and damage, must be based on grants and global taxes, not loans. Banks in the Global North must also stop funding fossil fuels and industrial agriculture, and fund renewables and agroecology.

Finally, African governments should recognise these institutions are fundamentally colonial in nature, formed before most African countries achieved independence. The voting structures of the IMF and World Bank remain basically unchanged since they were founded, giving power to the former colonisers to perpetuate a world order that does not recognise the voice, dignity and importance of Africa. It is time for African governments to chart a different path to the future, building strong and sustainable states that can deliver quality public services and sustainable development for all.

## Running for our Future



ActionAid Kenya marathoners at the Standard Chartered Nairobi Marathon

Donned in ActionAid branded bandanas with the message 'Fund our Future, be part of the solution,' the ActionAid Kenya marathon team successfully ran and completed the Standard and Chartered Nairobi marathon to keep fit and pass a message to the world on the need for concerted efforts to address the climate crisis. The marathon is held annually, with each year having a key objective. This 20th edition of the marathon aims to plant 2 million trees in the next 5 years to promote environmental sustainability. The marathon was held on Sunday, 29th October 2023, along the Southern bypass in Nairobi.



Throughout the race, red, white, and black bandanas with ActionAid logo could be seen in the multitude, and as you moved closer, the message was clear on the need to be part of the climate solution. ActionAid Kenya had a team of 17 marathoners; 15 participated in the 10 km race, and 2 participated in the 21km race. The group gladly finished the race and achieved the objective of keeping fit and communicating the need to fund climate solutions that are people-centred, not profit-centred.

The marathon attracted 22,400 runners from over 90 nationalities. Women and Persons with Disabilities were well represented, with 45% of the runners being female and 200 PWDS (Source: Standard and Chartered Marathon).



Fund Our Future is a climate campaign involving more than 70 ActionAid offices and hundreds of allies. The movement calls for investors still piling money into fossil fuels and industrial agriculture in the Global South to divest from these harmful activities. Through this campaign, we are asking for renewable energy investments and public and private support towards agroecological solutions that promote food security and social justice.

The campaign also calls on governments (including Kenya) to mobilise significant resources to finance climate action through policies that address tax avoidance and illicit finance flows, ensure ambitious and progressive tax reforms, and put fair tax obligations on wealthy corporations and individuals.



The campaign also calls on the Kenyan government and other governments in the Global South to stop supporting and subsidising harmful industrial agriculture activities, including applying chemical fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, and deforestation.

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