



Sensitization Programs  
Paving the Way for Women's  
Land Rights 3

How Kwabwai Youth Are  
Cultivating a Sustainable  
Future Through Innovation  
and Leadership. 5

Promoting Sustainable  
Agriculture Through 4K  
Clubs in Nyokal, Homabay  
County 7

Survivors fight back against  
GBV in Kisumu County 9

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## Sensitization Programs Paving the Way for Women's Land Rights



Women's Rights Sensitization Workshop in Nyokal, Homa Bay County

Mercy Owino, a resident of Kwabwai ward in Homabay County, was disinherited after her husband's death. The 45-year-old mother of six was on the verge of homelessness before the intervention of ActionAid Kenya. With their assistance, she reclaimed the land through an alternative justice process, and a modest structure was built for her.

Years of deeply rooted cultural practices prevented women like Mercy from owning land or even discussing it, leading to discrimination and frustration, especially in the event of their husband's death.

In response, ActionAid Kenya has been running a sensitization campaign and women's empowerment program in the Kwabwai community about the importance of moving away from these practices.

"We want to create a platform for women to actively participate at various decision-making levels, starting from the homestead to national leadership. We have brought men on board as champions to transform others and reduce resistance," said Euphemia Awour, a program coordinator.

“When we started involving the men, they began allowing women to come to various forums, and now attendance is about 50-50 for both genders,” said Orsila Atieno, a sensitization officer at Nyokal Women Group, which runs the ActionAid campaign in Kwabwai.

In addition to land rights, women have gained the confidence to address other sensitive issues. Orsila observed that women now report cases of child abuse and defilement due to their heightened sense of responsibility. Furthermore, more girls are attending school, and household chores are being shared more equally among children, allowing girls to dedicate more time to their studies.

The women’s empowerment program also prioritizes individuals who are marginalized and have disabilities, to receive the necessary support and resources. Eunice Ouru, a local teacher with a hand disability, has gained confidence and acquired new knowledge. She has learned modern sustainable and commercial agricultural practices and is a community champion for other persons with disabilities.



A Transformative Session on Land Ownership in Kwabwai Ward, Homabay County – Bridging Gaps Between Women, Men, Youth, and Duty Bearers for Sustainable Land Rights and Empowerment

She has been collaborating closely with chiefs who back the campaign by writing widows’ succession letters in accordance with the 2010 constitution, which mandates joint ownership and requires men to put their wives’ names on land titles to address the historical disenfranchisement of women and advance gender equality in land ownership.

Since the initiative’s inception in 2021, Kwabwai location chief George Odero has witnessed some encouraging progress as cases of widow land disinheritance have shrunk since community members now have a better understanding of women’s rights.

When the program began, the biggest challenge was community mapping due to a prevailing myth that the empowerment initiatives were instilling pride in women, making them less submissive to traditional norms and values. However, once the community understood the benefits associated with women’s empowerment, such as gaining financial independence and alleviating the burden on men, addressing issues like gender-based violence, and others, it gained greater acceptance

## How Kwabwai Youth Are Cultivating a Sustainable Future Through Innovation and Leadership.



Kwabwai youth use black soldier flies and Azolla algae to create sustainable, eco-friendly chicken feed, enhancing nutrition and reducing waste on the farm

In Kwabwai, Homabay County, a new generation of youth is rising to meet the challenges of climate change while striving for financial independence. Among them are Vivian Ouda and David Ochieng standing together on a lush farm, divided into vibrant sections.

The land is dotted with tall banana plants, rows of maize, patches of thriving kale, and a grand mango tree heavy with green fruit. This transformation is remarkable, considering that the area was dry and harsh just five years ago.

Today, with a cooler climate and renewed energy, these young leaders embrace innovative agricultural practices and poultry farming to build sustainable livelihoods.

The year-old mixed farming venture is run by 13 other youths and costs an initial capital of Sh 10,000.

It was after Vivian's training on movement building and organising that she mobilised her fellow youth, and in 2023 they started their mixed farming business. And it has been a game-changer in tackling youth unemployment in the area. Nevertheless, she urged the county government to increase its support for young entrepreneurs engaged in various business ventures.

Besides the youth, Vivian is a financial literacy coach for a group of marginalized women that includes widows.

"As a loans and savings group, we provide financial support to our members. Our funds aim to empower businesses, facilitate education for children, and address various needs within our community," said Irene Otieno, Secretary of the Otange Silk Group.

Vivian observed that the traditional cultural beliefs that restricted young people from speaking in the presence of elders and discouraged their participation in decision-making are changing. She is confident in the community's readiness for youthful leadership and embraces the opportunity to assume greater responsibilities.



Kwabwai youth use black soldier flies and Azolla algae to create sustainable, eco-friendly chicken feed, enhancing nutrition and reducing waste on the farm



Poultry farming project by the youth group in Kwabwai ward. Homabay County

"We use black soldier flies to feed the chickens as a sustainable way to improve nutrition and reduce waste and use Azolla algae as a cheaper and eco-friendly feed alternative," said Vivian, a youth champion who also advocates for children's and women's rights.

In 2022, she received comprehensive leadership training from ActionAid Kenya, which boosted her confidence. Thereafter, she was elected as one of 30 youth representatives in her ward in a local election. Together, they engage the county government on the challenges faced by young people while seeking locally tailored solutions.

"We are advocating for access to gender-responsive public services through the youth. We use their energy, knowledge, and skills to champion accountable leadership to ensure delivery of services like education, safe and clean water, and good roads," said ActionAid Kenya community development officer Jospher Akinyi.

## Promoting Sustainable Agriculture Through 4K Clubs in Nyokal, Homabay County



Pupils at Alara Primary School carefully weeds the 4K Club Garden, cultivating both crops and valuable life skills in line with the Competence-Based Curriculum.

Alara Primary School in Homabay County has embraced a transformative approach to education by integrating sustainable agriculture into its teaching practices, thanks to Kenya's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). The school's initiative, which includes a thriving vegetable garden, marks the revival of the 4K Clubs—programs designed to equip young learners with practical skills and promote self-reliance.

Peter Odero, a teacher at Alara Primary and the project leader, emphasizes the value of the CBC in equipping students with skills that are relevant to their lives.

"As part of the new CBC, we aim to provide pupils with practical skills that can help them later in life. This project also aligns with the return of the 4K Clubs, which focus on teaching self-reliance," Odero explained.

The 4K Club, originally introduced by the Kenyan government in 1962, was reintroduced in 2021 with a renewed focus on sustainability and resilience in agriculture.



A pupil at Alara Primary School carefully weeds the 4K Club Garden, cultivating both crops and valuable life skills in line with the Competence-Based Curriculum.

“This is one of our projects that extends to schools. We have set up model farms in Kwabwai Ward to help students learn about sustainable agriculture and enhance their productivity, resilience, and adaptation to climate change,” Akinyi explained.

By involving students in practical agricultural activities, ActionAid hopes to inspire them to apply the skills they learn at school to their communities, helping to improve local food security and sustainability.

“We chose schools because they are accessible to all community members and can serve as learning centers for everyone,” Akinyi added.

The sustainable garden at Alara Primary School serves as an example of how Kenya’s CBC can be used to promote food security, self-reliance, and environmental consciousness. The project not only supports the educational development of students but also aims to create lasting, positive change in the surrounding community. Through such initiatives, the Competence-Based Curriculum is helping shape a generation of young people equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to sustainable agricultural practices and food security in Kenya.



Jospher Akinyi, Community Development Facilitator at ActionAid Kenya, joins Alara Primary School pupils in their 4K Club Garden. The school has received support from ActionAid, including shade nets, to help protect and sustain their crops.

The program aims to instill values of hard work, responsibility, and environmental stewardship among young people. Through hands-on agricultural projects like the vegetable garden at Alara Primary, students gain real-world experience in farming and food production.

The school’s agricultural project began last year, supported by ActionAid Kenya, an NGO that provided technical training and resources, including shade nets to protect the crops. Since then, the garden has flourished, with vegetables grown not only for use within the school but also for sale in the local community. Odero hopes that, with approval from the school board, the program will expand next year to include a feeding program for junior secondary students, utilizing produce from the garden.

“This is a trial, but we are seeing great progress. We hope to expand the garden into a larger space in the future,” Odero said.

The sale of vegetables also contributes to a fund that supports the school’s most vulnerable students, such as those who cannot afford essential items like shoes. The initiative is part of a larger effort by ActionAid Kenya to promote sustainable agricultural practices and build resilience against climate change in local communities.

Jospher Akinyi, a community development facilitator with ActionAid, highlights the importance of schools as platforms for teaching sustainable agriculture.



## Survivors fight back against GBV in Kisumu County



Survivors of Gender-Based Violence engage in a meaningful discussion with staff from Palawama, who are providing support in collaboration with ActionAid Kenya.

When Mary Atieno was married off at 13, her life spiraled into hardship after her husband abandoned her and sent goons to assault her. She sought refuge in her father's home but faced another ordeal when her brother attempted to defile her teenage daughter.

Despite her efforts to report the case, her family dismissed her concerns. "You know these are family matters, and we should not involve the police," her aunt argued. A family meeting ultimately silenced her attempts to seek justice.

Mary refused to give up. She contacted Pambazuko la Wanawake Magaharibi (Palawama), a local gender-based violence (GBV) advocacy organization, via their toll-free SMS line, 21094. She pursued legal action with their support and received financial aid to start a business.

Her story is not unique. 11 percent of Kisumu women between the ages of 15 and 49 report having experienced sexual violence, and another 7.0 percent in the same age group report having experienced sexual violence in the previous 12 months, according to the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health study (KDHS) study report. Another 36% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 reported having been physically abused since they were 15.

“Parents must support their children to access justice,” Atieno urged. “Silence only deepens the harm.”

According to Lena Jobita, assistant chief of Nyalenda B location, her office receives at least two GBV cases weekly.

“Our main focus is prevention through community forums to raise awareness, but when cases arise, we refer them to the police,” Jobita said. She called for government investment in safe houses for survivors, noting that existing private facilities can only accommodate a few people.

Organizations like Palawama and ActionAid Kenya play critical roles in the fight against GBV. Palawama’s counselor, Mural Nyangaga, revealed that most cases they handle involve defilement, domestic violence, and child neglect.

“Economic strain is a major factor in domestic violence,” Nyangaga said. “Many women stay in abusive homes because they fear single parenthood. Sensitization is key, especially to help women understand legal pathways for justice.”

Economic independence is another focus in combating GBV. Dinah Wambua, a project officer with ActionAid Kenya, explained how their programs provide seed capital and business training for survivors.

“Economic violence, like disinheritance or evicting widows from family land, is widespread,” Wambua said. “We work with communities to challenge cultural norms that deny women land ownership. Educating men is equally important to foster change.”

However, challenges persist. Some women attend forums secretly, fearing backlash from their husbands. Mistrust over land ownership often leads to further conflict, underscoring the need for broader education efforts.

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