

Progress in Shifting Norms and Improving SRHR in Kenya

Restrictive gender norms, stigma, and limited adolescent agency continue to undermine access to SRHR information and services in many Kenyan communities.

Program Overview

The Wellspring Program aims to build a grassroots movement by empowering communities in Kakamega and Homa Bay counties to challenge harmful gender norms, strengthen adolescent agency, and enhance access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across Kenya. Through community mobilization, capacity strengthening, and advocacy, the program supports adolescents and community members to actively engage in advancing gender equitable norms and SRHR outcomes at the local and national levels.

Shifting Community Norms Around SRHR and Gender

- **Male Champions for Change:** 40 local men in Homa Bay received training, fostering peer-led dialogue that challenged practices of partner violence, multiple sexual partnerships, and restrictive parenting.
- **Impact Example:** Knowledge and positive attitudes among male champions rose from 59% to 82% after facilitated discussions.
- **Safer Communities:** Boda boda riders previously linked to adolescent pregnancies and unsafe abortions publicly committed to protecting girls' rights and safety.
- **Ending Exploitation:** Fisherfolk groups and Beach Management Units (BMUs) were trained on gender-based violence, ending "sex-for-fish" arrangements and removing school-going adolescents from the beaches, reducing risks of exploitation and early marriage.

"I believed women using the coil would give birth to a child holding it. Through these dialogue sessions, I am now more knowledgeable and can advise appropriately."

Enabling Supportive County Environments for SRHR Dialogue

- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** County chiefs, religious leaders, and local institutions partnered with grassroots CBOs, creating supportive spaces for critical SRHR discussions, unprecedented engagement from traditionally conservative actors.
- **Religious Leaders as SRHR Allies:** Faith leaders now collaborate to educate congregations and refer community members to services, indicating shifts among key gatekeepers.
- **Improved Case Reporting:** Collaboration between police gender desks, BMUs, and local chiefs improved trust, formal SGBV reporting, and community protection.
- **Digital Reach:** Twitter Spaces, Facebook Live, radio talk shows, and webinars amplified intergenerational SRHR discussion—broadening the project's reach and reducing stigma.

Strengthening CSO Capacity and Cross-Sector Coordination

- **Organizational Growth:** CSO partners demonstrated increased technical and strategic capacity; they led referral pathways, facilitated dialogues, and administered monitoring tools such as KAPI surveys.
- **Media Advocacy:** Partner organizations harnessed digital platforms and live radio for wider, sustained advocacy and norm change.
- **Broad Impact:** Grassroots CSOs mobilized multi-sector teams—health, security, government, youth—driving policy and practice improvements county-wide.



Boosting Adolescents' Agency and Self-Efficacy

- **Mentor Mothers:** 72 adolescent mothers supported through peer mentorship; 10 successfully reintegrated into school, thanks to psychosocial and family mediation.
- **Comprehensive Support:** Young mothers received referrals for contraception and abortion care in youth friendly, stigma reduced environments.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Support-group models provided adolescent mothers with training and income-generating activities, strengthening both financial and emotional wellbeing.
- **Tools for the Youngest:** The Nimechanuka board game reached very young adolescents, helping them navigate puberty and challenge harmful stereotypes.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT



40

male champions
trained



72

adolescent mothers
supported by
mentor-mothers



10

teenage mothers
returned to school

21



boda- boda and fisherfolk groups
transformed from perpetrators to
protectors

Over 5,000

reached with digital norm-
shifting campaigns

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- **Cross-Hierarchy Engagement:** Including elders, faith leaders, and community officials accelerates norm change.
- **Men as Advocates:** Peer-led engagement with men and boys fosters deep, lasting shifts in attitudes and practices.
- **Safe Spaces Work:** Honest, non-judgmental community forums catalyze real behavior change.
- **Media is Multiplicative:** Radio, social media, and live digital events rapidly reduce stigma and normalize SRHR issues.
- **Rooting Change in Community Structures:** Long-term impact is achieved when change is embedded in trusted, local organizations and systems.

CONCLUSION

The Wellspring Project demonstrates that community-led approaches can shift harmful gender norms, strengthen adolescent agency and improve access to SRHR information and support systems. By engaging local champions, grassroots organizations and institutional actors, the project contributed to more supportive and protective environments for women, girls, and adolescents in Kakamega and Homa Bay counties.



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