

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



About Us

SIMUN embodies the spirit of positive change and stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment for adolescent girls, women and youth by advancing their rights and becoming a driving force for positive change. SIMUN adopts a holistic approach in its work by addressing the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality, transforming social norms and championing initiatives that break down the barriers to adolescent girls, women and youth inclusion and participation fostering a world where they can thrive

Vision

A society where young women and youth live in dignity to enjoy equal rights and influence decisions on the change they desire in their lives and community.

Values

Equity and Justice

We recognize that people are not the same but equal.

Transparency and accountability

We uphold ourselves to the highest standards of honesty.

Diversity and inclusion

We have zero tolerance to all forms of discrimination.

Mission

To amplify women and youth voices to promote social justice and challenge inequalities in our community.

Professionalism

We are committed to excellence, authenticity, continuous improvement for exceptional service standards.

Team work

We work together as a unit and commit to firmly stand with and by our partners.

Innovativeness

We are devoted to creativity and learning as the foundation for change.

Welcome to the Siaya Mungano Network Bi-Annual Newsletter!

We are excited to bring you the latest updates and highlights from our work over the past six months. Inside this edition, you will find inspiring stories of change, detailed reports on our projects, and insights into our ongoing efforts in climate action, women's empowerment, and community development in Siaya. Our dedicated team has been hard at work on several impactful initiatives, including Power to Youth, PWD Inclusion and Empowerment (PIE), Women Voices in Climate Action and Governance, Adolescent Girls Power Program, Rebuilding Widows Hopes for Decent Work in Siaya, Strengthening Women Voices in Governance in Siaya(WVL), Modest Feeding program/Psychosocial Support Program, She Deserves Her Rights and Skills, and Uchumi Huru. We are eager to share the progress and achievements we've made together in these areas.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO



Empowering Young People to Prevent and Respond to SGBV

Our Husika Dada sessions in schools and communities, done through Afya clubs and community safe spaces respectively aim to amplify voices against inequalities and reduce SGBV cases in Siaya. These sessions enhance participants' understanding of the link between SGBV and teenage pregnancy. Leveraging Husika Dada spaces, we adopt a Gender Transformative Approach, engaging male youth and adolescents in SGBV prevention, reporting, and supporting menstrual hygiene management for AGYWs. The initiative targets Adolescent Girls and Young Women, youth, and male champions, fostering a safer and more informed community.

Village Youth Cafés Driving Conversations on SGBV Prevention and Response

Our village-level youth cafés foster youth agency to engage with societal actors on SGBV and unintended pregnancy prevention. These cafés promote discussions on unintended pregnancy and GBV trends, highlighting each community member's role in reversing these issues. The platform aids the Power To Youth project in building youth and AGYW movements for advocacy, enhancing youth inclusion, and strengthening local prevention and reporting strategies. We engaged youth champions, AGYWs, religious leaders, community health promoters, and societal actors, reaching 29 females (18-35 years), 22 females (above 35 years), 24 males (18-35 years), and 14 males (above 35 years).



Storytelling Sessions to Mobilize community Actions against SGBV

Our ward-level storytelling sessions with AGYWs and youth foster youth-adult partnerships for GBV and unintended pregnancy prevention in Siaya. By sharing experiences, adolescent girls, young women, and male champions raise awareness, break stigma, and offer peer support. These sessions empower young girls and mothers with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions and advocate for their rights. Targeting AGYWs, societal actors, and male champions, this initiative is vital in curbing unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence.



Bridging Generations: Ward-Based Dialogue Forums on Mental Health, SGBV and MHM

Our ward-based dialogue forums with community leaders bridge the intergenerational gap, fostering open communication and stronger relationships among community members. Participants, including AGYWs, religious leaders, societal actors, and health promoters, shared their roles in reducing SGBV. Additionally, AGYWs attended sessions on mental health and menstrual hygiene management (MHM), gaining vital knowledge and skills. This holistic approach strengthens our community, creating a safer, more supportive environment and promoting overall well-being. Together, we are making significant strides in SGBV prevention and response.

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Strengthening GBV Response Through TWG Meetings

We supported Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings focused on AGYW and youth agendas in Siaya. These meetings have strengthened the GBV TWG and centralized sub-county data, allowing partners to plan effectively and allocate resources efficiently. Adopting a multi-sectoral approach, TWG members leverage the strengths and resources of various partners to tackle complex GBV cases. Our collaborative efforts involve the Ministry of Health (MoH), male and female champions, and civil society organizations (CSOs), ensuring comprehensive support and advocacy for AGYW and youth.



Menstrual Hygiene Day, 2024

#For a Period Friendly World

In commemoration of Menstrual Hygiene Day, adolescent girls and boys gained crucial information on menstrual hygiene, disorders, and products from the MoH department. The event dispelled misinformation, myths, and taboos surrounding menstruation, providing clear answers to adolescents' questions and concerns. This initiative involved representatives from the Department of Education, CSOs, and the MoH, ensuring a comprehensive approach to educating and supporting young people on menstruation-related matters. This effort fosters a more informed and supportive environment for adolescents.

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Strengthening Capacity of Young Widow Advocates

Siaya Muungano Network remains committed to empowering young widows by providing civic training and vital information on legal instruments of women's rights. Through our project, "Rebuilding widows hope for decent employment in Siaya," nine widows have been equipped to serve as community paralegals, advocating for their rights and combating gender-based violence within their communities. These efforts aim to amplify the voices of widows and ensure their rights are upheld in the community, creating a more supportive and equitable environment for all.



Strengthening Village Saving Schemes for ease of widows access to credit facilities.

Under the "Rebuilding Widows' Hope for Decent Employment in Siaya" project, we conducted the Saving for Transformation Training. This initiative reached 47 right holders: 16 Hekima Widows in North Alego, 16 Precious Widows in West Uyoma, and 15 Smart Women in West Alego. The training aims to equip these women with financial literacy and savings skills, empowering them to achieve economic stability and independence. This transformative effort is a crucial step towards improving the livelihoods of young widows in Siaya.



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Reshaping widows Household plans for better livelihoods.

We conducted household road mapping with 47 right holders. This initiative included 16 Hekima Widows in North Alego, 16 Precious Widows in West Uyoma, and 15 Smart Women in West Alego. The purpose was reshaping widows' household plans for better livelihoods by identifying employment opportunities and addressing their specific needs. This activity aimed to empower young widows, fostering a pathway to decent employment and improved living conditions.



Community Safe Spaces for peer learning and collective care.

In January, our efforts to empower young mothers persisted as we established community safe spaces where they could convene, share experiences, and engage in mentorship sessions. These spaces provide a supportive environment for open discussions on decision-making and personal growth, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among young mothers in our community.



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Unveiling Power Dynamics and Championing Decision-Making

In Ugunja, Gem, and Alego Usonga sub-counties, power analysis sessions were conducted under the Piscca Decid'Her project. These sessions engaged 196 adolescent girls and young women from various communities. The aim was to enhance their decision-making skills, challenge patriarchal systems, and build confidence to resist gender-based violence. Through these efforts, we strive to empower young women to assert their voices and rights.



Community Environmental Stewardship

We were honored to welcome the Council of Governors' Knowledge Management Unit as they documented community best practices in climate change mitigation & adaptation. They toured our tree nursery at Umala VTC, established by Eco-club members, showcasing our commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability.



Promoting Skillful Parenting and Nurturing care for Young Mothers

Together with Stawisha Africa and Siaya Young Women Alliance, our Siaya cluster has implemented a community safe space model. With an aim of Promoting Skillful Parenting and Nurturing Care for Young Mothers, we empower young mothers by fostering agency, confidence, and skills to navigate and overcome challenges in their environment.

Improved retention and increased enrolment of Young Mothers at Umala VTC

With a target of improving retention and increasing enrollment of young mothers at Umala VTC, we are supporting a modest feeding program. The program focuses on young mothers and their children within the institution, providing a conducive learning environment. This initiative has borne significant fruit, as enrollment rates have increased and performance has improved. We have documented some quick wins of the program, and the documentary is attached.



[Click here to Watch:
Modest Feeding Program
at Umala VTC](#)

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Building Young Community SRHR Champions

We dedicated our efforts to building the capacity of adolescents and young women as champions in their communities. Through this initiative, we are disseminating accurate sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and working together towards the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Siaya. This activity aims to increase access to SRHR information, create more opportunities for referrals, and ensure that young people have better access to essential SRHR services.



Enhancing access to SRHR information and services

We supported four Community Integrated Forums in Umala, Kaluo, Simenya, and Sirembe, reaching 557 community members. Among the participants were 35 young mothers who accessed essential family planning services. These forums aimed to address community needs, promote health awareness, and provide critical resources to support family planning and overall well-being. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering healthier, more informed communities and improving access to essential services for young mothers.



Promoting involvement of women small scale traders in revenue decisions and budget making process

Through our Uchumi Huru project we conducted assessments in 15 markets in Siaya Sub County to gauge women small scale traders' involvement in budget decisions and revenue allocation. Our aim is to promote tax justice and advocate for a favorable business environment for small-scale traders.



BI-ANNUAL**NEWSLETTER****Amplifying women voices through media**

Our partnership with community radio stations and local media has provided a platform to continuously amplify women's voices. Through this, we engaged in a special talk show, celebrating International Women's Day 2024. Focusing on the theme 'Invest In Women Accelerate Change,' we sparked meaningful conversations and championed women's rights. Through these collaborations, we ensure that women's perspectives are heard and valued in our community. These media engagements also play a crucial role in promoting accountability, oversight, and transparency, particularly on matters of governance. By leveraging the power of radio, we are building a more inclusive and informed society.

**Community Consultation: Addressing Climate-Induced Displacement**

During the month of March, we participated in a 3-day consultation to identify practices addressing displacement in the context of climate change in our community. Collaborating with global networks under the Platform on Disaster Displacement, we worked alongside partners to find solutions.

Localizing GBV and Teen Pregnancy Response

In March, we had a series of 'Intergenerational Dialogues' across Simenya, Rangala, Umala, Nyamila, Karemo, and Sirembe Sub-Locations in Siaya County. These sessions focused on localizing prevention and response to GBV and unintended pregnancy, encouraging community dialogue and action.



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Mobilizing Communities Through Theatre to support AGYWs uptake of SRH Services and information.

We organized eight theatre sessions in community spaces to sensitize and localize uptake of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and information for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW). These interactive sessions served as a platform for engaging community members, raising awareness, and fostering dialogue on family planning and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response. Through theatrical performances, we effectively communicated critical information, encouraged proactive behavior, and enhanced local capacity to address SRH challenges. Our initiative aimed to create a more informed and supportive environment within the community, empowering AGYW to make informed choices about their sexual health and well-being.



BI-ANNUAL**NEWSLETTER****Reduced Inequalities: Leaving no one behind**

In April, we held a catch-up meeting with PWDs and AGYW to discuss GBV, menstrual hygiene, and mental health. These conversations are key for creating resilience and inclusivity in our community. By addressing these issues, we are working together to build a better and more supportive society. Our united efforts aim to enhance awareness, support and empowerment for all community members, ensuring that no one is left behind.

**Gender Justice in Climate Action**

In April, our Executive Director, Shirleen Adhiambo, is representing us at the Africa Climate & Gender Convening held at the United Nations Office in Nairobi. The event, themed "Equality in Climate Action: Planning for a Gender Inclusive Future in Africa," brings together delegates and stakeholders to discuss and promote gender inclusivity in climate action. Shirleen's participation underscores our commitment to integrating gender perspectives into climate strategies and advancing equitable solutions for a sustainable future.

Building CSOs movement for accountability in climate actions programs and finances

In April, we hosted CSO consultative meeting aimed at enhancing the Siaya County CSO Climate Change Working Group. The session focused on strategies to strengthen collaboration and improve engagement among local CSOs. Our discussions were centered on building a more unified and impactful approach to addressing climate change challenges in our community. By working together, we aim to ensure greater accountability in climate action programs and financial management, thus enabling sustainable and effective climate solutions.



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Youth Unite 4 SRHR

In May, we proudly supported our staff member, Oduor Euphracia, as she participated as a panelist in the "Youth Unite 4 SRHR" meeting, convened by the Make Way Program. This event brought together youth champions from the Nyanza and Western regions to share experiences and strategies in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) advocacy. Euphracia's contributions highlighted our commitment to empowering youth and advancing SRHR initiatives, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing these critical issues.

**National Tree Growing Day**

In collaboration with the Stawisha Africa Initiative and community members, we marked National Tree Growing Day by planting 100 trees at Umala Dispensary. This well-celebrated holiday highlighted our commitment to environmental conservation and community engagement. The event was a resounding success, transforming the day from a plan into a meaningful action. Together, we contributed to a greener future and strengthened our community's connection to nature. This initiative underscores the importance of collective efforts in promoting sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

**Building Capacity of Human Rights Defenders in Siaya County**

In partnership with Uraia Trust, we conducted a three-day training program for Human Rights Defenders in Siaya County. The sessions covered crucial topics such as the operating environment for human rights, the Constitution and constitutionalism, key actors in human rights promotion, HRDs' access to information, and safeguarding. This comprehensive training aimed to empower and protect those dedicated to advocating for human rights, equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively promote and defend human rights in their communities.



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Building Young Environmental Champions

We distributed tree seedlings to 10 schools across Siaya and Gem sub-counties. Each school received 150 seedlings, totaling 1,500 seedlings. This initiative aims to promote environmental sustainability and foster a greener future by encouraging students to participate in tree planting activities. The project not only enhances the school environment but also educates young minds about the importance of environmental conservation.

**Creating spaces for widow access to legal support on land rights**

In May, under the "Rebuilding Widows' Hope for Decent Employment Project in Siaya," supported by VOICE, we held legal clinics to empower rights holders with crucial legal information and justice access tips. The clinics featured a High Court of Kenya advocate who provided personalized legal advice and addressed individual cases. This initiative aims to enhance the legal awareness and rights of widows, ensuring they have the necessary support to pursue decent employment opportunities and secure their livelihoods.

Reflecting on Success: VOICE Close Out Meeting

In May, VOICE and the Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative (DLCI) organized the VOICE Close Out Meeting. Attended by Beatrice Oduor and Shirleen Adhiambo from SIMUN, the session highlighted the unique journeys of various organizations. Key takeaways emphasized the importance of appreciating one's path, staying true to the vision while seeking resources, and telling compelling stories that connect with people. Building relationships beyond work was underscored as vital for sustainable impact and growth. The meeting was a significant moment of reflection and learning for all participants.



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World Environment Day 2024

In June, we marked World Environment Day 2024 with impactful activities. We planted 200 trees at Pap Nyadiel Primary School and distributed 170 trees to women for home planting. Our efforts focused on raising awareness about the day's theme: Land Restoration, Desertification, and Drought Resilience. Through these initiatives, we not only enhanced local green spaces but also empowered community members to contribute to environmental sustainability.



Sustained Civic Education on Climate Action and Governance

Our sustained civic education efforts are aimed at strengthening women's voices in climate action and governance. Through sessions with grassroots women's groups, local projects were identified to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Utilizing community facilitators, we successfully reached seven women's groups. These initiatives not only empower women but also encourage community-driven solutions to climate challenges.



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IMPACT STORIES

Resilience Amid Adversity: Scovia Achieng's Journey from Pain to Empowerment

Meet Scovia Achieng, a 17-year-old girl from the village of Rarieda in Sidindi Ward. She is the third child among eight siblings. Scovia completed her secondary school education in 2023 and is yet to proceed to the next level. However, her life is a tale of resilience in the face of adversity. Scovia's past is marked by a difficult family situation that left her with emotional wounds. She faced emotional gender-based violence from both close family members, which caused her a lot of pain. Despite her academic abilities, Scovia was denied the opportunity to attend a prestigious school due to doubts about her paternity, leaving her feeling rejected and unwanted. As if that wasn't enough, when Scovia's exam results exceeded the expectations of a family member, she was pressured to use her earnings from her hairdressing meagre job to pay for their expenses. The family member even threatened her and made her feel unsafe. Fearing for her well-being, Scovia had to leave her home and start anew without any belongings. Despite her efforts to reconcile with her family, they were not receptive and even made threats against her life. This left Scovia feeling isolated and alone. "When I tried reaching them through a close friend of mine, they told him that even if they could locate my whereabouts, they could end my life and forget that they ever had a child called Achieng," Said heartbroken Scovia. In her darkest moments, Scovia found the best moments in her achievements, cherishing the joy of her KCSE results when she scored B plain. Scovia learned about the Siaya Muungano Network from a staff member who visited her home during a project mapping exercise. Since then, Scovia has actively participated in various sessions organised by the organisation. These include community entry meetings, Community SRHR champions training, intergenerational dialogues, and community theatre outreaches. Participating in these sessions has been transformative for Scovia. They have not only boosted her confidence but also expanded her knowledge on important issues like gender-based violence. Through these sessions, she has learned the value of being content with what she has and avoiding situations that could lead to trouble. As for her dreams, Scovia has long harbored aspirations of joining the military or becoming an air hostess. Despite qualifying for these opportunities based on her KCSE results, financial constraints and unresolved school fees have stood in her way. She is seeking support to obtain her leaving certificate from school, a crucial step towards achieving her dreams. Additionally, Scovia is passionate about poultry farming, recognizing its potential for financial stability. She has dabbled in poultry farming before and believes it could provide a sustainable income stream. With the right support, Scovia hopes to pursue poultry farming and save enough money to pursue her dreams, even if it means adjusting her career path from joining the military or becoming an air hostess. In conclusion, Scovia has a heartfelt message for everyone. To parents, she urges understanding, care, and a readiness to offer advice. For Adolescent Girls and Young Women, she emphasizes the importance of holding onto hope in even the toughest situations. Lastly, she extends her heartfelt gratitude to the Siaya Muungano Network for the invaluable opportunities and impactful sessions they have provided.



Rising Above Challenges: Marion Auma's Journey of Strength and Hope

When you are getting a good meal with your family, or even when retiring to sleep on your very soft bed, has it ever crossed your mind that there are worst of situations? In Orungo, a village in Nyamila sub-location North Alego ward, Alego Usonga in Siaya county, we had an encounter with Marion Auma, a twenty-year-old lady. Miss. Marion is a mother to a seven-month-old baby and five of her siblings. After a problematic schooling at the primary school level, with the support of her mother who earned a living from working on people's farms, Marion later got a well-wisher who took her education up from form two until she was done with form four. During her schooling days, there was no good experience in life. Her mother could only afford basic and common food and the well-wisher was strictly handling school fees. Personal effects of the girl child to her were a struggle to get. She involved herself in premarital sex and on her first trial, she got pregnant. This was after she was just done with her form four examinations. There were no hopes also for furthering her education because there was no source of funds.

When Marion was three months pregnant, she suffered the loss of a close family member due to childbirth complications. This event brought to light the challenges she would face in the future. Her guardian, who had the responsibility of taking care of her and her siblings, was not able to fulfil his duties as he struggled with personal issues. Marion found herself in a difficult situation, with a growing family to support and no stable source of income. She had to rely on the kindness of her mother's friends for necessities. Over time, Marion made the tough decision to move out of her family home and seek refuge with one of her mother's acquaintances. Here she could be given maize flour which she could then return home to prepare porridge for her siblings. In this family, she faced disrespect from the children of the family and verbal insults.



She had to find a better place than here. A friend of her mother on seeing her situation took her to Barding gold mines where she did tough manual work. She could collect stones which she ground and took for processing to extract gold. Sometimes she would be lucky enough to get 4000 to 10000 Kenya shillings. This, being a responsible girl, she used to pay school fees for her sister now in form two, by then she was just joining form one. This happened until she delivered her baby. She couldn't continue working and had to come back home. Miss. Marion came back to a hell of an environment. Her guardian was wild with her, there was no food at home, her siblings were squarely dependent on her and nothing seemed to work. She resorted to working as a house help in the house of one of her mother's friends to feed her siblings and her baby. In her vulnerable state, the grandmother has brought six different men suggesting marriage for her. The worst case scenario is this last one that has been tipping one of her close relatives and now poor Marion is to be married off by force.

Luckily enough, the CHV of her village identified her for mapping with Siaya Muungano Network where she joined a community safe space, joined other peers and shared experiences. In the group, they were taken through mentorship and training like power analysis sessions. Through this, there has been a tremendous change in the way Marion views things. She has built her confidence in her approach to life. She can now bargain for her rights, and she can speak for herself and others with similar challenges. She also has sexual reproductive health and rights knowledge. Even though she is gaining the power to stand up for herself, Marion is still vulnerable and needs serious support for her and her siblings. It is the money she gets from the training in the form of transport reimbursement that she pays as an advance fee to a food vendor to serve them for a while. Marion's plea is that people of authority strengthen their grip on orphaned and vulnerable children to protect them from the abuse she is undergoing. Chiefs to identify children of her kind to groups that may be offering support to such children. Her advice to people of her age is that peer pressure has detrimental effects to normal life, avoid it like plague.

From Misfortune to Empowerment: Seline Akinyi's Journey to Renewal and Change



In the line of duty, we met one-on-one with Seline Akinyi from Sidindi Ward Ugunja sub-county in Siaya County. Seline who is 22 years old lives with her caregiver and her baby at their home in Sidindi. Here they survive on casual labour and peasant farming. The case of Seline is a tale of misfortune that has followed her life but luck came her way in its simplest form when she had an encounter with Siaya Muungano Network.

Seline's life was never easy, but it became even more complicated when she lost her financial support and was forced to leave school. She had been a bright student until her close family member passed away, leaving her without the means to continue her education. With no other options, she had to drop out and stay at home to help her family.

Life at home was difficult for Seline. Her care giver was

struggling to provide for her and her siblings, and they often went without the necessities such as food. As time went on, Seline became frustrated and began to feel trapped in her situation. She often faced violence from one of her family members and eventually decided to leave home to start a new life with someone she thought she could trust.

Unfortunately, her hopes were shattered when she became pregnant and her partner rejected her. With nowhere else to go, she had to return home and face her family. Her situation was not easy, one of her blood relatives sent her away. She eventually went to live with her other sister in Kisumu, where she faced new challenges but was able to persevere.

Another misfortune came at the point of delivery. Seline had obstructed labour and was to undergo an operation to save the baby and her life. The only thing delaying them was money, a resource which is a very rare visitor in their family. It only took the intervention of God in heaven that she gave birth normally without the operation.

A glimmer of hope, a silver lining came when Siaya Muungano Network was mapping for participants and members in her locality. She was considered and trained as a community SRHR champion. Seline also went through power analysis sessions which have seriously impacted her life. As a champion, Seline has disseminated information to the locals on sexual and reproductive health matters as well as gender-based violence. She is also able to stand up for her rights and the rights of others who are oppressed.

Seline thanks Siaya Muungano Network for empowering girls who would otherwise be miserable in the society because of lack of knowledge. She recommends a continuation of the good work being done by the organisation. From a personal perspective, she is looking forward to being supported to join a Vocational training centre so that she can advance her passion for beauty and hairdressing through training. Seline has in a special way given an ovation to the area assistant chief for her 'return to school' advocacy for girls who dropped out due to teenage pregnancy.

Empowered to speak out for myself and my peers

Widows in Siaya county have faced different violations due to their vulnerability and lack of knowledge, for instance Emily a widow from West Uyoma was accused of killing her husband and after the burial of her spouse, her close relatives grabbed her land and because of this she felt powerless and hopeless, during that time SIMUN came and started the implementation of "Rebuilding widows' hope for decent employment in Siaya," project, which targeted young widows, under 40 years, in West Uyoma, came to my rescue when I became a right holder. After different activities and trainings I underwent by other right holders lives have changed greatly for instance through power analysis model I'm now confident and self-esteem has been increased, training on S4T has also improved my saving culture and now I'm financially literate.

"Before training on power analysis sessions and legal aid sessions my close relatives would come and farm my late husband's land without my permission but now, I know my rights and have confidence to speak out when my rights are violated, they now fear trespassing," says member from Hekima Widows from north Alego.

Transformed to resist and prevent violations



Precious widows in West Uyoma Ward were formed after the inception of the Rebuilding Widows Hope Project in December 2023. This was a need because there was no existing young widows group in the area that could unite them and create a space for sharing lived experiences and offer mutual support for each other. The space provided a platform for the widows through SIMUN to access various capacity building sessions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the women who are unfortunately systematically marginalised due to the death of their spouses. Through the household road mapping approach, the right holders have conducted reality checks of their individual households and come up with clear road map plans for social and economic transformation of their households and themselves using the resources and opportunities available. This has made it easy to track the changes and develop impact stories from the right holders which can be used to mentor others. As a result of access to information, skills and knowledge provided in the project, some right holders have explored available opportunities to respond to their experiences such as land right violations and mechanisms to improve their household social security thereby reaching to SIMUN for referral and linkages.

Glimpse of Hope among Young Widows

Siaya County continues to experience an increase in the number of young widows who are left vulnerable due to economic exploitation, unemployment, skills gap and facing different human rights violations in the community. The challenges affect the widows negatively leaving them powerless and voiceless to challenge the inequalities thus reducing their bargaining power to meaningfully participate in decision making spaces. The Rebuilding Widows Hope for Decent Employment Project in Siaya supported by VOICE provided a platform and opportunity for right holders for capacity

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strengthening on different interventions to build their power and voice to speak out and challenge the retrogressive societal norms and inequalities that they face in the community. This was done gradually then progressively in the existing safe spaces of the right holders where they have found a home to share their challenges, identify gaps and find possible solutions together as a family united in agony. The project has provided a glimpse of hope for the young widows who can afford a smile after training on savings for transformation to strengthen access to finances within the group therefore improved livelihoods for the women and their children. Further, material support to kick start the S4T model has provided assurance that it's possible to start small and scale up to bigger levels in the effort to ensure that there is financial independence of the right holders. "The initiation support for the S4T model has been instrumental in our group since we are able to save and loan hence growing ourselves beyond where we've always been as widows" said the chairperson Smart Women

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

SIMUN Joined the 69th UN Civil Society Conference

We proudly attended the 69th UN Civil Society Conference (UNCSC2024) held on May 9-10 in Nairobi. Represented by our Programs Coordinator, Hilary Omondi, we joined global delegates to discuss the theme: "Shaping a Future of Global and Sustainable Progress." This conference, in support of the Summit of the Future (SoTF), provided valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration on advancing sustainable development goals.



Participating in the Reproductive Health Network Kenya Conference 2024

In June, we attended the Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK) Conference2024, where we showcased our Community SRHR Academies in Siaya. This initiative, part of the She Deserves Her Rights and Skills project, was supported by the French Embassy in Kenya under Piscca Decid'Her program. Our presentation highlighted the successes and impacts of our academies in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in the community. This conference provided a platform to share our achievements and collaborate with other stakeholders in advancing SRHR initiatives.



BI-ANNUAL**NEWSLETTER****Enhancing Our Evaluation Skills**

In June, our team participated in an Experiential Training on Impact Evaluation conducted by The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC). This training aimed to enhance our capacity to evaluate complex interventions. We explored various evaluation approaches and applied them to our ongoing projects. A significant outcome was the development of a draft manuscript based on data analysis findings from our Mjane Ana Haki project. This training has equipped us with valuable skills to better assess and improve the impact of our interventions.

**Joining the 2024 Water Journey Edition**

In June, we participated in the 2024 Water Journey Edition, a crucial initiative focused on creating awareness about the sustainable management of water sources. This event highlighted the importance of preserving and responsibly utilizing our water resources to ensure a sustainable future. Our involvement underscores our commitment to environmental stewardship and community education.

**Enhancing Community Health and Well-being through Partnerships**

In collaboration with Villanova University and Start with One Kenya, we successfully distributed 100 Uzima Water filters in Sumba and Uwasi, Usonga Ward. This initiative aims to combat waterborne diseases and enhance community health. During our visit, we also assessed previous support at Nina Special School and planned future engagements. We cherished memorable moments with the children and reaffirmed our commitment to improving their lives through continued partnership.



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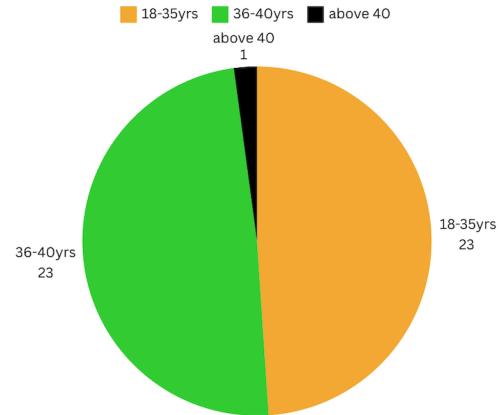
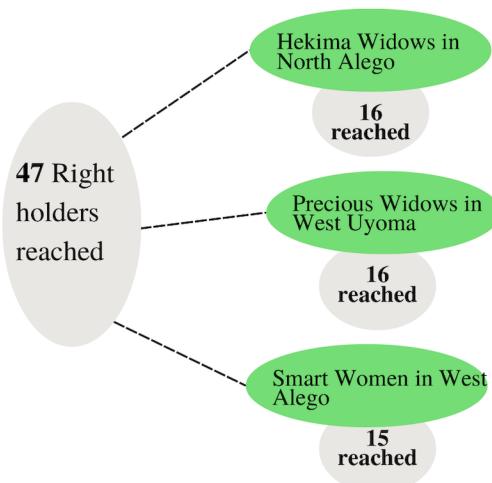
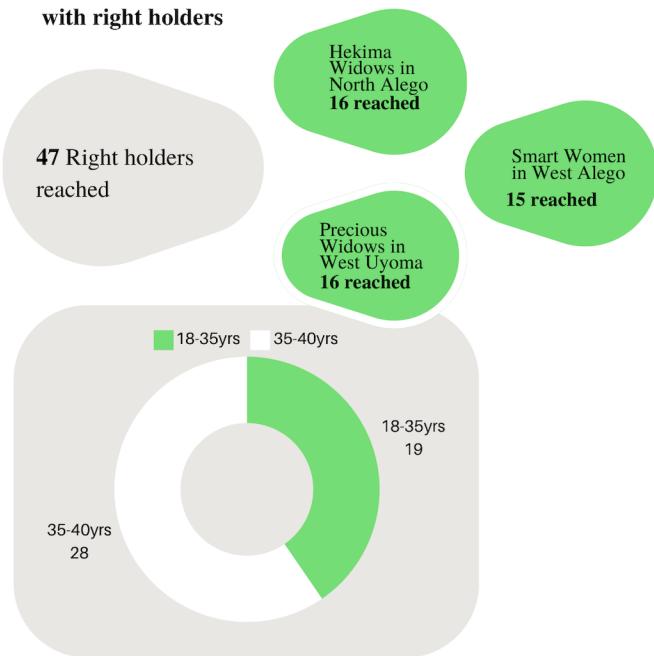
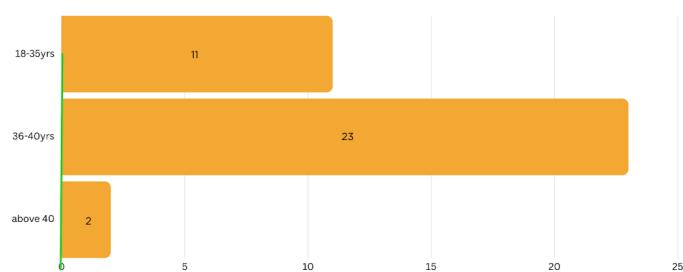
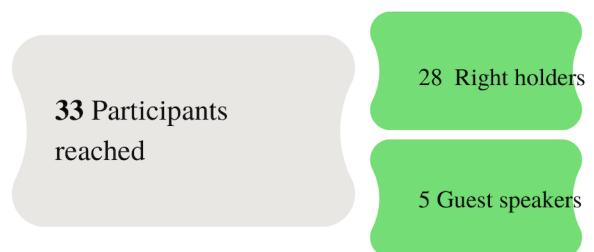
NEWSLETTER

QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS

Field Monitoring visits

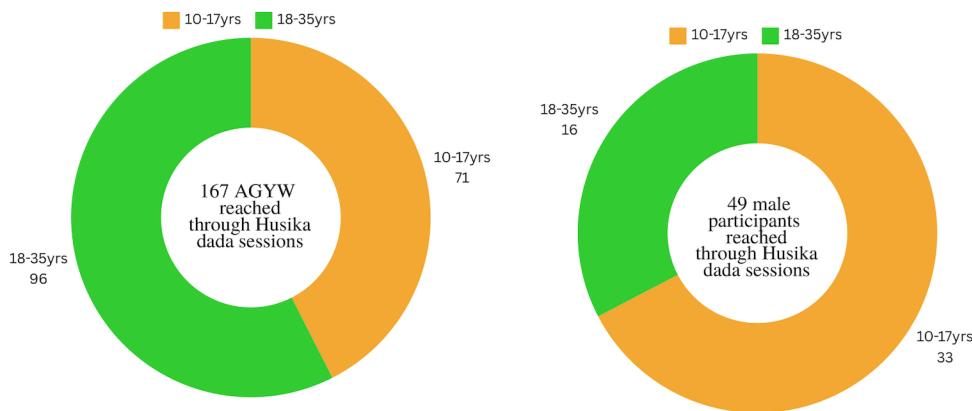


Saving for Transformation Training

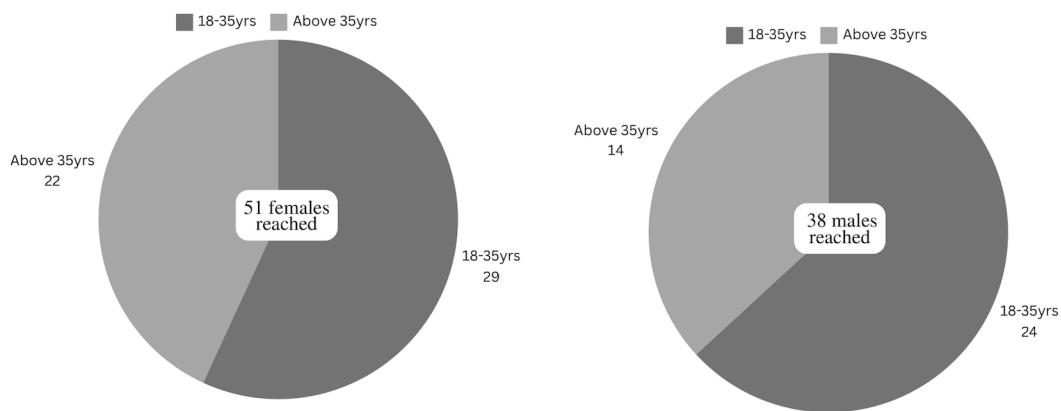
Household road mapping
with right holdersJoint Quarterly feedback meeting
with right holder groups

QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS

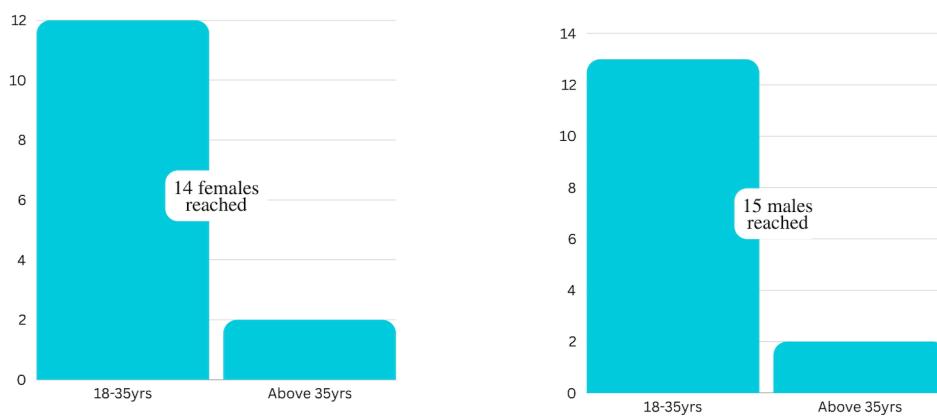
Husika Dada Sessions



Village-level youth cafes

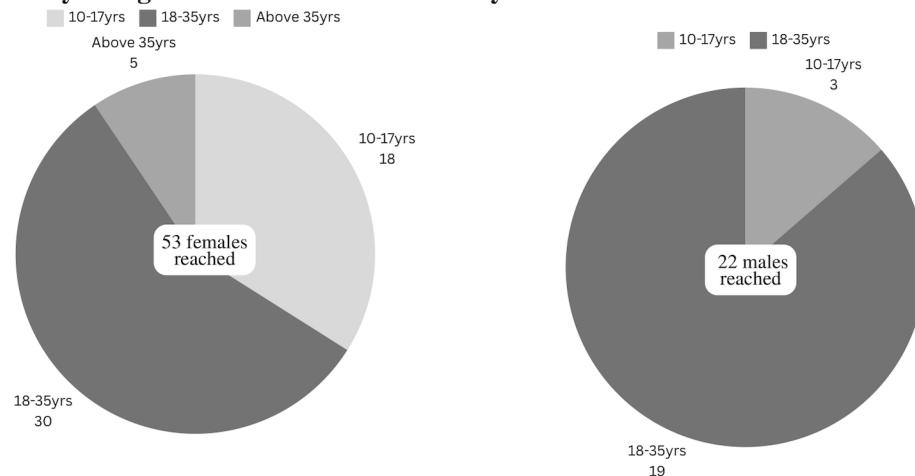


Meetings between Youth Led and Youth Serving CSOs and existing sub-county technical working groups

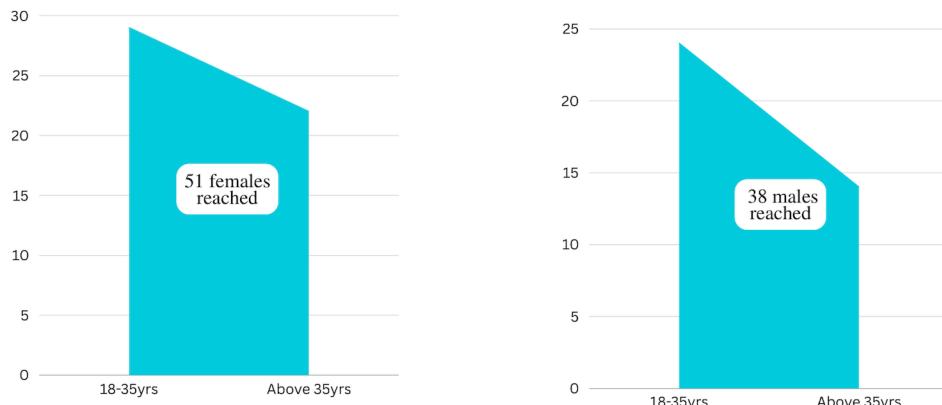


QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS

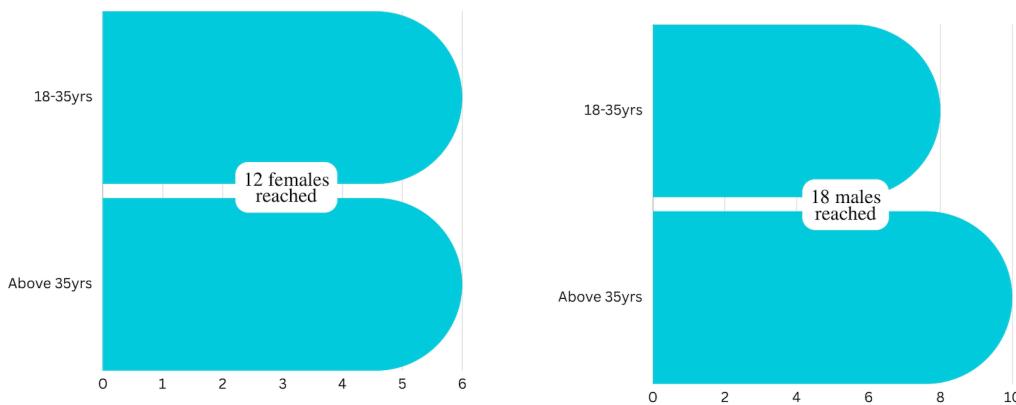
Storytelling sessions with AGYW's and youth at the ward level



Ward-based dialogue forums

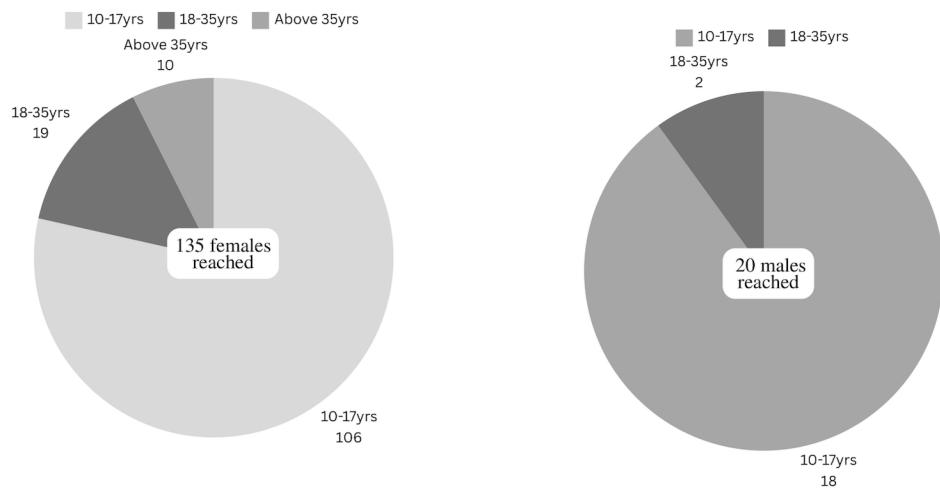


TWG's meetings

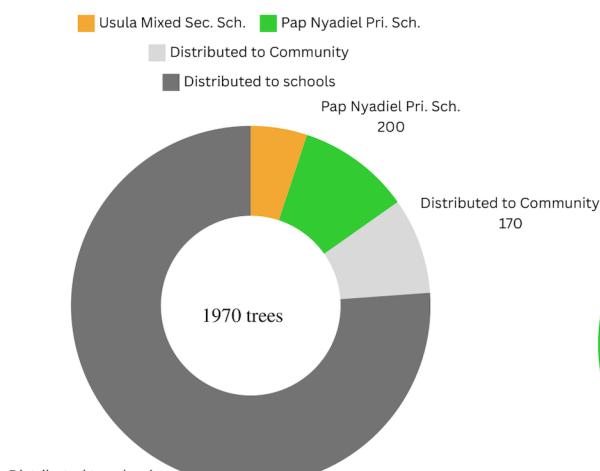


QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS

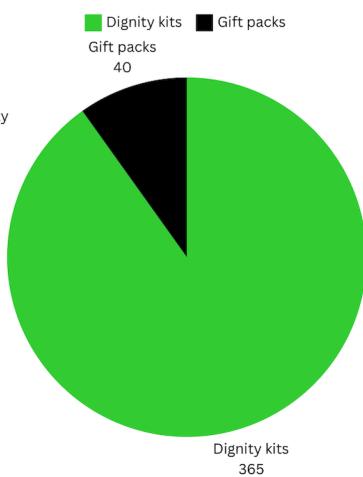
Commemoration of Menstrual Hygiene Day



Tree Planting/ tree seedlings distributed



Dignity Kits and Gift packs to Girls and Boys respectively



Our Gratitude to Partners

At Siaya Muungano Network, we are deeply grateful for the unwavering support and invaluable partnerships that have propelled our work over the past six months. We extend our heartfelt thanks to The National Government of Kenya, The County Government of Siaya, Akina Mama wa Afrika, The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF), Uraia Trust, the French Embassy in Kenya, Amref Health Africa in Kenya, We One Action Network, VOICE (HIVOS), We Are Purposeful (With and For Girls) and other partners. Your dedication and collaboration have enabled us to successfully conduct various activities, driving impactful change in our community. Your support has been instrumental in helping us achieve our goals, and we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. We are open for continuous partnerships to keep building a resilient and inclusive society. Together, we can create sustainable solutions and foster a community where everyone thrives.

We also urge other potential partners to join our mission. At Siaya Muungano Network, we highly value partnerships, both local and international. Your support and collaboration are essential as we continue to work towards a better future for all.

Thank you once again for your trust and commitment. Let's keep building and growing together.



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JAN - JUNE 2024

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