

# QUARTER 2

# NEWSLETTER

## APRIL - JUNE 2025



# 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.

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## Progress highlights



### >>> Business or Employment? Young Women Debate Paths to Self-Reliance and Safety

Should adolescent girls and young women start small businesses or look for jobs to become self-reliant? This was the debate question at the Husika Dada session held on April 19, 2025, at Ngiya ACK Hall, where 72 young women gathered to explore how economic choices shape their safety and future. The discussion highlighted how building income, whether through business or employment, can help reduce cases of sexual and gender-based violence in homes and communities. Beyond the debate, the session became a space for sharing ideas, spotting local opportunities, and inspiring future mentorship and entrepreneurship among the girls.



### >>> The Double-Edged Screen: Young Mothers Debate the Impact of Social Media

Social media can be good and bad at the same time, depending on how one chooses to use it. This was the centre of discussion on April 23, 2025, at Nyamila Community Centre Hall, where 44 young people from community SRHR academies came together for a debate. They explored how online platforms can open doors for learning and small business, but also expose them to risks like SGBV. The session sparked honest reflections on digital safety, online behaviour, and the need for more awareness around using social media wisely.



## »»» Exploring Work Choices Beyond Formal Employment

Finding a job isn't always just about qualifications; sometimes, it comes with hidden costs like harassment, stress, or unfair demands. On April 23, 2025, we convened 50 adolescent girls and young women from Sidindi ward to debate how informal, community-based jobs could help reduce reliance on formal employment. The discussion uncovered real-life experiences tied to job seeking, some involving SGBV and mental strain. The session also opened ideas around creating small businesses, village savings groups, and linking economic empowerment with efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.



## »»» Shaping Youth Voices for National Dialogue



On April 14, 2025, we convened nine youth champions to co-develop and submit abstracts for the 8th RHNK Conference. Drawn from youth-led and youth-serving organisations across Siaya, the champions worked together to reflect on lessons from the Power to Youth project and shape them into five strong submissions. The abstracts focused on youth voices in SGBV prevention, economic empowerment for AGYW, and addressing barriers to SRHR services in rural areas.



## Localizing Conversation on SGBV and Teen Pregnancy



"Where should we talk about it? Home or school?" That was the big question during a Husika Dada debate held at Usula Secondary School on May 20, 2025. Seventy-two students, both girls and boys, reflected on where conversations about teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence should begin. While some leaned on the role of schools, others emphasized home settings. Most agreed that both spaces matter. The debate encouraged critical thinking and highlighted the need for ongoing, honest dialogue at home, in schools, and through community support to prevent SGBV and support adolescents better.



**It's not just about where we talk, but how often we do. Whether at home or in school, what matters most is that the conversation starts and never stops."**

Closing remarks from the speaker of the session

## »» Making Health Systems Work for Young People

For many young people, the struggle is about facing gender-based violence in silence, fearing stigma when seeking health tests, and dealing with the mental weight of joblessness. These challenges came to the fore on April 24, 2025, when we convened 44 stakeholders to reflect on how local health services are responding to youth needs.

The forum brought together youth-led and youth-serving CBOs, community structures, and state actors to assess how health facilities are serving adolescents and young adults—especially in sexual and reproductive health (SRH), youth-friendly care, and community health outreach. Participants noted

“We keep saying youth friendly services, but what does that mean if we walk into a clinic and feel judged before we even speak?”

Youth Participant, Stakeholder  
Reflection Forum

“You can tell someone to go to the hospital, but if they fear being asked too many questions, they just stay home.”

Young Woman, Stakeholder  
Reflection Forum

the value of community-led actions in bridging service gaps. Stories were shared of young women navigating referral systems that don't always work, and of local efforts that have helped AGYWs access SRH care through informal networks. However, key issues remain: inadequate youth-centred services, lack of mental health support, and limited trust between health providers and youth.

The session ended with the development of concrete action points. These will be compiled into a memo for submission to the County Health Department and Health Committee in the Siaya County Assembly.

## »» Redefining Periods Through Open Dialogue and Support



On May 28, 2025, we celebrated Menstrual Hygiene Day at Ambrose Adongo Adeya Secondary School, with 159 students and two teachers under the theme “Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld.” We had small group talks which created a safe space for girls to open up about their periods; sharing stories, concerns, and ideas without fear or shame. We also conducted a debate, sparking reflection on why it's important to talk about menstruation openly. Finally, Reusable and disposable sanitary pads were distributed, helping girls manage their periods with dignity and stay in school, ready to learn and thrive.



## ➤➤➤ Towards a Community Where Survivors Find Support

Some stories go untold when systems don't connect. On June 26, 2025, youth-led groups, Siaya county government officials, and community members met to reflect on how SGBV cases are reported and followed up. They noted that while efforts exist, gaps remain, especially in linking informal and formal support. As a result, they created a plan to see more community talks, school activities, youth-friendly services, and new SGBV committees formed. The goal is to work together, link efforts, and make it easier for survivors to speak and find support.



## ➤➤➤ Hope in Hand as Young Mothers Secure Identity for Their Children

Through the "For Young Mothers, For Their Well-being" project by Siaya Muungano Network with support from Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund, 42 young mothers received birth certificates for their children in phase one. For Esther Akoth, it brought a quiet relief. "I had lost hope of ever getting a birth certificate for my child. Today, I feel seen, valued, and hopeful," she shared. Jesca Atieno said she didn't fully understand the importance before. "Now I know it means better access to services for my child. I'm glad I took this step." A small change, yet deeply felt.



## ➤➤➤ A Dream Come True at Umala Vocational Training Centre

In phase two of setting up the food forest at Umala Vocational Training Centre, Siaya Muungano Network, in partnership with @WeOneActionNet2, planted kales, spinach and onions. The goal is to strengthen the school feeding program, encourage student retention, create a space for community learning and support household nutrition.

Later, this was a dream come true. The students were excited to harvest vegetables from the garden. It was their first time picking food they had planted themselves. They had fun, learned new things, and had something to eat. The garden became a place of learning, sharing, and hope.





## Women, Land, and the Power of Indigenous Knowledge

As an organization that seeks constant improvement of the community we work with and for, the question, “what could they be doing that we haven’t gotten right?” is one that lingers in us for so long. For this reason, and as a response to low livelihood for our women, who have lands with the potential to be a source of livelihood, we took them to an exchange learning visit to Eden Indigenous Seed farm (Makongo Network) and Belakom, both in Nakuru County. The biggest lesson from the visit, we dare say, is that “no land, no matter the state, is barren.” Eden Indigenous Seed Farm, a group with over 830 members wowed us with their knowledge of seeds

“We thought we had barren land; until we saw what women can grow from stones, ditches, and dry soil. Now we know: it’s not the land that’s poor, it’s the imagination we bring to it.”

Woman Climate action champion

BELAKOM has saved over 50 varieties of seeds and like Makongo Network they have a good structure for seeds exchange and stocking both with its members and the communities, where first, seeds are only shared with members after they are tested for germination. Importantly, they are stored and preserved organically and naturally in calabashes, using dry ashes, using salt which helps absorb moisture ensuring that the seeds are dry and in air tight glass containers (a good reuse and repurposing practice)

Another highlight was use of herbs as natural medicine, within their farms, there is a herbal medical centre with labels like pharmacy- from pharmacy- where herbal prescriptions are administered.

A bigger highlight was the role women play in restoration, conservation and improved livelihood of the families and the community. Most of the growing in Makongo are in ditches which could potentially be labeled not suitable for use, and the BELAKOM’s site is at a rocky and hilly ground, the women; 17, representatives of 5 women groups, had to buy soil to soil from somewhere else, and the returns, so massive!



policies, and the role some of its members play in advocating for good seed laws, especially, in the war against the Seed and Variety Act of 2010, where they were part of the group that sued the government for the Act; Lucia Wambui, a vocal advocate with Greenpeace Africa is a member of the group. Understanding what seed ‘ownership’ means to the local people, they encourage their members to have their seeds documented to save farmers from dangers of patency by others. Also, they are big in seeds characterization.

Cognizant of the loss of indigenous seeds due to reliance on the modified varieties, both BELAKOM and Makongo Network are big on seed saving.





## Women Dig into Climate Solutions in Kisumu Learning Exchange

Together with our community women champions in climate action, we visited Kisumu Young Agripreneurs for a learning exchange. The visit focused on local and indigenous ways of farming, pest control, and composting. Women explored cone gardening, raised fish ponds, and organic compost systems, all using available materials. The highlight was a hands-on session where participants built cone gardens, shared ideas, and encouraged each other. Many left with plans to replicate the skills at home.



## Community Voices in Action Through Social Audit of FLLOCA Projects



We conducted a three-day training for community members who led a participatory social audit of FLLOCA projects in Siaya. During the sessions, participants explored ways to track project progress, examine how funds had been used, and assess the level of community involvement particularly women's participation. They also took time to understand how the FLLOCA framework functioned from the county to the ward level. The data collectors designed tools for group discussions with Ward Climate Committees and for collecting views from wider community members and key stakeholders involved in the selected projects.

After completing the fieldwork, we entered the report-writing phase. The trained team began organizing and analyzing feedback gathered from different wards. They reviewed how the projects had progressed, how resources were managed, and how inclusive the processes had been



## ➤➤➤ Building Climate Resilience from the Ground Up in Nyanza Region

In April, we took part in the Nyanza Region FLLoCA workshop, which brought together different voices to talk about locally led climate action. The workshop helped participants understand the FLLoCA framework better, strengthen how we all work together, and explore ways to make sure communities stay involved and informed. By supporting this space, we joined efforts to grow local solutions and shared responsibility. It was a reminder that real change can begin with simple actions; right where we live, using what we already know and value.



## ➤➤➤ Bridging Gaps in Healthcare Through Dialogue



South East Alego residents in Alego Usonga Constituency, Siaya County, finally got an opportunity to speak openly about their healthcare experience; what's working, what's not, and what they hope to see. We partnered with Uraia Trust in a Kagua Huduma forum that united the community face-to-face with duty bearers including Hon. Scholastica Madowo (area MCA), ward administrator, and Ministry of Health officials. The forum gave room for listening, learning, and real commitments to improve health services.

## ➤➤➤ Reflect, Rethink, Reimagine towards Supporting Young Mothers Better

The best way to stay on course is to pause and reflect. Around one table, we gathered ideas, feedback, and plans under the "For Young Mothers, For Their Wellbeing" project. Together with stakeholders, we looked at what had gone well, what still needed attention, and where we hoped to go next. It was an open space for learning and adjusting. These moments help us shape better support for young mothers, guided by real experiences and conversations from the people involved in the work.





## »» Building a Regional Roadmap for Climate Justice

We convened civil society groups from across Nyanza Region for a two-day workshop in Kisumu County. In partnership with Women Empowerment Link and under the We Are VCA program, the focus was on shaping a costed action plan to guide how CSOs can take part in locally led climate work. The conversations were grounded in lived experiences and the need for clear steps. By the end, participants had outlined ways to strengthen advocacy and take practical action as a collective across the region.



## »» Duond Mine Forum: Where Women Redefined Climate Action



"Are you bold enough? Are you ready to speak up on matters climate action and occupy leadership positions?" This was the challenge posed by Prof. Jackline Oduol, Siaya County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Water, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, to women during the Duond Mine Forum; a two-day space that brought women from across Siaya to share ideas, raise concerns, and speak directly to duty bearers.

Women showcased climate solutions like drought-resilient foods, organic farming methods, indigenous seeds, and recycled crafts. They also questioned existing seed laws, demanded support for cleaner cooking technologies, and called for integration of reproductive health rights in climate responses.

The women champions in climate action also presented a policy communiqué outlining their priorities: access to water, inclusive planning, climate finance, and stronger representation. A media address carried these voices beyond the forum. Siaya Muungano Network is committed to following up on the actions and commitments made.



## ➤➤➤ Leveraging the 8th RHNK Conference to Scale Up Local SRHR Solutions Nationally

We participated in the 8th RHNK Conference and shared five abstracts highlighting our work in Siaya County. Beatrice Oduor, our Project Assistant, presented how village intergenerational dialogue spaces are sustaining grassroots voices for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) to access SRHR. Salma Babu, AGPP Regional Coordinator, shared a case study on how power analysis is enhancing self-determination for adolescent mothers. Shirleen Adhiambo, our Executive Director, reflected on how social accountability and community action are helping close SRHR policy gaps. Basil Owiti,



Youth Champion from Siaya, presented on the impact of platforms like the Youth Voices Assembly and Husika Dada in elevating youth voices in SRHR spaces. Martina Onyango shared the Siaya County Youth Charter, a youth-led tool designed to strengthen civic engagement in SRHR decision-making.



## ➤➤➤ Young Mothers Learn Soap Making for Income and Hygiene

Young mothers in our safe spaces were trained on how to make liquid soap through the “For Young Mothers, For Their Well-being” project. The sessions combined practical skills with conversations on hygiene and income generation. “Now I can make soap for my home, and maybe even sell some,” one participant said as she bottled her product. The training aimed to support young mothers in building small steps toward financial independence while improving everyday care for themselves and their children.





## Other highlights



### Building Education Responses That Reflect Every Learner's Reality

We worked with Usawa Agenda to train volunteers in Siaya to support the FLANA 2025 process. The training focused on preparing them to carry out school and household assessments. With this, they were better placed to gather useful data that will help guide conversations and actions around fair and inclusive education. This effort is part of our shared commitment to stand for education justice for all, ensuring that every learner's situation is understood and their needs considered in shaping education responses.



### Growing Together: Reflections from a Peer Learning Exchange with Lamu Women Alliance

Growing together means taking time to listen, share, and reflect. That is what happened during a 3-day exchange visit where we hosted the team from Lamu Women Alliance drawn from Communication, Finance, Program, and M&E departments. The visit created space to learn from one another's approaches, challenges, and lessons in community work. We explored ways to deepen collaboration and strengthen what we do for the communities we serve.







## Photo Gallery





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