

Republic of Kenya

**Project on Strengthening Local Government
Capacity for the Elimination
of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

**Final Report
(1 August 2025)**

Makiko Kubota
Chief Advisor,
NGEC-JICA GBV Elimination Project

1. Project Overview

1) Background

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains widespread and socially tolerated in Kenya. According to the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), 43% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) from a spouse, ex-spouse, or boyfriend. In addition, 13% of women and girls have experienced sexual violence¹.

Harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage also persist. In some regions, FGM is viewed as a marker of modesty, and many men prefer to marry women who have undergone the practice. Consequently, some girls are subjected to FGM as early as age 9 and married off by ages 12 to 13—depriving them of access to education and economic or social empowerment opportunities². Sexual harassment is equally prevalent, affecting approximately 65% of women in schools, workplaces, and public spaces³. Menstrual health poverty compounds these vulnerabilities. An estimated 65% of women lack adequate access to sanitary products, and some girls are reportedly forced to engage in transactional sex to obtain them⁴. In rural areas, girls who rely on motorcycle taxis to attend secondary school are frequently subjected to sexual abuse by drivers.

The consequences of such GBV are severe. Survivors suffer from physical injuries, psychological trauma, communication disorders, sexually transmitted infections, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), low self-esteem, unwanted pregnancies, and childbirth complications. The ripple effects extend to families and communities. Children born to teenage mothers who have experienced sexual violence are at risk of abandonment, social exclusion, and developmental delays—often condemning them to cycles of extreme poverty. Research shows that children raised in violent households face an increased risk of dissociative disorders, depression, substance abuse, and social or economic exclusion. Currently, it is estimated that the economic damage and loss of such GBV to the Kenyan economy, including costs of health care, legal and judicial costs, and loss of productivity, amounts to KES 46 billion, which translates to about 1.1% of country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁵.

¹ The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2022), "Kenya Demographic Health Survey Report"
<https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/kdhs-2022/>

² UNICEF (2017), "Baseline Study Report: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Child Marriage among Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, and Somali Communities in Kenya"
<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/541/file/Kenya-0000076.pdf.pdf>

³ Amref Health Africa (2020), "Amref Health Africa Statement on Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma in Kenya", <https://amref.org/position-statements/amref-health-africa-statement-on-addressing-period-poverty-and-stigma-in-kenya/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ National Gender and Equality Commission (2019) "Gender based Violence in Kenya: The cost of Providing Service"

In response, the Government of Kenya has prioritized the elimination of GBV in national development plans and legal frameworks. Legislative milestones include the 2014 amendment of the Sexual Offences Act, which strengthened penalties for forced and child prostitution and other sexual crimes, and the enactment of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act in 2015, which criminalized all forms of domestic violence and enhanced survivor protections. The Kenya Vision 2030 identifies the elimination of GBV as a key priority, and national strategies such as the National Policy on the Prevention and Response to GBV and the Kenya National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2020–2024) have been developed. The government has also established a toll-free national GBV hotline and formed an inter-ministerial GBV Thematic Working Group to coordinate cross-sector efforts.

However, implementation remains limited, particularly at the county level. Only 4 out of Kenya's 47 counties had developed GBV-related policies. There is a widespread shortage of trained personnel—including police, medical professionals, judiciary members, teachers, and community leaders—with the knowledge and skills to respond to GBV cases. Infrastructure to support survivors is inadequate. While the government has promoted the establishment of Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) at county referral hospitals, only 13 counties had operational GBVRCs by 2023, and just four public shelters exist nationwide.

With Kenya's devolution framework assigning increasing responsibility to county governments, addressing GBV at the local level is now more urgent than ever. Comprehensive efforts are needed to strengthen policy implementation, institutional coordination, human resource development, and survivor-centered infrastructure.

2) Objectives of this project

This Project implemented a series of initiatives to strengthen the capacity of County Governments to prevent gender-based violence (GBV), protect survivors, and promote their self-reliance and social reintegration. The key activities included:

- Building the capacity of service providers and support personnel at the county level to respond effectively to GBV, with a strong emphasis on the survivor-centered approach;
- Fostering collaboration and network-building among GBV support service providers and relevant institutions to promote more coordinated, comprehensive, and seamless support systems for GBV survivors; and
- Supporting community-based initiatives in schools, villages and the private sector, while exploring effective approaches for GBV prevention, survivor protection, and reintegration.

The basic framework of the Project is as follows:

Overall Goal	The capacity of county governments to respond to the elimination of GBV is enhanced
Project Purpose	Effective measures for the prevention and elimination of GBV are identified and validated.
Expected outcomes	Outcome 1: The Capacities of professional and supporter personnel in target counties are strengthened Outcome 2: Collaboration and networks among support providers and institutions in target counties are strengthened Outcome 3: Community-level and private sector initiatives are strengthened. Outcome 4: Knowledge and lessons learned from the effective practices are collected
Implementation period	15 February 2023 - 15 August 2025
CP Institution.	National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC)
Target counties	Kajiado, Machakos and Nairobi counties (3 counties)

3) Implementation Structure

The Project was implemented in partnership with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) as the counterpart institution, in collaboration with relevant officers from the three target counties. NGEC, established under Article 59 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), is a constitutional commission mandated to audit and advise public institutions on promoting gender equality, empowering women, and eliminating discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, age, and other grounds. In the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, including the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), NGEC carries out research and public awareness campaigns, monitors the implementation of national legislation and international human rights standards at the county level, and issues policy recommendations to the Cabinet, national ministries, and county governments. As of September 2023, NGEC operated with 106 staff members across its headquarters in Nairobi and six regional offices⁶, where it carries out education and advocacy activities at the local level. (See Annex 1: NGEC Organogram)

4) Overview of Target Counties

The Project was implemented in three target counties - Kajiado, Machakos, and Nairobi- selected for their geographic and ethnic diversity, as well as their strategic suitability for effective project implementation.

⁶ Kitui, Ishiara, Nakuru, Garissa, Marindi, Kisumu



An overview of each county is provided below.

Overview of target counties

County	Kajiado County	Machakos County	Nairobi County
Location	Southern part of Kenya	Eastern part of Kenya	Capital of Kenya
Population	Approx. 1.12 million	Approx. 1.4 million	Approx. 4.4 million people
Number of sub-counties	5	9	17
Major ethnic groups	Maasai	Kamba	Diverse, including Kikuyu and Luo
Major industry	Grazing livestock	Agriculture	Tourism and service industry, finance, industry
Percentage of DV	36%	25%	30 %
Percentage of sexual violence	17%	6.3%	12.2%
Department of Gender Mainstreaming ⁷	Department of Gender, Social Services, Culture, Tourism and Wildlife (18 staff)	Department of Gender, Youth and Social Services office (35 staff)	Department of Gender and Inclusion (15 staff)
Gender policy	-Gender Mainstreaming Policy -Women's Economic Empowerment Policy -A Policy for the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation: FGM (2019)	-Machakos County Public Transport Sexual Harassment and Gender based Violence Policy (2022)	-Nairobi County Gender based Violence Act in 2021, an ordinance to eliminate gender-based violence.
GBV infrastructure	-Establishment of a Gender based Violence Recovery Centre (GBVRC) within the fifth tertiary hospital in the county (2022) -Establishment of Gender desks at the Police stations	-Establish GBV desks in police stations - Construction of a public shelter with a capacity to accommodate up to 35 survivors -Establishment of SGBV court system	-Establish a GBV desks at the police stations -Establishment of a public shelter in collaboration with the Children's Department, with a capacity to accommodate up to 16 survivors - A new shelter dedicated to supporting GBV survivors is currently under construction

⁷ Each of the county has a Gender Directorate within the local government. The organisational structure consists of a County Executive Committee Member (Minister), Chief Officer and a Director. In addition, there is a social worker in charge of activities in each sub-county (depending on the county).

5) Hypothesis for the implementation of pilot activities

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), the counterpart institution, serves in its role as a national oversight body. Accordingly, all activities under the Project were designed and implemented as pilot initiatives to test effective approaches for the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV). The insights and lessons learned from these pilot efforts are intended to inform concrete policy recommendations to strengthen systems for GBV prevention, response, and survivor reintegration, particularly at the county level.

In implementing these pilot activities across the selected counties, the Project was guided by the key question: “What types of initiatives—and in what ways—can effectively promote the prevention of GBV and the empowerment and reintegration of survivors in Kenya?”

Based on this question, the following hypotheses were developed and tested during implementation:

(Hypothesis)

- ✓ Enhancing **the understanding of GBV and survivor-centered support approaches** among a diverse range of local actors will promote more effective protection, empowerment, and reintegration of survivors.
- ✓ **Strengthening coordination** between GBV Recovery Centers (GBVRCs), shelters, and local resources will enable more comprehensive and continuous support for survivors.
- ✓ Empowering women and girls to raise their voices—particularly those who have been silenced—through actions **that address menstrual poverty and promote economic independence is essential** for both GBV prevention and response.
- ✓ **Increasing understanding and engagement of men and religious leaders** in GBV issues and establishing spaces for gender-inclusive collaboration are key to shifting community norms and strengthening prevention systems.
- ✓ **Sports-based approaches can serve as an effective means** of learning the values of gender equality experientially and contribute to building a society free of GBV.
- ✓ **Promoting entrepreneurship and business initiatives** that prevent GBV or economically and socially empower survivors can provide sustainable solutions.

Throughout the course of the Project, a series of capacity development initiatives were carried out targeting government officials and relevant stakeholders in Kajiado, Machakos, and Nairobi Counties. In parallel, GBV Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) and shelters within the three counties served as critical support hubs, facilitating the establishment of a more coordinated, comprehensive and seamless support system for GBV survivors.

At the community level, the Project collaborated with local authorities in Kajiado County to promote the creation of “GBV-Free Smart Villages”—a model aimed at fostering safer, more responsive communities through women’s empowerment, awareness-raising, prevention, and collective action. In Machakos County, efforts focused on developing GBV-responsive school models that actively engage in prevention, early identification, and support mechanisms. In Nairobi County, the Project explored business-driven approaches to GBV prevention by promoting enterprises and entrepreneurial initiatives that contribute to the elimination of gender-based violence.

2. Project Activities

I. Capacity Building for Service Providers and Support Personnel on GBV Response

In the global response to gender-based violence (GBV), the implementation of a survivor-centered approach has been emphasized as a fundamental principle for ensuring effective and dignified support for survivors. This approach is grounded in the principles of confidentiality and respect for survivors' rights, and prioritizes the survivor's safety, choice, and decision-making throughout the support process. However, in Kenya, this approach is not yet fully institutionalized at the service delivery level. To address the gaps, the Project implemented training activities in all three counties, targeting service providers and concerned support staff involved in GBV prevention and response. The aim was to enhance their practical skills to deliver survivor-centered care.

1) A Study Tour to the Gender based Violence Recovery Centre (GBVRC) in Kisumu County

To deepen understanding and strengthen the capacity of service providers on the survivor-centered approach, the Project organized a study tour to Kisumu County from October 4–6, 2023 with staff from Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) and shelters in Kajiado and Machakos Counties⁸.

Kisumu County was selected for its pioneering role in GBV response. It was the first county in Kenya to establish a GBVRC in 2013. The center, operated by the county government with support from local NGOs, is nationally recognized as a model for its comprehensive, survivor-centered programming.

During the tour, participants engaged in lectures and practical exercises that introduced key elements of case management. These included fundamental principles and attitudes in survivor support, effective interviewing and counselling techniques, appropriate methods for evidence collection, and proper procedures for case documentation and filing. Beyond technical skills, the program also facilitated peer learning and strategic thinking. Participants exchanged ideas on strengthening multi-sectoral coordination with other service providers and agencies to ensure seamless, holistic support for survivors. Each participant was also required to develop an action plan outlining how they would apply the learnings in their respective institutions.

⁸ Participants included medical personnel, social workers, and health department staff from both counties, as well as representatives from the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC).

Outline of the training

Training objectives	To learn how to provide support based on the survivor-centered approach
Participants.	Staff of the Gender based Violence Recovery Centers/GBVRC in Kajiado and Machakos (health professionals and social workers, staff of the provincial health department responsible for the operation of the GBVRC, staff of the gender department, NGEC) Staff (15 staff in total)
Training contents	<p>[Day 1] (lecture and exercise)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting and survivor referral from the community to the facility for support services • Survivor screening at the facility after reporting • Case management (clinical management and documentation, forensic sample and evidence collection, preservation and care and interviewing based on survivor-centered approach) • Survivor support based on a multi-sectoral approach • How to effectively cooperate and partner with other institutions in GBV prevention and response • Best practices, achievements made, issues, challenges and existing gaps in addressing GBV • Efforts to rehabilitate survivors and support their reintegration into society • Analysis of issues and preparation of action plans in each prefecture <p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and presentation of action plans • Visit to Nyanza Initiative for Girls Education (NGO) • Visit to Empowerment and Nyalenda Young Turks (NGO) <p>*Both NGOs provide vocational training and counselling to women and girls in collaboration with GBVRC.</p> <p>* Nyanza Initiative for Girls Education also provides safe shelter to survivors.</p>

(Annex 2: Kisumu Exchange Study Tour- participant List)

Participants found the Kisumu study tour to be highly meaningful, particularly the opportunity to observe survivor-centered practices firsthand and engage in peer exchange. They were notably impressed by Kisumu's emphasis on survivor privacy, individualized case management, and strong inter-agency coordination.

The visit prompted critical reflection among participants regarding current practices in their own counties. Several acknowledged gaps in areas such as recordkeeping and survivor interviews, and expressed commitment to applying lessons learned to improve service delivery. The study tour served as the first full-scale training under the Project and played a catalytic role in enhancing motivation and promoting concrete action among local partners.

"I was shocked at how careless we've been with recordkeeping and survivor interviews. Seeing a facility truly designed with survivors in mind was eye-opening."—Nurse, Kajiado GBVRC

“I thought I understood the term ‘survivor-centered,’ but visiting this site helped me grasp its true meaning. We will apply this approach more rigorously in our own shelter.”-- Chief Officer for Gender in Machakos County



2) Specialized Training on a survivor-centered approach in the Three Target Counties

Based on the insights and results gained from the Study tour in Kisumu, the Project organized intensive capacity-building trainings in each of the three target counties. These were tailored trainings to strengthen practical skills in survivor-centered support and case management for service providers and support personnel. Prior to the training, the Project conducted needs assessments through interviews with participants to ensure the training content addressed their actual duties and challenges, and the trainings were designed to be customized and participatory, focusing on real-life cases and examples.

An overview of the training is given in the table below.

Outline of training

Target group	Main training content	Date of implementation	Number of persons
Educators (Machakos County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition, types, background and factors of GBV • GBV in schools: current situation and challenges • Impact on children • Roles and responsibilities of teachers and schools in eliminating GBV • GBV case management at the school level • Multisectoral approach in GBV case management • Legal Framework governing issues of GBV in Kenya • Development of an action plan 	5-6 December 2023	32 persons
Educators (teachers and administrators (headmasters, school counsellors, etc.) in Machakos province)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding GBV/Child protection and Survivor-Centered Approach • Risk assessment and Management • GBV case management process • Initial response to survivors (LIVES model) • Survivor centered approach in GBV case management. • Reporting and referral pathways for reported GBV cases • Legal instruments related to GBV • Documentation and Reporting • Handling Cases Involving Parents and the Community • Psychosocial support to survivors • Developing an action plan 	5 August 2024~ 7 days	32 persons
Administrative officers from the three counties Gender Department, Health Department, Education Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition, types, background and factors of GBV • Initial response to survivors (LIVES model) • Coordination for integrated service delivery • Data management • Establishment of a referral system, responsibilities of stakeholders 	22 Aug/17 Oct 2024 (Kajiado) 3 September / 8 November 2024 (Machakos) 5 September/6 November 2024 (Nairobi)	Kajiado 16 People Machakos 15 people Nairobi 15 people

Health promoters (Kajiado County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition, types and background factors of GBV • Role of CHPs in GBV prevention and response • Initial response to survivors (LIVES model) • Referral pathway for GBV services • Trauma counselling and psychosocial support • Coordination and coordination of service delivery 	20-21 August 2024	30 people (3 provinces)
GBVRC and shelter staff (3 provinces) (health professionals, counsellors, social workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing shelter management protocols • Trauma counselling and psychosocial support • Clinical, psychosocial and legal support • GBV management for adults and children • Post-training action plans developed and presented • How to use recording tools for GBV case management • Multisectoral approach in GBV case management • Legal framework governing GBV 	27-30 August 2024	30 participants (3 counties)

These trainings were conducted with the support of GBV specialists from a Nairobi Women's Hospital with long-standing experience in survivor care. In conducting the training, several meetings were held with the lecturers in advance, with an emphasis on moving beyond theoretical concepts to practical, hands-on learning, including real case studies and simulations. As a result, about 70% of participants showed improved understanding of GBV case management and survivor-centered care, including knowledge of referral procedures and psychosocial support. (Annex 3: Training on Survivor Centered Approach - Participant List and Training Materials)

On the other hand, a few days of training alone are not sufficient to fully strengthen support capacities. The training revealed that many participants had previously provided support to survivors without knowing even the most basic referral contacts within their own counties, underscoring a serious gap in coordination. This points to a broader systemic challenge in Kenya: the need to ensure that referral information is consistently shared across national and county levels, and that frontline service providers have access to regular, institutionalized training. Addressing these issues is essential for building an effective and coordinated support system for GBV survivors.



3) A Study Tour to the Shanzu Gender Justice Court, Mombasa County

In order to prevent and eliminate GBV, it is also essential to create an environment that facilitates access to legal and judicial support for survivors. However, in the target counties, multiple barriers, including economic constraints, lack of access to information, cultural stigma, and social pressure make it difficult for survivors, especially women, to receive the legal support that they need. For example, in many cases, survivors are unable to afford legal representation because they cannot afford legal fees for financial reasons, or are hesitant to report the incident to the police due to prejudice from the community or pressure from family members. Moreover, police and judicial actors often lack sufficient understanding or capacity to handle GBV cases properly, resulting in inadequate initial responses and poor evidence preservation, which can lead to impunity for perpetrators. This situation not only hinders the protection of women survivors and their independence and social reintegration, but also creates a vicious circle in which the seriousness of GBV is not properly recognized by society as a whole.

In response to this situation, the Project organized another study tour program together with police, law and justice officials, social workers, gender bureau officials and NGEC staff from the target counties (15 people in total), and visited the Shanzu Law Courts in Mombasa to learn how efforts to improve women's access to justice should be.

The Shanzu Law Courts in Mombasa County, formally known as the Shanzu Gender Justice Court, was established in 2022 as Kenya's first court specializing in gender-based violence (GBV) cases. As a

pioneering model, it represents a significant step toward strengthening survivor-centered justice by providing dedicated judicial processes tailored to the needs of GBV survivors. For example, a dedicated GBV-related case registry (SGBV Registry) has been established within the courts, separate from the regular Criminal Registry, where the recording and management of cases is centralised by four staff with specialised training in GBV case management. In addition, every Tuesday and Wednesday has been designated as “dedicated GBV hearing days” where GBV cases are heard by a dedicated judge and prosecutor. The Court has also introduced a “witness protection box” to ensure the safety and dignity of survivors during court proceedings. In collaboration with partner agencies, the court further provides psychosocial support, including counselling services, to GBV survivors, contributing to a more survivor-centered justice process⁹.

At the institutional level, a coordinated framework has been established among the police, prosecutors, medical and social welfare institutions, NGOs, GBVRC, and the judiciary. This has led to the formation of a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Court Users Committee, which convenes regularly to discuss GBV-related court cases, enhance case handling, and improve support for survivors¹⁰. The Committee serves as a platform for continuous consultation on GBV response strategies. In addition, the neighboring Office of the Public Prosecutor has developed a rapid response policy specifically for GBV cases and established a dedicated “special counselling room” to provide a safe and child-friendly environment for interviewing child victims.

The training offered participants an in-depth understanding of the structure and functioning of specialized GBV courts, including case investigation, prosecution, and survivor protection and support through multi-agency collaboration. Through lectures, site visits, and discussions, participants were able to observe how coordinated justice responses are implemented in practice. A major insight from the training was that the establishment of GBV courts does not necessarily require new infrastructure. Effective case handling can be achieved through practical steps such as setting up a dedicated GBV registry within existing courts and assigning specific hearing dates for GBV cases. The training also underscored the critical role of multi-sectoral collaboration at the regional level.

In response, participants from Kajiado County committed to enhancing access to justice for survivors by establishing a GBV registry within the county court and forming a GBV Court Users Committee to strengthen coordination among key actors. They also agreed to designate specific days for hearing GBV cases, effectively laying the groundwork for the operationalization of a GBV court within existing judicial structures. In Machakos County, participants also expressed commitment to step up efforts to strengthen

⁹ Consideration has also been given to child victims, such as providing them with snacks and a safe environment.

¹⁰ A 'gender desk' specialising in GBV victimisation has been set up in the provincial police force, and a system of close cooperation with the prosecutor's office and the courts has been established to collect evidence and register cases. Here, a 'GBV Response Team' has been set up with two full-time male and two full-time female staff. On the other hand, stakeholders raised as challenges the persistent issues of victims' evasion of reporting, lack of resources (lack of vehicles and means of transport) and the existence of unfair trials (kangaroo courts) in the region that ignore the original legal procedures.

support for survivors by activating a GBV Court Users Committee, introducing witness protection boxes and strengthening the networks between the judiciary, shelters, and other stakeholders in three counties.

Outline of the training

Training objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To deepen understanding of the structure of the Special Court for GBV, background to its establishment, operation, management and coordination. - To learn good practices in dealing with GBV cases (investigation, prosecution, protection, support, recovery and reintegration).
Date and time.	19-20 September 2024
Participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff working in GBVRC and shelters in Kajiado and Machakos provinces, judges, prosecutors, police, lawyers, and NGEC's legal and judicial team (X total), 17 people in total
Content of training	<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration, greeting, court structure and operation • Tour of facilities • Role and functions of the GBV court user committee (consisting of judiciary, health, prosecution, shelter, civil society, etc.) • State of multi-sectoral cooperation, sharing of good practices and challenges • On staff training based on survivor-centredness • Q&A <p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the previous day • Sharing of current situation and challenges in each county • Formulation of activity plans • Visits to local police gender desks, prosecutors, GBVRC and shelters (NGOs)

(Annex 4: Shunzu Gender Justice Court Study Tour-Participant List and Program)

“Gender Justice Court is a new concept to us since we do not have such a system in our institution. We handle GBV cases like any other cases and we did not know that this is creating more harm to the survivors emotionally. We commit to establish a GBV court system in our institution so that we can handle GBV cases in a better way.” –Magistrate, Kajiado Law Court

	
<p>Participants engaging in discussions to strengthen the network.</p>	<p>A presentation on their action plan</p>
	
<p>Magistrates, prosecutors, police officers, gender officers, and GBVRC staff from Kajiado and Machakos Counties engaging in discussions on GBV response</p>	<p>Mtwapa Police station with a vibrant gender desk in Mombasa County</p>

4) Awareness-raising workshop for stakeholders in the transport sector (27 Nov 2023)

In Kenya, many women and girls experience sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces and while traveling. For example, it has been reported that approximately 80% of women using public transport experience sexual harassment.¹¹ In addition, teenage girls are also often sexually assaulted by motorbike taxi drivers (known as boda boda) on their way to school, resulting in unwanted pregnancies.

In response to this situation, the project organized a workshop in collaboration with JICA's Project on Capacity Building for Operation Policy and Management in Nairobi Metropolitan Area, the Kenya Motorcycle Taxi Association (Boda Boda Association) and UNFPA to raise awareness and actions among stakeholders in the public transport sector. The workshop was attended by a total of 100 participants, including representatives of the bus and motorbike taxi associations and government officials from Busia, Samburu, Garissa and Marsabit counties, in addition to Kajiado, Machakos and Nairobi counties.

At the beginning of the workshop, opening remarks were delivered by representatives from JICA and the

¹¹ UN Women (2021), "WOMEN AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN EAST AFRICA: Expanding available data and knowledge base about women and public transport", Nairobi Report' IUN Women, Kenyatta University and Stockholm Environment Institute, <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/12/women-and-public-transport-in-east-africa> .

Chairperson of NGEC, followed by a keynote speech by Ms. Naomi Mwaura, a Kenyan expert who has long been engaged in efforts to eliminate GBV in the transport sector. She highlighted the reality in Kenya, where many men own private means of transportation such as cars or motorcycles, while women are largely dependent on public transport. She pointed out that women passengers frequently experience sexual harassment on buses and at bus stops. Ms. Mwaura strongly emphasized that GBV in the transport sector is one of the key factors hindering women's freedom of movement and significantly limiting their access to education, as well as their participation in social and economic life, thus underscoring the urgent need for effective countermeasures.

In the panel discussion that followed, representatives from the Boda Boda Association, the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the Nairobi Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (NAMATA) discussed key strategies for preventing and eliminating GBV in the transport sector. The discussion highlighted the importance of: 1) strengthening training for transport sector stakeholders; 2) implementing a nationwide campaign to enhance GBV reporting and referral mechanisms, and 3) improving the infrastructure of safe waiting areas and strengthening surveillance systems.

The panel discussion also shed light on the widespread verbal abuse and physical harassment experienced by female drivers. Panelists called for the urgent measures to enhance their safety through sustained public awareness and education campaigns. They also emphasized the importance of expanding opportunities for women to enter the driving profession as a pathway to economic empowerment and gender equality.

In the Kenyan context, where women's career choices remain limited, female drivers were recognized as powerful role models whose presence and leadership contribute not only to the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) but also to the broader empowerment of women and girls. The Chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to intensifying efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV in the transport sector, while also promoting greater participation of women within the industry.

Recommendations made at the workshop

- Policies need to be developed for the elimination of GBV in the transport sector
- Action to strengthen women's participation and leadership in the public transport sector
- Public space development that is aware of the safety of women and girls, such as CCTV, electric lights, etc., and footpath maintenance
- Gender and GBV training for public transport sector stakeholders
- Development of women-friendly public toilets (toilets with space for young children to change clothes, etc.)
- Development of mechanisms for reporting GBV victimisation in public transport (emergency buttons at bus stops and on buses. (e.g. development of a hotline)
- Improvement of bus services and routes in view of women's mobility needs for non-economic activities, such as shopping and care work
- Improvement of public transport services that are accessible to people with disabilities

- Development of policies and institutions to ensure the safety of women working in the public transport sector.
- Inclusion of motorbike taxi operators as members of gender working groups in each province



More than 100 participants attended the workshop from the public transport sector



A Panel discussion to prevent GBV in Transport sector



A poster produced to increase awareness on GBV in Transport (1)



Reflector jackets produced in collaboration with UNFPA to enhance awareness on GBV among motorbike taxi and bus drivers



A poster produced to create awareness on GBV in Transport (2)



Posters produced to create awareness on GBV in partnership with JICA Bus Operation Project

II Strengthening Coordination and Networks among Support Providers and Institutions - Towards the Establishment of a Comprehensive, Seamless Support System

In order to provide survivor-centered support, it is essential to establish a system in which service providers and relevant institutions work in close coordination to deliver holistic and seamless support—from protection to recovery, reintegration, and empowerment. To this end, alongside efforts to strengthen human resource capacity, this project undertook activities aimed at enhancing coordination among support providers and relevant agencies within each county.

1) Enhancing Survivor Access and Strengthening Institutional Linkages in Kajiado County

In Kajiado County, a Gender-Based Violence Recovery Center (GBVRC) has been established within a level-five hospital under the leadership of the County Department of Gender and Health. The center is staffed with dedicated personnel, including doctors, nurses, psychologist, and social workers, totaling 10 staff members. However, in many cases, the services remain limited to emergency medical assistance, and the provision of comprehensive support for the survivors' physical and psychological recovery, economic empowerment, and social reintegration is still insufficient.

In response, the Project supported the strengthening of GBVRC staff capacity in case management and facilitated stronger institutional linkages with the Kajiado Law Court. Key initiatives included the establishment of a dedicated unit within the County Court to handle GBV cases, the organization of an awareness forum on the role of the GBVRC, and the convening of dialogue forums and coordination meetings to enhance collaboration between the GBVRC and justice sector actors.



GBVRC in Kajiado County



Awareness-raising workshop on GBV and the role of GBVRC (8 December 2023)







In addition, by mobilizing another resource from JICA¹², the project supported renovation work for the GBVRC itself. Although the center was initially constructed in 2020 with financial support from a local NGO, its structural and functional design was found to be inadequate in providing a safe and supportive environment for survivors. For example, the original layout allowed the interior of the facility to be visible from the reception area, compromising the privacy and security of survivors. Furthermore, the rooms were separated only by curtains, lacking the private and confidential spaces necessary for survivors to feel secure during consultations and while receiving support services. Moreover, delivering support grounded in a survivor-centered approach requires the design of clear and safe movement flows within the facility. However, this aspect had not been adequately addressed, and survivors were often exposed to the view of other patients and stakeholders while accessing services at the center, compromising their privacy and sense of safety.

To address these issues, the Project collaborated with a consultant dispatched by JICA, county officials, the hospital director, county engineers, and representatives from the NGO involved in the original construction to review and revise the building's layout and functions as a one-stop center. Renovation work was subsequently undertaken to improve the facility's safety, privacy, and usability for survivors, with the following enhancements:

- ✓ Private service rooms were created through partitioning and the installation of doors, allowing for confidential delivery of services such as medical treatment, forensic examination and evidence collection, psychosocial counseling, child care, medication provision, legal support, and economic empowerment referral services.
- ✓ Separate safe accommodation areas were newly constructed for male and female survivors, and essential furnishings such as beds and shelves were provided.
- ✓ Dedicated toilets and shower rooms were installed exclusively for survivors.
- ✓ Storage areas and shelving were added to securely store frequently used medications and forensic evidence.

As the renovation work was completed at the end of May 2025, a formal handover ceremony was conducted on July 24 of the same year. The event was attended by the Deputy Governor Kajiado County, Chairperson of NGECC, JICA Senior Representative, and the JICA consultant who played a key role in the renovation, along with representatives from the county government.

¹² "Data Collection Survey on Intervention Methodology for Gender Equality Promotion" by JICA

	
<p>The rehabilitated GBVRC</p>	<p>The female safe room</p>
	
<p>The legal aid room at the GBVRC</p>	<p>The therapy and counselling room for children</p>
	
<p>The signboard of renovated GBVRC in Kajiado</p>	<p>Handing Over Ceremony with Deputy Governor of Kajiado</p>

2) Strengthening the Shelter System in Machakos County

In Machakos County, the construction of a shelter to support GBV survivors, funded by the county government, was completed in September 2024, marking the official commencement of shelter services within the county. The facility includes a medical service area, a legal aid room, private rooms with a total capacity of up to 35 individuals, and basic amenities such as a kitchen and dining area. This indicates that a foundational level of physical reception capacity for GBV survivors has now been established.

Despite the establishment of the shelter, the provision of comprehensive support services for survivors remains limited. Currently, five full-time staff members, including a certified social worker, have been assigned to the facility by the County Department of Gender. However, standard operating procedures (SOPs) for survivor support have not yet been developed or implemented, and the scope of interviews and counselling services remains limited.

Furthermore, public awareness and outreach efforts regarding the shelter among local residents have been inadequate, and no coordination system has been established with other support resources available in the area. As a result, women who have experienced violence are primarily receiving temporary shelter and food, but are not able to access the comprehensive care and services necessary for their physical and psychological recovery. In this context, many survivors are forced to leave the shelter within a short period of stay without having sufficiently recovered. They often face the harsh reality of either returning to the same violent environments they had escaped or seeking refuge with relatives, without sustainable options for safety and reintegration.

In response to these challenges, the project has provided training for shelter staff and supplied essential equipment and materials (such as medical costs and weighing scales), while also advancing the following initiatives:

■ **Supporting the Establishment of a Technical Working Group to Discuss the Future Direction of Shelter Services and Deliver Support to Survivors**

In Machakos County, a working group aimed at promoting gender equality has been established, and meetings are held several times a year. The group is mainly composed of representatives from various county departments and NGOs. However, many members lack sufficient understanding of GBV-related issues and have limited practical experience in survivor support. As a result, discussions in these meetings tend to remain at the level of general agreement on the need to strengthen efforts, without progressing to concrete action. Recognizing this situation, the project facilitated discussions on the necessity of establishing a Specialized Working Group to engage in more practical and in-depth dialogue on shelter management. This group would include stakeholders with technical expertise—such as judges, lawyers, police officers, private shelter operators, and NGO representatives. The Project planned to support the formation of this group by helping to develop a draft member list and assisting in preparations for its inaugural meetings. However, due to timing constraints and competing priorities at the county level, the group’s formal establishment was postponed. Further follow-up and coordination will be required to operationalize the initiative in the next phase.

■ **Establishing a System to Connect the Shelter with the Machakos County Court, Enabling Survivors to Access Legal Support and Court Proceedings from Within the Shelter**

The Project has supported efforts to strengthen coordination between the shelter, the Machakos County Court, and local stakeholders. Specifically, the project supported the activities of the Court Users Committee

geared towards promoting access to justice for survivors. In addition, to enable women staying at the shelter to receive legal assistance without having to travel, the project worked with the Chief Officer for the County Department of Gender and the shelter’s lead officer to facilitate coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders. These efforts aimed to establish a system in which court staff would create virtual links with the shelter on designated days of the week, allowing survivors to receive legal consultations and case hearings virtually. To operationalize this system, the Project had planned to provide the necessary equipment. However, due to timing constraints, delays in staff deployment, the initiative is currently on hold. Further follow-up and close coordination with relevant institutions will be required to resume preparations and operationalize the initiative in the next phase.

■ **Promoting Economic Empowerment and Social Reintegration of Survivors through Strengthened Collaboration with Vocational Training Institutions in Machakos County**

Given that survivors can stay at the Machakos County shelter for a maximum of three months, the project has supported the County Department of Gender in advancing initiatives to strengthen collaboration between the shelter and local Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions to promote survivors’ economic independence and social reintegration after their departure. Machakos County has a total of 43 TVET institutions that offer a wide range of vocational training programs. Under this initiative, a pilot collaboration was planned with one of the TVET institutions. The Project facilitated discussions with relevant stakeholders to design a mechanism through which survivors seeking to become self-reliant after leaving the shelter—could access vocational training opportunities using county budget resources. However, due to timing constraints and delays in reaching a formal agreement with government partners, the initiative is currently on hold. Continued engagement and coordination will be necessary to advance the initiative in the next phase.

	
<p>Safe Shelter in Machakos officially opened Sep 2024</p>	<p>Kyemutheke Vocational Training Center in Machakos</p>

	
Beauty and therapy students at Machakos TVET	Students at the TVET

3) Facility Improvement at the Kayole Women's Center in Nairobi County

Currently, Nairobi County operates a public shelter for adult female survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse by utilizing part of a facility originally established for girl survivors under the Department of Children's Services. The shelter, which can accommodate up to 16 women, managed by three dedicated staff members from the County Department of Gender. This facility plays a vital role in providing immediate safety, basic necessities, and a sense of security for women in crisis. With support from partners such as World Vision, the shelter has also introduced small-scale vocational training activities—including beadwork and bread-making—which offer survivors opportunities for engagement and skill-building during their stay. These efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to empowering survivors and creating a more holistic care environment.

Nonetheless, the shelter continues to face limitations in staff capacity and resources. Current programming primarily focuses on accommodation and meals, and while vocational activities are a promising step, they remain sporadic and limited in scale. As a result, their impact on long-term self-reliance and reintegration of survivors into society has been constrained. Further investment in structured psychosocial support and sustainable economic empowerment programs will be essential to maximize the shelter's transformative potential.

In light of these challenges, the project has held multiple consultations with the County Department of Gender on how the shelter should be operated and improved. Nevertheless, due to restrictions associated with operating within a facility managed by the Department of Children's Services, the project was ultimately only able to carry out the following activities:

■ Renovation of the Kitchen, Communal Room, and Counseling Room for Women's Economic Empowerment

Many of the women currently residing in the shelter have fled their matrimonial homes with young children, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive, family-sensitive support services within the facility. However, the shelter space, located within a facility managed by the Department of Children's Services was not designed with the safety of small children in mind. In particular, the kitchen posed significant safety

risks due to inadequate safety measures, with open flames, sharp utensils, and hot cookware accessible to children.

To address this, safety enhancements were made to the kitchen area. These included the installation of child safety gates to prevent children from accessing open flames or cooking tools, the relocation of high-temperature cooking equipment (such as stoves) to safer areas, and the installation of secure storage shelves for sharp objects and hot pots. In addition, counseling rooms were renovated to ensure a private and welcoming environment where women could comfortably receive support.

■ Development of a Kitchen Garden, Training for Survivors in Vegetable Farming, and Installation of a Water Tank

As part of peer counseling activities aimed at promoting the psychosocial recovery of shelter residents, the Project supported the establishment of a kitchen garden in the courtyard. With technical assistance from JICA's nutrition improvement project, training sessions on vegetable cultivation were also organized for survivors.

The gardening activities have had a notably positive impact on the mental well-being of survivors. One survivor shared, *“Taking care of the vegetables, watering them, and seeing them grow healthy gives me a deep sense of satisfaction. I feel useful and worthy when I see us eating those vegetables during our meals.”* This initiative has demonstrated strong potential as an effective component of future shelter-based support interventions.

	
Public shelter in Nairobi County (Kayole Women's Centre)	Renovated Kitchen for GBV survivors in Shelter
	
Kitchen Garden Supported	Training for GBV survivors by JICA IFNUs Project

III. Initiatives to Promote Actions in Communities, Schools and the Private Sector

Eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) requires more than government-led legal and administrative reforms. It is equally essential for individuals and communities to deepen their understanding of the issue and actively challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors. Addressing GBV at its root demands collective effort to inspire concrete action across all levels of society—from individuals and families to communities and institutions.

Building on this recognition, the Project collaborated with key stakeholders in the target counties to identify and pilot effective initiatives aimed at driving positive change in the society. The following interventions were implemented:

1. Creating a GBV-Free Smart Village (Kajiado County)
2. Building Schools that Take Action to Eliminate GBV (Machakos County)
3. Promoting Businesses that Contribute to the Elimination of GBV (Nairobi County)

These pilot initiatives were designed to foster community engagement, challenge harmful norms, and demonstrate locally rooted, sustainable approaches to GBV prevention.

1. Creating a “GBV Free Smart Village” (Kajiado County)

As part of efforts to promote community-level transformation, the project launched an initiative in Orinie Village, located in central Kajiado County, under the slogan “Creating a Smart Village Free from Gender-Based Violence.” Orinie is a pastoralist community of approximately 2,700 Maasai people living in a vast, arid savannah region. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms prevail in the area, significantly limiting women’s access to education and participation in society. Only 26.3% of girls progress to secondary education or beyond, and around 60% of women in the village are illiterate¹³. (Annex 5 ‘Rapid Gender Analysis and Baseline Study of Orinie Location, Kajiado County’ JICA)

Polygamous family structures are common in the village, with households typically headed by a male patriarch and consisting of multiple wives and children, and gender roles are also strictly defined. Men are responsible for livestock, while women handle water collection, firewood gathering, household chores, childcare, and elder care. Decision-making and inheritance rights are held almost exclusively by men,

¹³ NGEC-JICA GBV Elimination Project (2024), ‘Rapid Gender Analysis and Baseline Study of Orinie Location, Kajiado County’ JICA

leaving women with little say in matters such as property sales, children's education, or the family's future¹⁴. In the community, women are often viewed as the equivalent of children or considered the property of their husbands or families. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) persist, and many girls are forced into marriage and childbearing by the ages of 12 or 13. Domestic violence by husbands or male family members is widespread, and sexual violence remains a serious concern. According to interviews conducted with women during the project, 54% of women in the village reported having experienced GBV¹⁵. However, due to strong societal pressures and fear of retaliation, many women and girls are unable to speak out. This “culture of silence” exacerbates the prevalence of GBV and hinders both response efforts and the provision of support.

While Kajiado County has made efforts to address gender-based violence (GBV) by partnering with local NGOs to implement awareness and education campaigns, these initiatives have often faced challenges in terms of long-term planning and sustainability. Many activities to date have tended to be reactive and short-term in nature, limiting their overall impact. Recognizing both the county's commitment and the need for more strategic approaches, the project worked in close collaboration with the County Department of Gender and Ministry of Education to explore and pilot more effective, community-rooted models for addressing GBV at the village level. This partnership aimed to shift from one-off interventions to more structured and sustainable mechanisms for prevention and response.

Here, three main areas of intervention were pursued:

- Increase the agency of Women and Girls – through activities that help them build confidence, expand knowledge, strengthen peer networks, and achieve economic independence so they can break the silence and stand up against GBV;
- Engaging Men and Boys – to foster awareness and promote behavioral change toward gender equality and the elimination of GBV;
- Developing Community-Based Protection and prevention mechanisms – to ensure that survivors are appropriately supported and women's safety is upheld collectively at the village level.

The key activities carried out under this initiative are outlined below.

1) Initiatives to Increase the Agency of Women and Girls

- **Holding a “Women's Forum” – Development and Implementation of Action Plans by**

¹⁴ Although female religious leaders and government officials are present, their numbers are extremely limited.

¹⁵ NGEC-JICA GBV Elimination Project (2024), ‘Rapid Gender Analysis and Baseline Study of Orinie Location, Kajiado County’ JICA

Women Themselves

The forum was held exclusively for women to ensure a safe environment for open and honest dialogue. It aimed to help women to share their personal experiences with GBV, strengthen their voices, and cultivate the confidence and agency needed to take action. During the forum, participants also discussed global trends and statistics on GBV to gain perspective on how women and girls around the world are affected.

To ensure a secure and open environment for honest dialogue, the forum was held exclusively for women. It was designed to encourage participants to share their personal experiences, strengthen their collective voice, and build the confidence and agency necessary to take action. By incorporating discussions on global trends and statistics related to GBV, the forum also enabled participants to situate their own experiences within a broader context. This exposure helped them critically assess the realities in their community and collaboratively identify solutions that are both locally relevant and culturally appropriate.

	
<p>Women's forum attended by more than 100 women</p>	<p>Women in a group discussing about their issues and challenges</p>
	
<p>Women in a group discussion to develop an action plan</p>	<p>Women presenting their action plan</p>

More than 100 women from the village participated in the workshop. For many of them, it was the first time they had ever spoken publicly about GBV, and at the beginning, there was noticeable hesitation to speak up. However, with careful facilitation by staff from the Kajiado County Department of Gender and Kenyan

experts with experience in survivor support, the women gradually became more engaged. Discussions grew increasingly active, far beyond expectations, and the participants began to contribute ideas enthusiastically. As a result, the group successfully moved forward with the development of concrete action plans. Below is a summary of the challenges identified by the women and the corresponding solutions they proposed.

	Women's voices
Current situation and challenges surrounding women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Women have no say in the home. They are forced to marry early. Women lack knowledge and information on how to spend money. ✓ Women are violated if they fail to prepare dinner on time and to their satisfaction. ✓ Husbands give money few times a month, and it is never enough. Cooking and securing food are considered women's work. However, husbands do not allow their wives to work outside their homes. ✓ Women sneak out after their husbands have gone out so as to engage in casual work and earn money (e.g. washing and cleaning in other people's houses, constructing their traditional houses, cleaning the community, etc.) Although the family relies on the income earned by the women, husbands often beat their wives when they discover that they have secretly left the house to go to work. The husbands often suspect that their wives sneak out because they are having relationships with other men. ✓ Many women have to go to hospital because of the violence. GBV is widespread in the village. ✓ When women run back to their parents because of unbearable abuse by their husbands, they are evicted and told to go back to their husbands. ✓ There is economic discrimination against women. Women do not have access to wage-earning work. Women are forced to work for lower wages for the same job at the village level. They are economically excluded and access to the job markets is difficult. ✓ Women buy vegetables from the village men who own land by the river and do vegetable farming. This place them at a vulnerable position of abuse by such men especially when they do not have money. Women wished to own land so that they could grow their own vegetables. ✓ Male children do not respect their mothers, because they imitate what husbands and the men say and do towards women. ✓ Women are struggling financially to make ends meet. ✓ Women have no ownership rights to property, even when they get married and buy livestock, it is considered a man's property. ✓ Women are forced to get married at an early stage hence being denied an opportunity to go to school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There is a language barrier since women who did not go to school cannot read or write English or Swahili and have no access to a wide range of information. These women cannot express themselves or speak out when they face abuse. ✓ Women have huge burden of domestic work. It takes half a day to fetch water and collect firewood. ✓ There is a lack of empowerment among women leaders. They who can stand strong and advocate for women's rights. ✓ Violence is constant due to male drug abuse especially by men who are addicted to alcohol. ✓ Some men do not work hence placing a huge burden on their wives to provide for their families. Women end up getting distressed and depressed. ✓ Women lack decision-making power. Men are the decision makers. ✓ Self-esteem is greatly affected in economically abusive lives. Psychological damage is severe. ✓ Many women remain silent when they are abused as it is considered a shameful experience.
Women's solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Women need to be economically empowered. We want financial education for women and support for small businesses. Support should be given to women to develop business plans. ✓ Adult literacy program is needed for women. If women can read and communicate, they will be able to participate in various activities and also speak out when they are abused. ✓ Establishment of support for group businesses, expansion of savings activities and support for the establishment of women's co-operatives and savings associations. ✓ Promote access to Sanitary products and information. ✓ Leadership training for women is needed. Action is needed to amplify women's voices in the society. ✓ There is a need for widespread GBV awareness-raising through storytelling using the media. ✓ Actions need to be taken to promote financial transparency among households. ✓ There is a need to raise awareness and educate men.

Based on the above discussions and action plan, a follow-up workshop was later organized for the women leaders from each women group¹⁶. Here, the women were encouraged to further deepen their thinking and develop specific joint action plans to proactively work towards the elimination of GBV in their villages. The following is a description of the action plan developed by the women themselves.

¹⁶ There are 11 women's groups organized in Orinie Village

Women's action plans for GBV prevention and elimination

	Specific activities	Implementing body	Time of implementation	Support and resources required
1	Training on factors and background of GBV	Department of Gender	Mar 2024	Dispatch of experts
2	Vegetable cultivation for economic independence	12 women leaders	Mar 2024-	Land and water tanks, training in vegetable cultivation, fencing of fields
3	Strengthening literacy	Department of Adult Literacy Program	From July 2024 -	Dispatch of teachers, teaching materials
4	Installation and promotion of energy-saving stoves adapted to climate change	12 women leaders	Aug 2024	Purchase of soil for stove building
5	Implementation of peer counselling activities among women (sports)	County Department of Gender	Jun 2024	Dispatch of balls and facilitators
6	Establishment of Posho Mill in the village	12 women leaders	Apr 2025	Establishment of huts to set up PoshoMill (the Posho Mill itself will be financed by the women's own savings activities).

Building on this plan, the Project supported the implementation of the action plan developed by the women themselves in collaboration with the county government, thereby encouraging and reinforcing women's agency and leadership in taking action.

“This is the first time we came together as women groups and women leaders to discuss on how we can develop our lives together through joint actions. We have seen how much we can do if we only welcome the idea of working collaboratively”-- A women leader in the village.

■ GBV Training for Women in the Village – Understanding the Issues, Causes, Context, and Impact of Gender-Based Violence

In the village, many women suffer from GBV and are aware of its injustice. However, it is also common for women to internalize the belief that they themselves are partly to blame. Additionally, there is limited

knowledge among women about where to report GBV cases or what support services are available. To address this, a training program was organized in collaboration with the County Department of Gender, with the goal of helping women gain a deeper understanding of the nature and root causes of GBV, as well as to inform them about appropriate responses and available support systems.

For the training, a TOT (training of trainers) was first conducted for staff of the Gender and Adult Literacy Departments with the cooperation of Kenyan experts who run a shelter for GBV survivors in Kenya and are particularly involved in the protection and support of Maasai girls. And through these trained facilitators, the program repeatedly conveyed to the village women that GBV is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women that are socially and culturally constructed, and that all forms of GBV are crimes. The training also covered steps to take in the event of GBV, how to access support services, and emphasized the importance of women coming together, breaking the silence, and building mutual support systems within the community to prevent and eliminate GBV.

In addition, during this period, the Project collaborated with a JICA expert on "Sport and Development" based in Tanzania, who was visiting Kenya¹⁷. With the support of this expert, team-based ball games and other physical activities were incorporated into the training to foster trust among participants and to promote the development of women-led peer support networks.

For the women of this village, there had never before been a space to openly talk about GBV. In the early sessions, some participants left without saying a word. However, as the training progressed, women gradually began to share their own experiences and speak out confidently about the various challenges facing women in the village.

The sports-based sessions attracted approximately 220 women. For most participants, it was their first time engaging in sports. Thanks to skilled facilitation by the JICA expert from Tanzania, the women actively participated in team activities and began building bonds of mutual support. By the latter half of the training, many women voiced powerful reflections such as: "I now tell my children that violence is never the woman's fault." "I've realized how important it is for women to support one another." "This was my first time playing sports—I feel stronger now." "I want us village women to take the lead in forming a support network for those suffering from violence." These powerful statements are evidence that shifts in awareness and behavior are already taking place. They point to the great potential for these initiatives to contribute to future efforts to prevent and respond to GBV at the community level.

¹⁷ Mr Tomoya Shiraishi, Expert on Sports and Development in Tanzania

	
<p>GBV awareness session during the sports event</p>	<p>Women engaging in ball games</p>
	
<p>JICA sports expert, Mr Tomoya Shiraishi from Tanzania guiding the women on the ball games</p>	<p>Women and girls engaging in sports activities.</p>

■ **Supporting Women’s Economic Empowerment through Vegetable Farming**

Among the various strategies to prevent and eliminate GBV, the most strongly expressed need by the women of Orinie Village was support for their economic empowerment. Orinie is located in a dry area that experiences frequent droughts and very low rainfall throughout the year. Most residents rely on livestock—cattle, goats, and sheep—for their livelihoods. However, many households do not own enough livestock to sustain themselves, and some men work as daily laborers in “sand harvesting” activities. Even so, income from these jobs is unstable, and in most households, the husband’s income alone is not enough to support the family.

In this context, while women are traditionally assigned household responsibilities, such as cooking, childcare, cleaning, collecting firewood and water, in practice, many also contribute to the household economy. This includes making beadwork, selling vegetables sourced from nearby markets, doing laundry and cleaning in others' homes, or providing services like water-fetching and fuel collection. Some women also run small snack stalls or engage in petty trade. In addition, many participate in savings groups to support with each other and cover expenses such as school fees for their children.

However, women continue to face limited access to key resources necessary for economic activities, such as land, transportation, and information, and their labor is often undervalued. In addition, the heavy burden

of unpaid domestic work, including tasks like water collection and firewood gathering, disproportionately falls on them. Many women shared experiences such as “being beaten for asking their husbands for household money” or “facing violence for not preparing satisfying meals.”

Amid these challenges, women in the village increasingly expressed interest in vegetable cultivation as a way to enhance household food security and generate income. However, most lacked both agricultural knowledge and access to land, making it difficult to initiate farming activities. To address this, the project, in partnership with the village chief, secured the lease of one acre of land for the women and provided initial support to launch vegetable production. A water tank was installed to enable irrigation, and fencing materials were also provided. At the same time, to foster a sense of ownership and promote long-term sustainability, the women themselves were responsible for preparing the land.

Initially, the women were hesitant to take up land preparation work because they thought it was a man's job and not a woman's job, but by explaining to them that such ideas created gender-based social norms, they gradually came to understand and were willing to take up land preparation work on their own.

After the land preparation was completed, training on vegetable cultivation was conducted for the women with the help of experts from the Nutrition Improvement Project (IFNAS) implemented by JICA. The training started with a workshop to examine the balance between cultivation costs and profits, and based on the results, technical training on the “Zaipit method”, which enables efficient cultivation with less water, was conducted. The training attracted a lot of interest not only from women but also from men in the community, and now this cultivation method is spreading in the village with the term “smart farming”. The women have started growing beans and spinach on communal land that has been developed, and each household has also started growing vegetables using the “Zaipit method”. The vegetables grown are used to secure food for the households and the surplus is sold, with some women earning approximately 2,000 Kenyan shillings per month, and certain results in terms of economic empowerment have begun to emerge¹⁸.

Due to time constraints, it has not yet been possible to collect sufficient data demonstrating a direct correlation between this initiative and the reduction of GBV. However, anecdotal evidence suggests positive impacts. One woman engaged in vegetable farming shared: “Whenever I asked my husband for money to buy food, he would beat me. But after the training, I took the initiative to set up Zaipits at my home. I planted vegetables which we consume, and I sell the surplus. I make a profit of Ksh 200 daily, which I use to buy flour, and on some days, I save it in our women’s group. This has reduced the physical violence I used to face from my husband whenever I borrowed money.”

Such testimonies indicate the potential of economic empowerment to contribute to GBV prevention at the

¹⁸ Twelve women earned 30,000 Kenyan Shillings in a single season from vegetable cultivation.

household level.

	
Women working at the community kitchen garden	Cost and benefit analysis workshop conducted by JICA IFNUs experts for women in the village
	
The women's farm in Orinie village	A woman putting into practice at home what she learned during the training on Zaipit style farming

■ Organizing literacy classes

In the village, about 60% of women are illiterate, unable to read or write at all. Many women enrol in primary school at least once, but are later forced to drop out due to family responsibilities or child marriage, leaving them with limited literacy and numeracy skills. Under these circumstances, women have voiced their concern such as “my husband or brothers deceive me about money” or “I can’t access necessary information.” At the same time, there was strong interest among the women in improving their literacy as a pathway to overcoming GBV and achieving economic empowerment.

In response, the project began supporting the County Department of Adult Literacy Education in launching an adult literacy program for women in July 2024. The classes are held twice a week—on Mondays and Thursdays—and around 50 women have participated so far. The curriculum includes reading and writing in Swahili, basic arithmetic, and introductory English. In addition, the program incorporates sessions for sharing experiences and learning about GBV, helping participants deepen their understanding of the social and structural causes behind gender-based violence. The class has also fostered solidarity and collective action among participants.

As a result, women's literacy skills have improved and new solidarities and actions have begun to emerge

among the women they met in the classrooms. For example, some women have started group activities to jointly write songs with the message of the elimination of GBV. Furthermore, many participants are learning how to use MPESA (mobile money) and are moving from cash to electronic money-based interactions. Some women reported: “Previously, I used to hide the money I earned under the carpet, but my husband always found it and took it. Now I deposit it with MPESA so I don't have to worry about my money being stolen”. Another said, “I now have more money to spend at my own discretion by using MPESA”

Currently, 28 of the women attending the literacy class have also enrolled in the county’s vocational training programs, gradually progressing from a learning environment to steps toward economic self-reliance.



“The basic math I learned in the adult literacy classes has helped me keep proper records for my shop. I now track my stock, sales, and profits, which has enabled me to manage my business more effectively”

“Through the adult literacy class, I learned basic English, Kiswahili, and math. This knowledge is helping me in my tailoring classes—I can now read instructions and take accurate measurements for the clothes I am making. I am earning about Ksh 1,000 by not only doing repairs but also making small cloth handbags for women.”

■ **Reducing the risk of GBV through the promotion of energy-saving stoves**

In the village, women are considered to play an important role in securing water and fuel for the family and preparing meals. However, there is no electricity in the village and securing fuel, especially for cooking, is a major burden for women. Due to the effects of climate change in recent years, firewood has become increasingly difficult to obtain, and women now spend an average of about three hours every day collecting fuel. There have been numerous cases in which women fall victim to sexual violence while traveling long distances in search of fuel. In response to this, the project supported the introduction and promotion of

energy-saving stoves that significantly reduce fuel consumption. This initiative aimed to alleviate the burden of unpaid labor and "time poverty" experienced by women, thereby creating an environment that enables them to engage more actively in efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV.

In Kajiado, energy-saving stoves had already been promoted in other areas of the county by a Kenya-based NGO. In fact, several women from a neighboring village of Orinie had already participated in relevant training. Building on this, the project provided a platform for these trained women to share their skills with other women in the village. Specifically, the project organized training sessions to enable women in the village to construct the stoves themselves, and supported their efforts to install and promote the use of the stoves in the community.

The introduction of energy-saving stoves has yielded remarkable results. Previously, 20 kilograms of firewood would be consumed within just one and a half days, whereas with the new stoves, the same amount now lasts approximately 20 days. This has significantly reduced the time and physical burden on women for fuel collection, thereby enhancing their safety in daily life. In addition, the stoves have allowed women to use their saved time for other productive activities, such as earning income and taking care of their households¹⁹



“I used to spend four hours every day fetching firewood. I never felt safe on the way because both the road and the firewood collection area are bushy, which posed a high risk of abuse or attack. Since receiving the energy-saving stove, I only need to collect firewood once every two weeks. This has greatly reduced the burden of my daily tasks.”--Woman, Orinie Village

“Whenever I came home late from fetching firewood, my husband would beat me and accuse me of seeing

¹⁹ The women used to spend approximately 1.5 to 2 hours daily collecting fuel. In some cases, they have also been victims of sexual violence in the process. The widespread use of fuel-saving stoves has contributed to reducing the workload of these women and improving their safety.

other men outside. With the energy saving stove, I no longer fetch firewood every day and this has reduced the physical violence I used to experience.”—Women, Orinie Village

■ **Strengthening Peer Counseling / Workshops on Understanding One’s Own Body**

In Orinie Village, the daily experiences of domestic violence, early childbirth, and sexual violence have significantly impacted women’s physical and mental health. Many suffer from long-term conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). However, due to limited access to education and a sense of resignation—such as the belief that “this is just how a woman’s life is”—awareness and interest in their own bodies and health remain extremely low. In particular, many women have never received any form of menstrual education, leaving them without accurate knowledge or appropriate coping methods. Deeply rooted local beliefs that “menstruation is unclean” have reinforced taboos around menstruation, leading many women to mistakenly interpret normal menstrual discomfort as a sign of serious illness, causing further fear and anxiety.

In response, the Project, in collaboration with Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) dispatched to Kenya, has implemented trainings and workshops to raise awareness about the impact of GBV on the physical and mental health of women and children. For menstrual health education and self-care, group activities using balloons and interactive sessions involving music and dance were introduced to help women engage with themselves and others in a positive and enjoyable way. These approaches proved highly effective. Participants shared positive feedback such as: “This was the first time I learned to value my own body.” “I have never felt this emotionally relieved before.” “I now feel that I have value.” “I want to teach my children this mindset”.

Health education—including menstrual health and self-care—is essential in enhancing women’s self-esteem and fostering a mindset that does not tolerate GBV. Creative activities can help release emotions and contribute to psychological healing. Moreover, the presence of a safe space where women can speak openly serves as a critical starting point for shifting awareness and behavior. Establishing such spaces regularly and sustainably at the community level is considered a vital step in creating an enabling environment where women can actively lead efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV. Furthermore, initiatives that support the physical and mental well-being of mothers have the potential to positively influence the welfare, attitudes, and behaviors of their children, ultimately contributing to broader social transformation.

	
<p>Awareness session on women's body conducted by JOCV.</p>	<p>Women engaging in outdoor peer counselling activities</p>
	
<p>Women engaging in indoor peer counselling activities</p>	<p>Women taking body measurements for the first time in life supported by JOCV</p>

“I have never thought I could play any ball games, but today's sessions have awakened the hidden potential in me, I feel so empowered.”

■ Supporting Women's Access to Light (in Partnership with the Panasonic Group)

Orinie Village is located in a non-electrified area in Kajiado County. As a result, women face significant restrictions in their mobility and activities during nighttime. In response, and with support from the Panasonic Group, 100 solar lanterns were distributed to women and two health facilities in the village.

The Panasonic Group has been implementing a global initiative to bring “light” to non-electrified communities, where the lack of electricity and lighting perpetuates poverty and insecurity. By providing sustainable lighting solutions, the initiative aims to enhance the safety of women and children, broaden access to education, and improve health outcomes. The overarching goals of this project—ensuring safety and illuminating the future for women and girls—are deeply aligned with Panasonic's core mission and social responsibility values.

Recognizing this strong alignment, the Project team introduced its activities to Panasonic, which immediately committed to donating 100 solar lanterns. Within four months, the lanterns were delivered to

the Project’s counterpart organization, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), with Panasonic covering all associated costs, including international shipping.

Shortly thereafter, three Panasonic staff members visited Kenya and, in collaboration with NGEC and JICA, took part in distributing the lanterns. The recipients included women attending Project-supported literacy classes, members of the community-based survivor network, and women leaders championing local initiatives. In addition, six lanterns were provided to a local health clinic to improve maternal and emergency care in off-grid conditions.

	
<p>Representatives from Panasonic paid a visit to NGEC</p>	<p>Women received the solar lantern from the Panasonic Group</p>
	
<p>Donation Ceremony of Solar Lantern organized by Panasonic, JICA and NGEC</p>	<p>A woman using the solar lantern in her shop</p>

Between late February and early March 2025—approximately three months after the donation—a follow-up survey was conducted with 42 out of the 97 women who had received the solar lanterns. The objective was to assess how the lanterns were being used and their impact on the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence (GBV). The findings revealed that access to light through the solar lanterns had helped enhance women’s self-esteem, improve their income, and gradually strengthen their capacity to engage in GBV prevention and elimination efforts²⁰.

²⁰ The survey was conducted over three days on Monday 24 February, Monday 3 March and Thursday 6 March 2025. (Individual interviews (6 beneficiary women) Focus group discussions (36 beneficiary women in total) Community health officer (1)

The following are the impacts identified by this study.

a) The introduction of solar lanterns has increased the women's night-time activity time by an average of three hours. This additional time has enabled the women to devote an average of 50 minutes to self-learning.

With the introduction of solar lanterns, women in the village, who used to go to bed at 7-8 pm on average, have extended their night time activities to 10-11 pm, giving them more time for themselves and their children. With this additional time, women attending literacy classes spend on average 50 minutes each day on their own studies, which is increasing their learning effectiveness. A teacher in a literacy class said, "In the past, when we gave homework to the women, few of them would finish it, but now most of the women finish their homework, so the class is progressing faster".

b) Increased Study Time for Children and More Family Communication

Thanks to the stable source of light provided by the solar lanterns, children now have more time to study at night, and increased communication between mothers and their children has also been observed. Several women shared comments such as: "Since we go to bed later now, I can tell stories to my children by the light of the lantern." "I've started sharing traditional folktales from our village with my children." "Before bedtime, under the light, I spoke with my daughter about how dangerous FGM is for women."

The extended evening hours have given women a small but meaningful sense of time flexibility in their daily lives, allowing them to spend more quality time with their children. This change is likely contributing positively to the children's emotional well-being and educational development.

Moreover, the availability of light has supported improved communication within households. As one beneficiary shared: "Now that we have more added hours at night, we usually have time to have a conversation with my husband to discuss some of our domestic issues and how to resolve them. This has improved our relationship in the household."

c) Access to Light at Night is Enabling Women to Increase Their Income

With the light provided by solar lanterns, women have been able to engage in beadwork during the evening hours, and some have already started to increase their income. During focus group discussions, women noted: "It used to take me two days to complete one bracelet, but now I can finish small pieces in a single day by working at night." Another added, "My production speed has increased, and so has my income."

Two women running small businesses at local markets reported that prior to receiving solar lanterns, they were forced to close their stalls by 6 p.m. due to darkness. With access to lighting, they have now extended their business hours until 9 p.m., increasing their daily income by an average of 300 to 500 Kenyan Shillings.


This translates to an additional 6,000 to 10,000 shillings per month, which they are now using to pay for their children’s school fees, buy clothing, save in their groups, and expand their product range and stock.

Other women shared additional benefits of the solar lanterns such as “I used to pay 20 shillings to charge my phone, but now I can do it with the solar lantern and save that money.” “I used to spend around 450 shillings per week on kerosene, but with the lantern, I’ve been able to save that money and redirect it toward my children’s education and nutrition.”

d) Enhanced Protection for GBV Survivors

The solar lanterns donated by Panasonic are also being utilized at the village clinic. Since their distribution in late November 2024, night time medical services have been provided to 28 women over the span of three months. In a village lacking stable electricity, frequent power outages previously made it difficult to offer care during the night, often resulting in critical delays.

Today, four medical staff members are using the solar lanterns to confidently deliver services to women in need. In March 2025, for instance, two women subjected to domestic violence requested help during the night. Clinic staff responded by using the lanterns to reach their homes, provided treatment at the clinic, and accommodated them overnight for safety. One healthcare worker shared, “The solar lanterns have given us great confidence. They empower us as medical professionals to offer support services to survivors even late in the hours of the night.”

	
<p>Women and Children studying under solar lantern</p>	<p>Focused Group Discussion with women on the Impact of Solar Lantern</p>

In Kajiado County, while solar lanterns have begun to spread to some extent, the lanterns donated by Panasonic Group are significantly superior in brightness and lighting duration compared to locally available models. As a result, women have been able to perform household tasks more efficiently, creating more flexibility and time in their daily lives. This has contributed to improved mental well-being and enabled women to engage more actively in income-generating activities, which in turn is enhancing the health and welfare of their children.

Receiving the solar lanterns has also elevated the women's status within their households, fostering a greater sense of self-worth and confidence. With the ability to cook and carry out chores efficiently even after sunset, many women are now able to prepare dinner by the time their husbands expect it, leading to a noted reduction in domestic violence linked to delayed meals.

One of the beneficiaries of the solar lantern explained that: "I remember when we used to use the kerosene lamp, sometimes we did not have money to buy kerosene, and I would struggle to cook in the dark. My husband would beat me whenever he came home and find food not ready. It was unbearable, but the solar lantern has made it easy and saved me from the daily physical abuse."

This collaboration between the Panasonic Group and JICA has demonstrated that the integration of corporate products and services with JICA's distinctive approach to technical cooperation—thinking and acting together—can serve as a powerful strategy for accelerating the creation of communities where women can live in peace and safety. As we move forward, it is considered important to further strengthen such multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to advance sustainable and inclusive development.

■ Establishment of a Posho Mill (Maize Grinding Facility) in the Village

One of the most pressing needs raised by women during discussions at the Women's Forum was the establishment of a maize grinding facility (Posho Mill) within the village. Ugali, the community's staple food, requires maize to be milled. However, due to the absence of a local milling facility, women are forced to walk approximately 60 kilometers one way to access the nearest mill outside the village. These arduous journeys expose them to multiple risks, including violence and abuse.

As one woman leader shared: "We walk long distances to grind maize, and when we reach the posho mill, we often find long queues that delay us further. On the way, we are constantly at risk of abuse, and when we return home late, our husbands beat us and accuse us of infidelity. It is emotionally overwhelming for us."

Determined to change this reality, the women began holding repeated discussions, pooling their own resources to purchase a milling machine, and petitioning the village chief to allocate land for its installation. Although they have not yet raised the full amount needed, a female Member of Parliament from Kajiado County has expressed her support after learning about the initiative. Once the purchase of the machine is finalized, the Project plans to contribute to this community-led effort by covering part of the installation costs—such as fencing and cement work²¹.

²¹ Due to delays on the part of the women's group in the village, this support could not be implemented within the project

One women leader explained: “We walk long distance to grind maize and when we reach the posho mill we find long queues which make us take long. On our way we are always at risk of facing abuse and when we get home late our husbands always beat us and accuse us of infidelity. It is very emotionally outweighing on us”

Determined to change this reality, the women held repeated discussions, began pooling their own funds to purchase a milling machine, and took the initiative to petition the village chief to secure land for its installation. Although the full amount needed for the purchase has not yet been raised, a female Member of Parliament from Kajiado County has expressed support for the initiative after learning about it. Once the purchase of the milling machine is finalized, the project plans to support part of the installation costs—such as fencing and cement—as a contribution to this community-led effort.

2) Engaging Men in Shifting Attitudes and Behaviors at the Community Level

Eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) requires not only empowering women to break the silence and stand up against violence, but also transforming the attitudes and behaviors of men. GBV is deeply rooted in gender-based social norms, unequal socio-economic structures, and harmful cultural practices. Addressing these root causes necessitates that men recognize these issues and actively participate as agents of change.

In Orinie Village, however, men continue to dominate decision-making in all areas of community life as cultural, economic, and political “gatekeepers.” Deeply ingrained beliefs persist, such as “women are like children and lack capability” or “women are the property of men.” These attitudes, in turn, perpetuate both conscious and unconscious violence against women and girls.

To address this, the project has implemented a behavior change program targeting male leaders in Orinie Village. The aim is to encourage men to recognize harmful masculinity and unconscious gender biases and to take action toward the elimination of GBV. In implementing the program, GBV was redefined as a societal issue, rather than an individual problem, and participants were encouraged to understand its roots in structural inequalities. Alongside this, the program conveyed positive messages such as “You can be part of the change” and “Men, too, benefit from gender equality”, while delivering lectures and exercises to deepen understanding of the underlying causes, contributing factors, and impacts of GBV.

Particular emphasis was placed on how men’s use of power can significantly influence equity and sustainable development in the community, prompting in-depth discussions on what responsible leadership

should look like. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on the negative impacts of harmful masculinities—such as equating power and control with manhood or suppressing emotional expression—not only on women but also on men themselves, their families, and the wider community.

The program further supported each participant in developing a concrete action plan tailored to their local context, and provided ongoing, hands-on assistance to accompany them through the implementation process.

Training and activities conducted		
Activity	Contents	Date and time
Training (1) Gender training by project experts/CPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition and forms of GBV • Relationship between gender and violence • Impact of GBV on society • Lectures and exchange of views on the role played by men 	Aug 2024
Training (ii) Training by Male Engagement Specialist (consultant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of GBV, main forms (sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence) • Lecture and exchange of views on root causes (gender inequality, abuse of power, disregard for human rights) and drivers (harmful cultural practices, poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, poor policy implementation) of GBV • Social norms and creating social transformations: Discussion on harmful social norms in Maasai society (culture that regards women as 'children', limited educational opportunities for women, patriarchal power structures) • Discussion on dispelling misconceptions and myths about GBV (women's clothing causes sexual violence, FGM keeps women chaste, etc.) • How to practice positive masculinity to bring social change • Legal framework governing GBV • Reporting and referral pathways of GBV and how to support survivors based on survivor centered approach • Discussion on role of men and how men can be actively involved in addressing GBV in the community • Action plan developed 	26 - 27 November 2024
Follow-up activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions to check the progress of the action plan and discuss areas for improvement 	14 Jan 2025.

Through the series of trainings, it became evident that men in Orinie were gradually deepening their understanding of the root causes, contributing factors, and broader societal impacts of GBV. Prior to the training, many participants believed that “Some actions amounting to GBV is part of our culture and we do not consider them as crimes,” and some were unaware of the existence of laws prohibiting and penalizing GBV.

However, as the sessions progressed, participants began to show meaningful shifts in awareness and attitudes. Some of their reflections included: “I learned that not only physical or sexual violence, but also verbal abuse constitutes GBV” “I realized that restricting my wife’s movements or preventing her from working is also a form of GBV” “I understood that denying my daughter an education is GBV and robs her of her future potential” “I learnt the serious and life-threatening effects of FGM. I do not wish my daughter to go through that”

Participants also increasingly recognized that GBV is not merely a private matter affecting individual women, but a significant barrier to the economic and social development of families and communities. In particular, they came to understand how early pregnancy and the loss of educational opportunities for girls place financial strain on households and have long-term negative impacts on regional development—realizations that many described as eye-opening.

	
Training session for men on GBV	Men discussing the issues of GBV in the community
	
Men making a presentation on their discussions	Men taking actions to address GBV in the village

Based on the action plans developed during the training sessions, the following concrete actions by the male participants were observed after the completion of the training program.

Specific actions	
Action one.	Conduct awareness-raising activities on GBV at community gatherings (barazas), school events, weddings and other occasions.
Action two.	Organizing of GBV awareness-raising sessions for sand harvesters. (Attitudes have changed, with some men becoming more supportive of women's economic activities).
Action three.	Leaders of sand harvesters who participated in the training initiated an initiative to distribute part of the wages of the men who neglect their families to their wives.
New action plan ²²	
Plan 1	Establishment of a dialogue forum between men and women as well as intergenerational dialogue forums.
Plan 2	Establishment of dialogue forums between men of the same generation (peer counselling) to raise awareness and promote mutual learning to prevent GBV.
Plan 3	Conduct GBV awareness campaigns through sports events to promote dialogue and call to action aimed at impacting the youth segment

3) Training Religious Leaders as Key Actors in GBV Prevention

In Kajiado County, religious leaders hold significant influence. Beyond conveying religious teachings, they serve as community leaders and play an important role in addressing local social issues. For example, the county still practices a traditional dispute resolution system known as the “Kangaroo Court,” which bypasses formal legal procedures. Under this custom, cases of sexual violence are often “resolved” through reconciliation between the survivor and the perpetrator, allowing the perpetrator to avoid accountability. In many instances, survivors are instead blamed for “damaging the family’s honor” and face social punishment.

Kangaroo courts²³ also address issues such as land ownership, marriage, and family disputes. However, these informal and culturally embedded forums often lead to unjust outcomes—particularly for women and other socially vulnerable groups—due to the lack of proper evidence examination and the absence of legal safeguards. In many cases, survivors are not permitted to attend the sessions themselves; instead, they are represented by a male relative, such as a father or brother. As a result, their voices go unheard, and their perspectives are excluded, leading to serious miscarriages of justice. These courts are typically overseen by local community elders and religious leaders.

Given this context, raising awareness and influencing the behavior of religious leaders is regarded as a key strategy in addressing GBV. In collaboration with a consultant team dispatched by JICA, the project

²² The men are currently developing a new action plan.

²³ A Kangaroo court is an unofficial, informal tribunal in the community

conducted training sessions for 150 religious leaders from five villages in Kajiado County, including Orinie Village. The objective was to deepen their understanding of GBV and strengthen their capacity to respond effectively within their communities.

Outline of training

Item	Orinie village	Orberber	Impilo	Sagironi	Encorica
Dates	20-22 November 2024 (3 days)	6-8 Nov 2024 6-8 November (3 days)	13-15 November 2024 (3 days)	30 Oct 2024 1 Nov 2024 (3 days)	26-28 November 2024 (3 days)
Participants	30 persons	30 persons	30 persons	30 participants	30 participants
Objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To enable religious leaders to understand the importance of action towards the elimination of GBV and to play a role as an enlightener. ◆ To enable them to take appropriate action to support victims of GBV. 				
Program.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening address 2. Basic knowledge of GBV (definition, types and impact) 3. Relationship between religious values and GBV (biblical teachings and gender equality) 4. Emotional regulation and violence prevention 5. Importance of victim support and reporting (legal system and counselling techniques) 6. Review of harmful gender norms (FGM, child marriage, domestic violence) 7. Roles and responsibilities of religious leaders in responding to and preventing GBV victimization 8. Case studies and role-playing (practical response training) 9. Preparation of action plans 				

To assess changes in attitudes and behaviors, a simple pre- and post-training survey was conducted among participants during the training sessions. The results revealed that many religious leaders initially had a limited understanding of GBV and often underestimated its severity and prevalence. While many acknowledged that GBV is a crime, a significant number still believed that “disciplinary punishment is acceptable if a wife disobeys her husband.” Moreover, 80% of participants reported that when approached about GBV cases, their typical response was “mediation” or “prayer,” rather than referring survivors to law enforcement agencies or support services such as shelters.

In response, the training encouraged participants to reinterpret biblical texts and theological teachings through a gender lens, and to critically examine cultural and traditional norms. Sessions introduced key concepts such as gender equality, women’s rights, and human dignity from a Christian perspective, emphasizing the importance of building a faith-based culture that rejects all forms of violence. Practical exercises equipped participants with concrete tools to support GBV survivors more effectively. Biblical stories were also used to stimulate dialogue on cultural tendencies to blame survivors of sexual violence

and the harmful practice of reconciling such cases through forced marriage between the survivor and the perpetrator.

As a result, notable shifts in both awareness and practice were observed. One male participant who had previously insisted that “men are divinely ordained as heads of the household” later shared that he had come to understand the biblical notion of “mutual partnership.” The proportion of participants who believed that “religious teachings support gender equality” increased significantly—from 23% before the training to 83% afterward.

Similarly, understanding of economic violence, which had been poorly grasped prior to the sessions, improved substantially: 63% of participants came to recognize that restricting a partner’s economic activities also constitutes a form of violence. Furthermore, a post-training follow-up survey found that 70% of the religious leaders had begun incorporating GBV-related messages into their sermons, and referrals to survivor support services increased by an average of 30%—demonstrating tangible behavioral change.

This shift in awareness among religious leaders, and the integration of GBV messages into sermons, is expected to play a critical role in advancing the prevention and elimination of GBV. As part of this initiative, a training implementation manual was developed to support the scale-up and replication of the program under the leadership of local governments. (Annex 6: Training Manual for religious leaders)

Action plans submitted by religious leaders during the training

- | | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Promote gender equality in their own communities through preaching and education. |
| ✓ | Organize public debates to review harmful cultural norms. |
| ✓ | Establish safe spaces for victims. |
| ✓ | Establish a victimization response team at village level. |
| ✓ | Develop awareness-raising activities for young people. |
| ✓ | Provide psychosocial counselling to victims and link them to local economic self-reliance programmes. |
| ✓ | Make policy recommendations for strict enforcement of GBV-related laws. |
| ✓ | Promote the introduction of GBV education into religious curricula |
| ✓ | Establish a network among religious leaders to work on the elimination of GBV (regular meetings and exchange of views). |
| ✓ | Strengthen cooperation with county government and police (establishment of reporting system, expansion of support services) |

4) Community-Based Collaboration for GBV Elimination: Organizing Community Dialogues

In order to eliminate GBV, it is essential not only to empower women and transform men's attitudes and behaviors, but also to promote joint efforts between women and men in shaping local systems and structures. As part of the ongoing initiative to build a "GBV Free Smart Village" stakeholders in the village strongly emphasized the importance of establishing a space for dialogue between men and women. In response, the Project collaborated with the County Gender Department in Kajiado to support the organization of the village's first gender-inclusive community dialogue.

The initial dialogue began by dedicating time to listen to women's experiences and voices. This was followed by mixed-gender group work and discussions, aimed at developing a joint action plan for GBV prevention and elimination. Although there were initial concerns that women might refrain from speaking in front of men, the reality far exceeded expectations. Many women spoke out assertively, sharing powerful testimonies such as: "Many women suffer violence inside their homes." "Men are restricting women's freedom of movement." "GBV is the greatest challenge faced by women in our village."

They also advocated that "eliminating GBV is not just a women's issue. It is key to improving the well-being of entire families." Several women went further, calling on men to take specific actions: "Women should be allowed to attend literacy classes, training sessions, and participate in economic activities," and "Men should also share responsibilities in household chores and childrearing."

The sight of women—many of whom had initially struggled to speak up—confidently sharing their experiences and concerns was a powerful symbol of change. Their assertive voices clearly demonstrated the emergence of empowerment and leadership among the women in the community.

In response, male participants shared that they had "never received any training on GBV" before. However, many expressed being deeply shocked upon learning—for the first time—about the severe physical consequences of FGM (female genital mutilation) on women's bodies. Regarding physical violence against wives and the restriction of their economic activities or mobility, several men admitted, "We thought these were normal cultural practices," but acknowledged that learning these are forms of GBV—and that the Kenyan government prohibits such acts by law—prompted them to reexamine their own behavior.

Some men went on to report that they had begun sharing household responsibilities, such as fetching water, and had become more supportive of women's economic activities. Encouragingly, participants also proposed that "more men in the village should start practicing these changes." Following the discussion, participants were divided into three mixed-gender groups, and each group proceeded to develop action plans addressing various GBV-related challenges.

Action plans by local male and female residents and leaders

Group	Contents
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct awareness-raising activities for the younger generation (including issues related to HIV and AIDS) • Encourage women's participation in regular community meetings in the village and create opportunities for dialogue on GBV. • Establish volunteer groups to raise GBV awareness at schools and in the community • Organize awareness-raising seminars on FGM, child marriage and the abolition of domestic violence to the community
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct ongoing community dialogues (using regular community meeting places in the village) • Set up a community rescue team (including setting up a WhatsAppGroup) • Disseminate messages on GBV through the community WhatsApp groups.
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a community champion scheme for the elimination of GBV • Organize an education forum in the community on GBV prevention and elimination • Establish safe spaces within villages (utilise a room in a church or health clinic)

5) Organizing a School-Based Sports Event: “Strong Girls, Strong Kajiado”

Sports have been shown through numerous studies to be an effective means of enhancing self-esteem and fostering a sense of self-worth. Recognizing the potential of sports not only to prevent GBV but also to support the recovery and reintegration of survivors and shift societal attitudes, this project implemented an initiative focused on the empowerment of women and girls through sports.

In collaboration with the Kajiado County Department of Gender and the Department of Sports, the project organized a sports event titled “Strong Girls, Strong Kajiado! — A Sport Event to Empower Girls.” The event targeted approximately 80 girls—GBV survivors residing at the AIC Girls Boarding School and those living in county-run shelters.

With technical support from Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) specializing in sports development and youth protection, the event featured team sports such as volleyball, soccer, netball, and handball. In addition to the sports activities, a listening survey was conducted to better understand the reality of menstrual poverty faced by girls and young women.

Although the event faced challenges—such as difficulties in preparing lunch due to a power outage—the flexible response and skilled facilitation by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) enabled participants to fully engage in the activities. Many girls were visibly experiencing a sense of physical and emotional release through sports.

Follow-up interviews revealed that approximately 90% of the participating girls reported positive changes, such as “I made new friends,” “I was able to forget painful memories for a moment,” and “I gained confidence.” These responses suggest that the sports activities contributed to both emotional healing and psychological well-being. The creation of friendships through sports also showed potential for strengthening peer networks and support systems among survivors.

Moreover, one county official remarked, “I had never considered using sports as a means of GBV prevention and survivor support. As a county, we would like to strengthen such initiatives moving forward.” This highlights the event’s role in sparking policy interest among local authorities. County officials, parents, and community leaders were also invited to participate event, making the event a valuable platform for promoting girls’ empowerment and social inclusion through sports.

	
Awareness Session on GBV	Children playing sports with JOCV
	
GBV survivors participating in the Event	Girls playing a netball in the event

Although the “Smart Village Free from GBV” initiative was implemented over just one year, it has already demonstrated clear signs of behavioral change across the community—even in a village widely regarded as one of the most conservative in the country. This progress can be attributed to a dual strategy: empowering women to recognize and realize their potential, while simultaneously fostering organic, internalized shifts

in attitudes among men.

Women's empowerment efforts went beyond knowledge-building and were reinforced by practical interventions, including the introduction of energy-saving stoves and solar lanterns. These innovations helped reduce the burden of domestic labor while improving women's health, economic opportunities, self-esteem, and confidence. Notably, sports-based activities also emerged as a highly effective tool for enhancing both physical and psychological well-being.

A key success factor in engaging men was the strategic reframing of GBV as a structural societal issue, coupled with the delivery of positive and inclusive messages such as, "You can be part of the change." This approach helped reduce defensiveness and encouraged voluntary reflection and behavioral transformation. By highlighting the harmful impacts of toxic masculinity on individuals, families, and communities—and promoting dialogue around responsible and empathetic leadership—shifts in men's attitudes and values gradually began to take root.

Moreover, the program went beyond knowledge dissemination by supporting participants in developing practical action plans and providing hands-on follow-up support to facilitate implementation at the community level. This approach effectively translated learning into tangible action. As a result, there is growing recognition that GBV is not merely a private matter, but a significant barrier to both household and community development. An increasing number of community members now understand that everyday actions—such as verbal abuse, restricting mobility, or denying access to education and employment—also constitute forms of GBV.

On the other hand, the observed reduction in domestic violence appears to be largely symptomatic—addressing the effects of violence without fundamentally altering the underlying unequal gender relations. While the project has made notable progress in empowering women at the individual level, this has not yet translated into collective empowerment or strengthened group-level action. Similarly, shifts in men's understanding and behavior remain limited, indicating the need for deeper, more sustained engagement to address the root causes of GBV.

Moving forward, it is essential to both deepen the empowerment of women and sustain the internal attitudinal and behavioral shifts among men in order to realize a future free from gender-based violence (GBV). In communities where men continue to dominate decision-making culturally and economically, it is particularly important to cultivate women's agency in ways that are responsive to their lived experiences, while also engaging men as active allies and agents of change.

Equally crucial is the creation of safe and inclusive spaces where community members can reflect, engage in dialogue, and take collective action. Sustaining continuous community dialogue will be essential to

solidifying these early signs of change and preventing them from becoming short-lived. To ensure that these efforts take root across the broader community, it is important to respect and support community-led initiatives, while simultaneously expanding institutional and technical backing from county governments. This could include, for example, mandating village chiefs to convene regular “Women’s Forums” and gender-inclusive “Community Forums,” as well as promoting the active use of government-managed funds dedicated to advancing women’s empowerment.

2. Creating Schools that Take Action to Prevent and Eliminate GBV (Machakos County)

In Kenya, not only adult women but also children continue to experience GBV within their homes and communities. In this context, schools serve as critical spaces where children can seek help for the first time. In many cases, teachers are the first responders when students experience or witness violence. Moreover, schools are not only places for academic learning but also environments where children acquire social values and behavioral norms. Therefore, schools are expected to play a significant role in GBV prevention and awareness-raising.

Recognizing this, the project has worked over the past one year and a half in collaboration with the Machakos County Department of Education and eight schools to develop a model for “Schools Taking Action to Prevent and Eliminate GBV.”

The eight target schools

No.	Name of school	Type
1	Machakos Teachers Training College	Teacher training college
2	Kwanthanze Secondary School	Secondary/secondary school
3	Machakos Township Secondary School	Secondary/High School
4	Kyanguli Secondary School	Secondary/High School
5	Mumbuni Primary School	Primary/primary school
6	Machakos Baptist Primary School	Primary/primary school
7	Machakos Muslim Comprehensive School	Primary/primary school, Muslim school
8	Machakos School for the Deaf	Special schools for the Deaf (primary and secondary)

1) Training for Teachers and School Staff

The Project first organized a training program for teachers and school administrative staff, recognizing their critical role in safeguarding children. As individuals who interact with students daily, teachers are uniquely positioned to detect early signs of GBV through changes in students’ behavior or emotional expressions. For children experiencing fear or trauma, teachers are often the first trusted adults they turn to for help. Additionally, given their respected status in the community, teachers can play a pivotal role in engaging parents and mobilizing the wider community to prevent GBV and protect children.

The training covered various forms, causes, and impacts of GBV, along with practical guidance on appropriate reporting and referral mechanisms. The Project also facilitated discussions to identify school-specific challenges and supported the development of concrete action plans. Furthermore, teachers were empowered to conduct GBV awareness sessions targeting both students, other teachers

and parents. (Annex 7: Teacher Training on GBV- Program and Participant List)

	
Teachers training on case management	Teachers developing an action plan
	
Teachers developing an action plan to address GBV in School	Teacher Training on GBV Response

“I had never attended any training on GBV, this was my first training. It has enhanced my knowledge on GBV which I never had before. I am now confident to identify and manage GBV cases which are reported to me by learners”

2) Development of School Policies for GBV Elimination

Based on the series of workshops and training sessions described above, teachers in participating schools raised the need to establish school-specific policies to prevent and eliminate GBV. In some cases, teachers who had completed the training proactively took the lead in initiating the policy development process within their schools. In response to this momentum, the Project provided training and technical support to school principals and teachers to guide the formulation of anti-GBV school policies tailored to the needs of each school.

The training emphasized the importance of clearly identifying challenges and setting specific goals as the foundation for policy development. Participants were also given opportunities to discuss the basic structure of policy documents and the key components they should include. Additionally, training was conducted on monitoring and evaluation methods to help schools track policy implementation and make necessary

adjustments.





Over the course of three months, teachers worked on drafting the policy documents, and by March 2025, all eight participating schools had finalized their Anti-GBV School Policies. These policies were officially endorsed by the County Department of Education and formally launched on March 26, 2025.

A survey conducted at Mumbuni Primary school to assess the impact of the policy, the teacher who is the anti-GBV focal point indicated that: “The policy has been helpful to us by providing proper guidelines on how to manage GBV cases reported, so far, we have handled three cases by following the guidelines provided for in the policy. It makes the whole process effective and efficient.” (Annex 8: Anti-GBV School Policy)

3) Establishment of GBV Committees and Counseling Desks

Through a series of trainings and workshops conducted under this project, teachers have taken proactive steps to establish Anti-Gender-Based Violence (Anti-GBV) committees and set up counseling desks within their schools, aiming to facilitate early detection and response to cases of abuse among students. For instance, at Mumbuni Primary school, a room adjacent to the principal’s office has been refurbished as a counseling room where students can confidentially seek support. At Machakos Muslim Comprehensive Primary school, a “GBV Reporting Box” has also been installed in the school compound to provide students with a discreet and safe way to voice their concerns.

Moreover, many schools have begun actively integrating GBV-related topics into classroom lessons to enhance students’ understanding and awareness. As a result of these efforts, a tangible shift is emerging: students who previously felt unable to speak out are now coming forward to report their experiences to teachers. At Mumbuni Primary School, for instance, four girls reported incidents of sexual violence to their teachers over the past year. The teachers promptly reported these cases to the police, resulting in the arrest of all perpetrators. To support the survivors’ recovery, the school has also been providing regular counseling sessions that address both mental and physical well-being. In situations where students feel unsafe returning home, particularly when the perpetrator is a relative, the school refers them to safe shelters managed by NGOs. These shelters provide protection and support while allowing the learners to continue their education. Mumbuni Primary School has referred one such learner to a safe shelter, where she now resides while attending school.



	
Safe room at Mumbuni Primary School	Safe room at Machakos Muslim Comprehensive school
	
School Policy to prevent and respond to GBV	Speak up Box introduced in primary school

4) Setting up children's clubs for the elimination of GBV

Teachers have also been setting up club activities for the prevention and elimination of GBV in order to create safe and equal schools, while encouraging the proactive participation of pupils. For example, a song club on GBV prevention and girls's empowerment has been set up in Machakos Muslim Comprehensive school with 50 pupils. Club activities have also been set up to promote GBV prevention and elimination through drama, poems, sports, and painting, and children have been strengthening their actions for GBV prevention and elimination in a lively manner.

Name of school	Club activities	Number of people
Machakos Teachers Training College	-Drama club for GBV prevention and elimination -Sports club for raising awareness on GBV	30 students 40 students
Mumbuni Primary School	-Painting club to raise awareness on GBV -Songs and poems club to raise awareness on GBV	25 students 35 students
Machakos Muslim Primary School	-Song-making club to raise awareness on GBV prevention and elimination -Painting club to raise awareness on GBV through drawings Students' leadership council	72 members 29 students 12 students

Machakos Township Secondary School	-Drama and poem club to raise awareness on GBV	60 members
Machakos School for the Deaf	-Poem and drama club to create awareness on GBV	60 members
Machakos Baptist primary school	-Songs and poem club to create awareness on GBV	50 members
Kwanthanze Secondary School	-Drama club to create awareness on GBV	30 members
Kyanguli Secondary school	-Painting club to create awareness through drawings -Spoken word club to create awareness on GBV	20 students 20 members

	
Song club at Machakos Muslim Comprehensive School	Members of the Painting club at Machakos Muslim Comprehensive School

5) Launch of Karate Program for the Elimination of GBV

Since July 2023, a karate-based program for the elimination of Gender-Based Violence (Anti-GBV Karate Program) has been implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Machakos County, with the aim of promoting GBV prevention and response activities in schools and communities. This program aimed to cultivate individuals who can contribute to building a violence-free society by fostering physical and mental strength, self-esteem, and respect for others through the martial art of karate.

Sports, by nature, are a universal tool that transcends age, gender, and cultural background. In addition to promoting physical health, they support emotional development and social connection. Recognizing this potential, the project explored ways to harness sports as a means to address GBV at the community and school levels, and Karate was selected as the program's core sport for two main reasons. First, karate classes are increasingly popular among children in Kenya. Second, the presence of the Kenya Karate Federation's branch in Machakos County—with trained instructors actively engaged in local sessions—

provided an existing infrastructure that enabled the launch of a sustainable and locally grounded program with potential for expansion.

Importantly, karate is not merely a form of self-defense. It emphasizes values such as discipline, courtesy, self-control, and respect for others, embedding a philosophy that rejects violence. Guided by advice from Japanese karate experts, the program positioned karate as a tool for violence prevention—not by encouraging aggression, but by instilling peaceful values and self-protection skills.

As part of the program implementation, the project supported the purchase of mats required for karate practice and provided honoraria for instructors. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Machakos, a Training of Trainers (ToT) program was conducted over approximately eight months for around 50 students (28 girls and 22 boys aged 12 and above) from eight target schools. The training sessions were held every Saturday.

The curriculum included not only the basic movements of karate, such as stances, defensive techniques, and self-defense skills, but also provided opportunities for students to reflect on how to engage with others, understand the fundamentals of GBV, and consider what appropriate behavior looks like. Through role-plays and group discussions, participants explored practical topics such as: "What is violence?", "Why does GBV happen?", "What should one do when witnessing or experiencing violence?", and "Whom can we seek help from?"

In addition, in order to reinforce values and promote internalization of learning, the program also introduced the “Ten Dojo/ Karate Principles for the Elimination of GBV,” jointly developed with instructors and the Department of Education. These principles were recited at the beginning of each session, followed by brief discussions to reflect on their meaning. (Annex 9: Ten Karate Principles for the Elimination of GBV)

To ensure inclusivity, a parallel course with sign language interpretation was conducted for students with hearing impairments, offering tailored instruction and an accessible learning environment.

Anti-GBV Karate Program

Programme	Participants	Date of implementation	Location
TOT training	28 female students, 22 male students 50 students in total	5 July 2024 - 28 February 2025 (every Saturday from 10am to 12pm) The karate expert is currently supporting learners in their various schools during the week days.	Kwanthanze Secondary School
Program for children with hearing impairment	Female students 30 students, Male students 20, 50 in total	Ongoing from November 2024 to end of July 2025 (every Wednesday and Friday from 3pm to 5pm)	Meeting room at Machakos School for the Deaf



The success of the Anti-GBV Karate Program can be attributed not only to its innovative design but also to the strong instructional capacity and enthusiasm of the karate instructors, which contributed to the program's growing popularity within both schools and the surrounding community. The combination of skilled facilitation and engaging content resulted in high levels of student participation and motivation. Importantly, the program went beyond physical training; it fostered a strong sense of personal agency and commitment to social change among participants.

A post-training survey conducted at the conclusion of the Training of Trainers (ToT) program in February 2025 revealed that over 90% of students reported increased self-confidence. Qualitative responses

highlighted psychological and emotional growth, with participants noting improvements such as enhanced public speaking skills, emotional regulation, and self-worth. Many shared comments such as: “I can now speak in front of others,” “I have learned to control my emotions,” and “I feel that I have value.” These findings suggest that, in addition to strengthening their capacity to respond to violence and defend themselves, the program also supported inner development—fostering emotional stability and a greater sense of personal security.

Regarding GBV awareness, some students—particularly boys—reflected on their past behaviors. Several admitted that they used to hit girls, believing them to be weak. Through the program, however, they came to understand that such behavior constitutes violence. One student shared: “My friends and I used to beat girls and we were not disciplined. But after joining the karate program, my discipline improved. I even call out my friends not to beat girls and tell them that such acts amount to GBV.”

The motivational drivers for participation were equally telling. When asked why they joined the program, 78% of students responded that they wished to change societal norms in which women and girls are dominated and subjected to violence. Some girls noted “Because I want to change the reality of a society where women and girls are dominated and subjected to violence by men.” Among female participants, approximately 80% stated that learning self-defense empowered them not only to protect themselves but also to support the safety of other girls²⁴. This sense of solidarity and social responsibility reflects a notable shift from individual to collective empowerment.

Early signs of ripple effects are also emerging. Several students have independently established school- and community-based clubs to share the knowledge and skills gained through the program, demonstrating the potential for peer-to-peer learning and sustained community engagement.

Moreover, the program has played an important role in cultivating leadership among girls and challenging gender norms among boys. A significant number of male participants expressed shifting attitudes, acknowledging that “girls can be strong too” and “girls have the right to make their own choices.” These attitudinal changes indicate progress toward greater gender equity and represent a critical step toward the broader goal of preventing violence through cultural transformation.

(Impact for children with hearing impairments)

The program also conducted separate sessions for children with hearing impairments, and significant impacts have already begun to emerge. According to teachers, “Through this program, the children have learned to trust others,” “many have started to break their silence about abuse,” and “their self-esteem has improved, and their academic performance has also risen.”

Many of the children attending this school come from impoverished backgrounds and have experienced

²⁴ “By learning self-defense techniques, I can protect myself from risk and become someone who protects other girls.”

violence or abuse from family members or relatives, including sexual violence. Some have also suffered abuse in institutional care settings. These children had long been taught not to speak about their experiences. While some had previously signaled their suffering through behavior, they had rarely expressed it in words. However, since joining the karate classes, they have gradually started to open up to their teachers about their experiences of GBV.

One boy, for instance, had been silently struggling not only with his own suffering but also with the domestic violence his mother endured at the hands of his father. Through the program, he came to understand that what he and his mother were experiencing was a clear form of GBV. He approached his teacher for help. Shocked by the seriousness of the situation, the teacher reported the case to the police. As a result, the father was arrested, and the boy's mother was safely rescued.

In another case, four girls who had been sexually abused by relatives reported their experiences to teachers, leading to the arrest of the perpetrators by the police. These four survivors continue to participate in the program and are gradually rebuilding their sense of self-worth.

A particularly striking transformation was observed in an eight-year-old boy who grew up in a slum. Due to prolonged exposure to various forms of violence, he had become emotionally unstable and was known as a "troubled child" who frequently got into fights and could not stay still even for a moment in class. However, after joining the karate sessions, his behavior changed significantly—he became more focused during lessons and his academic performance improved.

At this school, the "Ten Dojo/Karate Principles for the Elimination of GBV" are not only used in the karate classes but also integrated into daily classroom instruction. Students recite them every day using sign language. Through these initiatives, even students who are not enrolled in the karate program have begun to deepen their understanding of GBV.

Results of interviews (excerpts from participants' comments)

- 'In this country, women are perceived by society as 'weak'. And many are harassed and sexually discriminated against. I participated in this programme because I wanted to change these social attitudes. Now I feel that I am stronger. I used to lose my temper over many things, but now I am able to control my emotions.
- 'Since I started karate, my perspective in life has broadened. I feel I have a different perspective now. I feel that my respect for others and my own mind has made me stronger. (Margaret, 20, student at teacher training school)
- I have learnt that it is wrong to fight with force. I have always been involved in fights, but since I started karate I know that it is wrong to use physical force to overpower an opponent."
- "Now I know that girls and boys can be equally strong and that violence is not strength.' (17-year-old, male pupil)
- 'I took part because I wanted to learn self-defence techniques. Since I started karate, I have become more respectful of myself and others. Now I have the courage to intervene without being silent if someone is being bullied or violated at school." (14-year-old, female pupil)

- 'I feel stronger now that I have the strength to defend myself. I used to be afraid of being approached or chilled by boys on the way to school. I always ran away. But now I am not afraid anymore. Even if something like that happens now, I walk home slowly and with a lot of time to spare (without being scared)' (12-year-old).
- 'My classmates know that I am learning karate. Because of this, the boys who used to bully the girls in my class are now too scared to come near me. But some of the other boys ask me to teach them karate, so I demonstrate it in the classroom' (14-year-old).
- 'There is a lot of GBV happening in my area. The village head is a good man and he raises a lot of awareness and helps those affected. I respect him a lot. I joined the programme because I want to help this village chief and take action to eliminate GBV in my community as much as possible (18-year-old male student, Kantanze)
- I have no father or mother. My mother left home. I don't know where my father is. Now I live with my grandmother. My grandmother is very supportive of me learning karate. She always says that it is important for girls to be strong too. In this country, girls are victims of all kinds of violence. Fortunately, I have not experienced such things, but I want to be a person who can help women who are going through such things so that they don't have to go through such hardships.
- "Karate has taught me discipline, I used to be a very undisciplined boy at school but not any more. I am now very respectful to my teacher and fellow learners."
- Since I joined the karate program and I learnt that fighting is bad, I tell my friends not to fight nor tease girls since that is abusing them."
- Ever since our learners joined the karate program, the girls have become very confident and they express themselves better and with courage compared to before. It is very impressive!

The Training of Trainers (ToT) program under this project officially concluded at the end of February 2025. However, the initiative continues on a voluntary basis through the collaborative efforts of the Machakos County Department of Education, the Karate Association, and parents of the participating students. Looking ahead, it is expected that the county government will integrate GBV prevention perspectives not only into karate but also into other sports activities, thereby expanding the reach of such initiatives across the wider community²⁵.

²⁵ Due to the late start of the programme for children with hearing impairments, the residual budget was used to continue the said programme until August, the official closing date of this project.



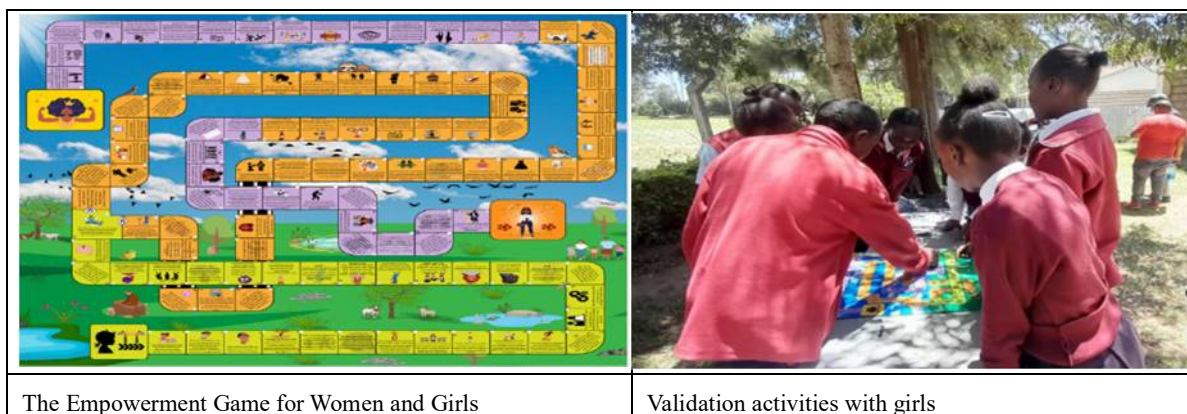
6) Learning About GBV Through Games: Developing the “Life Game”

To broaden understanding of the gender-based challenges and GBV risks that women and girls face throughout their lives—as well as how to respond to them—this project collaborated with the Ministry of Education in Machakos and eight schools to develop an educational board game titled “LIFT”

The game divides a girl’s life into three key stages—childhood, adolescence, and adulthood—and introduces players to the challenges and risks that women and girls may encounter at each stage. These include gender-based division of labor, child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), menstruation-related stigma, sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic violence, and gender discrimination. The game is designed to help players learn about these issues in an engaging and accessible way. Furthermore, the game incorporates scenarios that highlight the role of adults surrounding girls—such as teachers, parents, government officials, and relatives—and encourages supportive behaviors and responses. This perspective was deliberately integrated into the game’s design to promote positive social norms.

To ensure that the game serves as a learning tool not only for children but also for families and community members, the development process involved multiple rounds of consultations and pilot testing with teachers, students, and local stakeholders. The educational board game was completed in March 2025 and was unveiled for the first time during a “Knowledge and Lessons Learned Sharing Workshop” co-hosted with the County Department of Education. At the workshop, participants—including children, teachers, and local stakeholders—had the opportunity to play the game themselves.

While the game was praised for its strong educational content with positive feedback as a “learning tool that combines fun with education”, it still lacks a certain level of excitement as a game. Moving forward, it is hoped that further testing and user feedback will guide the refinement of this tool and inspire the development of similar, more engaging and effective educational materials.



7) Knowledge and Lessons Learned Sharing Workshop

On March 26, 2025, a workshop was held to share the process, insights, lessons learned, and achievements from the development of the "School Model to take Action Against GBV" implemented in Machakos County. The aim was to disseminate these experiences to teachers, government officials, and students from other schools within the county.

Approximately 200 stakeholders from across the county participated in the workshop, which was also attended by the Chairperson and Commissioners of NGEK. By bringing together actors from both within and beyond the county, the workshop served as a valuable platform for demonstrating the effectiveness of school-based GBV prevention efforts through the sharing of practical experiences and outcomes.

The workshop was featured by Citizen TV, one of Kenya’s leading media outlets, and was broadcast nationwide. In addition, the event was covered in an article published on the Kenya News digital platform. This media coverage significantly raised public awareness of the initiative, marking an important step toward expanding similar approaches to other regions and enhancing policy-level support. Schools play a vital role in the elimination of GBV. Moving forward, it is essential to promote approaches that position schools not merely as educational institutions, but as critical entry points for transforming social norms and preventing GBV at its roots, starting with the younger generation.



School policy on prevention and response to GBV launched at the workshop



Learners from the song club presenting a song on the elimination of GBV



Karate learners showcasing their skills



Learners playing the life board game 'LIFT'

3. Promoting businesses that contribute to the elimination of GBV

Given the severity of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Kenya, it is crucial for stakeholders across various sectors—including private companies, social entrepreneurs, investors, financial institutions, students, civil society actors, and development practitioners—to deepen their understanding of the current status of GBV, its underlying causes, and its social and economic impacts. Moreover, it is essential that these actors strengthen their collaboration and engage in dynamic initiatives based on innovative ideas and approaches that contribute to the prevention and elimination of GBV.

To this end, the project had worked in partnership with the Nairobi County Government and the JICA's Technical Cooperation Project on Enhancing the Competitiveness of Kenyan Enterprises to raise awareness and actions among private sector stakeholders. These efforts aimed to stimulate private-sector-led action in the fight against GBV.

1) Business Idea Marath on Elimination of GBV (Ideathon)

To raise awareness and promote action among private companies, social entrepreneurs, students, civil society organizations, development practitioners, the Project organized an “Ideathon” with the aim of deepening participants’ understanding of GBV and encouraging the development of solutions.

Held as a build up activity for the International Women’s Day, the two-day Ideathon took place on March 7–8, 2023, and was designed to combine knowledge-building with solution-oriented innovation. The event was structured in two distinct parts. The first focused on deepening participants’ understanding of gender-based violence (GBV), its current realities, and effective response strategies. A panel discussion featuring domestic experts and frontline service providers highlighted the structural drivers of GBV—such as the lack of safe and accessible transportation for women and girls, limited access to menstrual hygiene products, and the absence of GBV-specific education in schools. These discussions were intended to foster empathy, challenge assumptions, and provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the issue. In the second part, participants were then encouraged to collaboratively explore business ideas that could contribute to the elimination of GBV.

The event brought together over 300 participants across the two days, generating active discussion and networking. A wide range of innovative business ideas were proposed, including the development of mobile applications for survivors to seek emergency support and initiatives aimed at promoting economic empowerment for GBV survivors.

Programme overview

Date and time	7 and 8 March 2024
Venue	Daystar University (in Nairobi. (Co-organiser)
Objectives	<p>(1) To increase understanding of the background, nature and impact of GBV among private sector companies, entrepreneurs, investors, financial institutions, government officials, students and development business actors from diverse sectors operating in Kenya.</p> <p>(2) Collaboration between service providers working on the elimination of GBV in Kenya and the private sector, social entrepreneurs, investors, financial institutions, universities, local authorities, development business actors, etc. is strengthened, and concrete business proposals for the prevention of GBV, protection of victims and promotion of self-reliance and social reintegration from the perspective of the parties concerned are be formulated.</p>
First day	<p>1) Opening Speech (by Mr Hayashi, Deputy Director General, JICA, NGEC Commissioner)</p> <p>2) Screening of a short video made for this project (actual situation of GBV and business possibilities)</p> <p>3) Lecture presentation (by Mr. Kubota) on the current situation of GBV, its causes and impacts, and business in the world</p> <p>4) Panel discussion by Kenyan experts on "Business potential for the elimination of GBV".</p> <p>✓ Ms Naomi Mwala, President, Floan Initiative (NGO) 'The reality of GBV in the transport sector, and the initiatives needed'</p> <p>✓ Ms Alice Onsaligo Programme Officer, Zana Africa (NGO) 'The reality of menstrual poverty among young women, necessary initiatives'</p> <p>✓ Alberta Wambua, Director, GVRC (Gender Based Violence Recovery Support Centre) 'What we see through shelter operations, challenges and needed responses'</p> <p>✓ David Mania, Head of Business, Performeter 'Women's experiences in the dairy sector in Kaziad province'</p> <p>5) Presentation and selection of business ideas</p> <p>A total of 28 participants (including existing entrepreneurs) presented their GBV business ideas, which they had previously developed. Based on the voting by the participants, 10 promising ideas were selected and the groups were formed.</p>
Day 2	<p>6) Group work (each group discusses its business idea and prepares a presentation. The secretariat will give advice on the necessary points to be considered for business development.)</p> <p>7) Presentation and judging of ideas (Presentation of ideas and judging (first drafts of business ideas by each group are presented. The organisers (JICA, universities, NGEC (National Gender Equality Commission) and people involved in entrepreneurship support will conduct screening and select the top three groups).</p>




The top three winning business groups in the ideathon are as follows

Prize-winning	Business	Idea initiative
First prize	Proposal for a mobile app to provide GBV awareness materials to drivers and authenticate those who have taken the course in order to prevent GBV in the transport sector (note: sexual offences are common when using motorbike taxis). The aim is to generate revenue through contracts with the motorbike and taxi industry, etc.	KINGA
2nd prize.	Proposed platform to provide online medical care and counselling to survivors.	K-LINK Company
3rd prize	Proposed the development of a mobile app that enables 24-hour reporting of GBV cases and provides legal support, psychological care services and referrals to support NGOs.	Sauti Salama

This “Ideathon” served as a meaningful initiative by introducing a novel perspective to Kenya’s business community and GBV stakeholders—namely, the idea of addressing GBV through business solutions. It marked an important step in shifting the dialogue toward private sector engagement in tackling GBV. Many participants shared that the event inspired a sense of personal responsibility, with comments such as, “This event made me realize that I need to take action,” and “The idea of solving GBV issues through business is innovative—I now see the need to strengthen partnerships with the business sector.” These reflections suggest that the “Ideathon” successfully fostered new awareness of the intersection between business and social problem-solving.

Given that business-oriented GBV events are still rare even globally, the innovation of this approach drew considerable attention from local media and contributed to increased visibility for JICA’s efforts in Kenya. Moreover, the involvement of a diverse group of Japanese stakeholders—including JICA’s private sector development experts, University Students, and Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV)—enhanced mutual learning and opened up new possibilities for collaboration on gender-related issues within JICA’s programs.

On the other hand, the Ideathon revealed that understanding of GBV among business actors was more limited than initially expected. Conversely, many participants who were deeply interested in GBV issues lacked a strong business mindset. Their proposals often leaned toward traditional, non-profit approaches—such as economic empowerment support for women—without clear plans for revenue generation or sustainability. This highlighted the need to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of those working on GBV issues and to build stronger linkages between the social and business sectors. Moving forward, more targeted efforts will be needed to foster business models that are not only socially impactful but also financially viable in the context of GBV prevention and response.

	
Participants discussing Business Idea to address GBV (1)	Participants discussing Business Idea to address GBV (2)
	
Business Idea Presentation	A first Prize Winner of Business Idea

2) Business Idea Contest: Innovate Against GBV

Building on the experience of the earlier “Ideathon”, a business idea contest titled “Innovate Against GBV” was launched in August 2024. This initiative was organized in collaboration with JICA’s technical cooperation project on Enhancing the Competitiveness of Kenyan Enterprises, the Nairobi County Government, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the JICA Kenya Office. The contest aimed to identify promising and concrete business models that contribute to the prevention of GBV, as well as the protection, empowerment, and reintegration of survivors.

The call for applications opened on August 26, 2024, and within one month, approximately 180 companies applied. After a rigorous document review and interview process, 10 companies were selected. These finalists received six weeks of structured support covering essential business skills such as business planning, market research, fundraising strategies, and marketing techniques. They also benefited from mentorship and one-on-one coaching by experienced entrepreneurs and subject-matter experts, with a focus

on building practical and sustainable businesses that address GBV.

As the culmination of this initiative, a pitch event was held on December 5, 2024, with sponsorship from Trade Development Bank, Unicharm, Rohto Pharmaceutical, Women's World Banking, Equity Bank Foundation, and Safaricom. The event was attended by over 140 participants, including gender experts, investors, support organizations, and corporate representatives. It served as a powerful platform to showcase the potential of business in addressing GBV, while also offering participating enterprises valuable exposure and networking opportunities that could lead to business expansion and investment.

Following the presentations, judges from JICA, Women's World Banking, Safaricom, and the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) selected the top three companies. JICA announced that these companies would receive Proof of Concept (PoC) funding and support to further test and scale their business models and social impact. In addition, Unicharm awarded a special prize to a company working on menstrual poverty, providing product donations to support their cause. Rohto Pharmaceutical also gifted their products to the top three companies in recognition of their efforts. Women's World Banking and Equity Bank Foundation further committed to providing follow-up mentorship sessions for all pitching entrepreneurs to support the continued growth and sustainability of their businesses.

10 companies that took to the stage for the business idea competition

Business name	Outline	Progress
MOMA Renewable Energy (1st prize)	This business aims to solve both environmental and social problems: the lack of clean cooking fuel and the economic vulnerability of GBV survivors. Specifically, it has created and operates a system where women survivors of GBV produce and sell biofuel made from agricultural waste. This biofuel is used by the women as a clean cooking fuel that can replace firewood and charcoal. At the same time, it provides income and job opportunities for women survivors. Currently, the company has a sales agency agreement with 12 GBV survivors, and sales and publicity activities are underway in the community while working on empowering these women.	4,500 people already use the company's biofuels and 11 GBV survivors are currently employed.
CONNECT-Her (2nd prize)	A business that aims to provide GBV survivors with safe and continuous employment opportunities through a matching app platform for housekeeping and cleaning services. It aims to develop and promote a two-way beneficial system that guarantees the quality and safety of employment and also provides service users with quality housekeeping support.	Training for survivors has been provided to over 300 people. App under development.

Klinik Telehealth (3rd prize)	Developed an online support app to create an environment where GBV survivors can receive medical and psychosocial support (anonymously and securely). The app provides services such as online consultations with doctors, drug prescriptions, tests and counselling, as well as ambulance dispatch in case of emergencies. The aim is to create a system that allows survivors to smoothly access the support and information they need while minimizing contact with the outside world.	The app has been developed. Negotiations have started with more than 51 partners organizations for collaboration.
Mars Agrofarm	The business aims to improve the working environment for women in the agricultural sector and to stimulate women-led businesses in the distribution of agricultural products. It develops and sells agricultural equipment that takes into account the physical characteristics of women and their working environment, and provides multifunctional kiosks that can be used as sales points for agricultural products. The kiosk is planned to be equipped with solar lighting and a space design that allows mothers with children to work in peace. The kiosks are also projected to have an alarm button which women can press in case they are at risk of facing abuse.	Prototype under development.
Data Lock / e-Glow	In response to the current situation where women's GBV risk when travelling is a barrier to employment, education and business, the company offers a service where women can rent or purchase an e-scooter equipped with real-time location tracking and emergency notification functions. The project aims to increase women's income and promote their economic empowerment by providing them with a safe means of transport.	In coordination with domestic banks and investors. Plans to develop the project in fishing village areas in the country.
SafeWork App	Developed an app that allows survivors to report and consult anonymously and safely in order to solve the issue of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation in humanitarian settings. The app also includes educational content on GBV prevention for humanitarian workers and information on other support agencies accessible to victims. It is characterised by the fact that it is secured by de-tracking device information.	Plans to scale up to large humanitarian organisations, currently in testing phase.
Residence Technologies.	The business develops and provides a smart address system using AI and big data to address the current situation where emergency response to GBV survivors and other damage is delayed in areas where accurate GPS addresses do not exist. (The system integrates GPS location data, topographical data and existing public infrastructure information,	More than 2,000 people have registered

	and assigns unique 'smart address codes' to places where there is no actual address.) This allows victims to share their exact current location, enabling rapid rescue, medical and police response. In addition, the system is expected to be applied in a wide range of fields other than emergency response, such as home delivery business and material support, as it is designed to protect personal data, allowing safe access to various services while maintaining anonymity.	
Amicus	In view of the current situation where lack of knowledge about GBV and one's own legal rights leads to aggravated damage and delayed access to relief, a multi-lingual AI chatbot is used to provide information and educational support on the law. This tool, which can be accessed anytime, anywhere, aims to help affected parties understand their own situation at an early stage, leading to appropriate support.	Currently working with CBOs and legal experts in 14 provinces, with plans to expand to other legal issues beyond GBV.
Kuza Freezer	Based on the reality of economic exploitation of women fishermen, the business promotes the development and marketing of solar freezers for women fishermen. The aim is to improve market access and price bargaining power for women fishers by providing an environment where fish can be stored fresh in areas without electricity, using solar energy-based refrigeration technology. This business initiative aims to achieve economic empowerment of women in the fisheries sector, while also contributing to environmental sustainability in terms of reducing food loss and promoting clean energy.	850 women are currently using the company's products.
Heels4Pads.	A business model based on the barter of heels and sanitary products has been developed to help GBV-affected women and girls become financially independent and regain their dignity. The initiative aims to promote a circular business model whereby heeled shoes that are no longer needed in urban areas are collected, and sanitary products are purchased and provided with part of the proceeds from the processing and sale of these shoes.	Skills training for women is underway.

Annex 10: Business Idea Contest- 10 business cohort presentations

3) Proof of Concept (PoC) Support for the Top Three Companies

To support the establishment and scale-up of the winning business models from the Innovate Against GBV contest, Proof of Concept (PoC) support was provided to the top three companies between January and March 2025. The specific areas of support are outlined below.

Name of company	Outline of POC	Outcome
MOMA Renewable Energy.	<p>Supported the following initiatives to create employment for GBV survivors and establish sustainable biofuel businesses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Initiatives to establish and improve biofuel production sites. 2) Training and employing 12 GBV-affected women and testing a sales model through mobile marketing 3) Market a new product (livestock feed) and check the evaluation of the response 	<p>Improved income for affected women, restoration of trust within the community and expansion of sales channels through diversification of products</p>
Connect Her	<p>Support the following initiatives to ensure women's safety and create job opportunities in domestic and care work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Test operation of digital platforms 2) Conduct training for service providers (work ethics) 3) Piloting and collecting feedback on safety features such as emergency buttons and guaranteed rewards. 	<p>Establishment of an initial model of a safe working system for women, with several corporate contracts expected.</p>
Klinik Telehealth	<p>Support for the following initiatives to establish a mechanism for GBV victims to access medical and psychological support anonymously and quickly.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Development and piloting of WhatsApp-based AI chatbots (consultation, referral, education) 2) Collaboration with local CBOs (community-based organisations) to test a real-time consultation and referral flow 3) Introduction of anonymity and non-traceability technology to protect victims' privacy. 	<p>Confirmation of use results in several regions. Scalable as a model for cooperation between healthcare x technology.</p>

Annex 11 Final Report from Growth Africa

The concept and implementation of promoting businesses that contribute to the elimination of GBV gained widespread attention as an innovative approach. It was featured in multiple national media outlets and drew significant interest from stakeholders working on GBV prevention and response across Kenya. The most notable achievement of this initiative, however, lies in its clear demonstration that startups can actively

integrate a critical social issue like GBV into their business models—contributing not only to prevention and survivor protection, but also to the broader transformation toward a society that does not tolerate GBV.

This initiative, implemented in collaboration with a diverse range of domestic and international partners—including local universities and government agencies, Trade Development Bank, Japanese companies such as Unicharm and Rohto Pharmaceutical, Women’s World Banking, Equity Bank Foundation, and Safaricom—also played a catalytic role in supporting the growth of the participating businesses. Throughout the program, participating enterprises deepened their understanding of GBV issues, refined their business models, and gained access to individualized guidance and workshops from government agencies and organizations such as Safaricom, Women’s World Banking, and Equity Bank. These opportunities helped them to enhance profitability, identify new market opportunities, and accelerate actions toward scaling their impact.

On the other hand, two major challenges emerged: difficulties in fundraising and the limited public awareness of GBV as a business issue. The concept of addressing GBV through business has not yet gained mainstream recognition in Kenya, and with few proven revenue models in this space, investors tend to remain cautious.

Moving forward, it will be essential to raise public and investor awareness by showcasing successful cases through media outreach, while also providing continuous support to the selected companies in areas such as mentoring, fundraising, market entry strategies, and investor engagement. Promoting the understanding that GBV can and should be addressed as a business challenge—and encouraging action toward its resolution—will be key to sustaining and scaling impact.

Beyond continuing similar initiatives, it will also be important to advocate for the establishment of dedicated funds or impact investment programs focused specifically on GBV, in collaboration with the government and other development partners. Promoting businesses for the elimination of GBV is not simply about supporting startups—it is about generating a broader movement alongside entrepreneurs and activists who are tackling one of the most pressing social issues of our time. It is critical to build an environment where more startups and private sector actors feel empowered to engage with this issue and take concrete action toward a violence-free society. Based on the insights gained through this contest, JICA is also expected to scale up this innovative approach of “addressing GBV through business” to other African countries.



A Cohort presenting her business plan



A PR material developed for the Pitch Day



Judges from Equity Bank, Safaricom and GBV sector working group in Kenya



A cohort presenting his business plan



10 Cohorts participated in the Business Idea Contest



The first prize winner

IV Other activities

1) Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) Meetings

As part of project implementation, weekly coordination meetings were held every Tuesday afternoon with the counterpart (CP), and a formal Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meeting was organized once a year. These JCC meetings served as a platform to share an overview of the project, progress updates, future plans, as well as challenges and lessons learned with all key stakeholders.

JCC meetings held

Date and time	Contents	Participants
First JCC meeting (28 June 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address by NGECH Chairperson and JICA Office Director • Explanation on JICA's international cooperation (JICA Office Deputy Director) • Explanation on project overview (Mr Kubota) • Discussion on target areas • Introduction of CP members 	NGECH Chair, Vice-Chair, Commissioner, Program Director, Deputy Director, Director of Communications, Deputy Director, Research Officer, Women and Gender Division staff, JICA Office Director, Deputy Director, person in charge, others (15 in total)
Second JCC meeting (14 May 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address by NGECH Chairperson and JICA Office Director • Presentation on the initiatives for 2023 (NGECH CP) • Presentations by counterparts from the three prefectures (activities, progress and challenges in each region) • Q&A session • Action plan for FY2024 (Kubota) 	NGECH Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Commissioner (Director), Program Director (CP Director), Deputy Director, Director of Law and Justice Division, Director of Women and Gender Division, staff, NGO officials, CPs from Machakos, Kajiado and Nairobi Provinces, Ministry of Gender, JICA Office Director and contact persons (35 in total)
Third JCC meeting (24 April 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address by NGECH Chairperson and JICA Office Director 	NGECH Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Commissioner

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts, activities and results of this project (NGEC-JICA) • Presentations by counterparts from the three prefectures (activities, progress and challenges in each region) • Q&A session • Future plans/next projects 	(Director), Program Director (CP Director), Deputy Director, Director of Law and Justice Division, Director of Women and Gender Division, staff, CPs in Machakos, Kajiado and Nairobi counties, Ministry of Gender, JICA Office Director and contact persons (35 in total)
--	---	--

2) Advocacy Visits to Senior Officials of County Governments

In April 2024, together with the Chairperson and Commissioners of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and key counterparts of the project, advocacy visits were conducted to Kajiado and Machakos Counties—the main target areas of the initiative. The purpose of the visits was to directly advocate for stronger efforts to eliminate Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and to explain the project’s objectives and specific activities to county governors, County Executive Commissioners (senior administrators seconded from the national government), and representatives of key institutions within each county.

Although direct meetings with the governors could not be arranged, meaningful discussions were held with the County Executive Commissioners and representatives from relevant ministries and departments. These exchanges helped deepen their understanding of the GBV situation on the ground, local challenges, and the significance of the project’s approach and interventions. Officials expressed strong appreciation for the project, describing it as both innovative and practical—an initiative that meaningfully complements existing efforts in the counties.

Clear expressions of support and willingness to enhance multi-agency collaboration in the fight against GBV were also received. The opportunity to conduct these advocacy visits jointly with NGEC’s leadership helped solidify relationships with local governments and laid the groundwork for promoting locally rooted, sustainable GBV interventions under the leadership of county authorities. It also served as a strategic step in strengthening advocacy toward local governments in a more effective and impactful manner.



3) Gender Training for Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs)

On August 4, 2023, a full-day training session was conducted for approximately 30 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) working across Kenya, with the aim of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The training sought to deepen participants' understanding of why gender equality matters and how to integrate a gender perspective into their respective areas of activity.

The workshop used participatory methods to explore the challenges and everyday realities faced by women and girls in Kenya. Through interactive exercises, participants reflected on practical ways to address gender issues in their respective fields. During the training, some participants admitted they had “never looked at society through a gender lens before” and initially struggled to grasp the complexities of gender issues. However, many JOCVs expressed strong interest in the topic, and numerous questions were raised after the session—demonstrating a high level of engagement and concern among the younger generation.

Following the training, the project made efforts to involve JOCVs in field activities wherever possible. These opportunities enabled volunteers to hear directly from women and girls, and to engage in local initiatives addressing GBV and related challenges. Their active involvement in the community became a source of motivation and learning for both local government officials and residents, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Working alongside JOCVs has proven to be a catalyst for social awareness and attitudinal change at the community level. It has also introduced new perspectives and energy into efforts to promote gender equality

and prevent GBV. Moving forward, strengthening gender training for JOCVs and expanding their involvement in gender-related activities will be key to advancing gender mainstreaming within JICA’s programs and the broader field of international cooperation.

	
JOCV training on Gender	JOCV participating the Project activities

4) GBV Training and Field Visit for Students from Tokyo University of Agriculture

On September 2, 2024, a training program was conducted for 20 students from Tokyo University of Agriculture to deepen their understanding of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The program began with a lecture in Kajiado County covering the fundamentals of GBV, followed by a guided visit to the Kajiado GBV Recovery Centre (GBVRC) established in the county.

The students then visited Orinie Village, a community actively promoting the concept of a “GBV-Free Smart Village.” There, they engaged in dialogue with local women, offering an opportunity to hear directly about the challenges faced by women and girls and to better understand the local realities of GBV. In this session, while the students were initially attentive during the lecture and took notes diligently, they were relatively quiet and hesitant to ask questions. However, after engaging with the candid testimonies and lived experiences of the women in Orinie, a clear shift in their demeanor was observed. Many students began asking thoughtful questions and demonstrating a much deeper level of curiosity and concern about the issue of GBV. This transformation underscored the powerful impact of direct, on-the-ground learning.

The training underscored the importance of experiential education in development studies—particularly the value of allowing participants to directly observe field realities and engage in dialogue with those affected. Such immersive learning experiences not only deepen understanding but also foster empathy and a stronger sense of social responsibility. To inspire younger generations to take active roles in addressing global social challenges, it would be essential to continue offering opportunities that connect them with real-world contexts and the voices of those on the front lines.

Program overview

Date and time	2 September 2024
Participants.	20 Tokyo University of Agriculture students (1st to 4th year university students)
Destination	Kajiado County
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courtesy visit to the County Executive Committee Member for Gender , Kajiado County • Lecture "Current situation and challenges of GBV in Kenya and necessary initiatives" • Visit to Gender Based Violence Recovery Support Centre (GBVRC) in Kajiado County • Exchange workshop with women in the village of Orinie, Kajiado county(to learn about their experiences) • Observation of women's kitchen garden initiatives

	
Students in Orinie Village	Students at GBVRC in Kajiado

5) Information Sharing and Awareness Sessions with Chamber of Commerce and Panasonic Group

On June 26, 2024, a presentation was delivered to members of the Chamber of Commerce in Kenya to promote awareness and action on Gender-Based Violence (GBV). A similar session was later held on December 4, 2024, for approximately 100 employees of the Panasonic Group. Both sessions were conducted online.

During the presentation to the Chamber of Commerce, there was no immediate response from the participants, prompting reflection on how best to engage private sector actors in discussions on GBV. However, several participants later reached out individually, revealing that there was indeed interest and

concern among some members, albeit not immediately visible during the session.

In contrast, the response from the Panasonic Group was overwhelmingly positive. Many employees expressed a strong desire to take action—both professionally and personally—to help eliminate GBV. Numerous messages of support and commitment were shared following the session.

As the engagement of private sector actors is essential for the elimination of GBV, it is clear that continued awareness-raising and education efforts are needed. Ongoing dialogue, even if met with silence at first, remains a critical step in fostering long-term understanding, action, and partnership.

Messages received from the participants

- "Today was the first time I learnt about GBV, and as a woman, I was surprised and frustrated. Sexual violence should not happen. First of all, I want to know about it, and then I want to take action, starting with what I can do."
- "I am also a victim of domestic violence (by my father) and molestation, and I have experienced 'somehow I feel I am at fault' and 'mindless treatment by male police officers'. I cannot wait 280 years to achieve gender equality. I want to do something about it."
- "I'm involved in working to alleviate poverty among women in Africa. I am very happy that Solar Lanterns have contributed to alleviating poverty among women in Kenya."
- "As a company, I think the donation of solar lanterns is very significant. I feel that the challenge is how to build a network with the government, JICA and other companies outside the company in order to expand our activities."
- "It was good to hear that the support for solar lanterns is helping women and the poor and vulnerable to become more independent and confident. I strongly felt that I too would like to continue working on such activities, even if just a little."
- "I was very moved by the way the lanterns were used and the voices of the local people. I was encouraged that there is still more we can do if we think from a helpful point of view."
- "Listening to the stories, I felt anew the meaning and purpose of my work."
- "I have three daughters and it made me think a lot. It made me proud to be part of a company that provides products that give people hope."

6) Water Access versus Gender Assessment

From September 12 to 13, 2024, a field assessment was conducted in support of the JICA project “Project on Capacity Development for Effective Local Implementation of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program for Better Life in Kenya.” The purpose of the assessment was to explore effective strategies for improving women’s and girls’ access to clean water and appropriate sanitation facilities, with a particular focus on gender-responsive approaches.

The assessment was conducted in Mavoloni Village, Matuu subcounty, Machakos County, and consisted of three main components:1) A group interview with 11 community members (5 women and 6 men); 2) A focused group discussion (FGD) with 5 women, and 3); Individual interviews with women residents of the village.

The survey revealed that women play a key role in procuring and securing water in the area. At the same time, it was confirmed that the daily burden of water fetching labour carried out by women is extremely heavy. In this context, it is essential not only to increase the water supply, but also to develop mechanisms and means to reduce the burden of water fetching labour, which is disproportionately carried out by women, and to efficiently transport water to individual households, in order to improve the quality of life in the community and address the issue of time poverty. Therefore, the study recommended 1) providing support to women's initiatives such as joint purchase and joint transport of water, and 2) promoting awareness-raising and educational activities to promote the distribution of water fetching labour and the transformation of gender relations in the community 3) Involving women in water management committees for inclusivity in decision making

	
Interview with women on water fetching labor	Interview with a member of Water management Committee

7) Regional Seminar on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Africa

From 2 to 3 October 2024, in collaboration with UN Women and with the support of the Government of Kenya, a two-day regional seminar was organized to review the implementation status and challenges of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the African region and to discuss the direction and nature of future initiatives.

The year 2025 marks two major milestones: the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. It also precedes the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD9), where global discussions on gender equality

and women's empowerment are expected to gain further momentum. Building on this global momentum, the regional seminar served as a platform for African countries to share progress made on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, highlight persistent challenges, and collectively explore sustainable and actionable pathways to advance the agenda in the years ahead.

The first day of the seminar was attended by approximately 200 participants, including Kenya's Chief Cabinet Secretary, the Advisor to the Cabinet on WPS, the Ambassadors of Denmark and Finland, and representatives from the United Kingdom and Ireland. The second day was equally well attended, with around 190 participants representing governments and civil society from Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Burundi, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Zambia, Namibia, Ethiopia, and Senegal, as well as regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

The seminar opened with remarks by the Chief Representative of JICA Kenya Office. A presentation was also delivered from our side, highlighting JICA's ongoing efforts to implement the WPS agenda and discussing key challenges and future directions. Additionally, a representative from the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of South Sudan—currently receiving JICA support—shared the current status of WPS implementation in the country, including the development of its National Action Plan.

Based on the two days of rich discussion and country-level sharing of challenges and progress, participants emphasized the need to strengthen the following areas of action.

1. Promoting the localisation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

While action plans on WPS have been developed at the national level, women's participation in local communities remains limited; the development and implementation of national action plans (Local Action Plans) at the local administrative level is essential to increase the effectiveness of the WPS. It is necessary to promote the localisation of WPS, which is based on local contextual issues and needs and is carried out with the participation of the population.

2. Mainstreaming WPS and promoting gender equality in the security sector

With the shared risks and challenges faced by women working in the security sector, there is a need to strengthen institutional and practical efforts to promote the participation of women in the security sector, including the military and police. Specifically, institutional reforms are needed through the development of gender equality policies in the security sector, capacity building aimed at empowering women police officers and women military personnel, and improving the work environment.

3. Reflecting the experiences and voices of young women and strengthening their leadership

Young women leaders in Kenya and Uganda have told us that there are situations where 'senior women' prevent young people from participating, and that local gender norms tend to be applied particularly strictly to young women. Against this background, there is a need to strengthen mentorship program, support the development of role models and promote comprehensive initiatives for the empowerment of young women in order to support their network and action.

4. Strengthen data collection, monitoring and evaluation

A major challenge in promoting the WPS Agenda is the lack of basic data on the situation of women in conflict-affected and climate change-affected areas. Women's voices and experiences need to be carefully collected and analyzed to visualise progress and good practices, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to increase the effectiveness of action. It is also important to use such data to develop more concrete and realistic action plans and targets.

5. Promoting women's empowerment in a changing climate

It is important to promote the WPS agenda not only in conflict-related contexts, but also in areas affected by climate change. In particular, there is a need to promote women's participation in early warning mechanisms and other mechanisms, and to strengthen specific efforts to empower women living under climate change and strengthen their leadership.

Annex12 Regional Workshop on Women, Peace and Security-Program.

Moving forward, it will be particularly important to promote efforts aimed at eliminating GBV in conflict- and disaster-affected settings as a core component of advancing the WPS agenda in Africa.



WPS seminar conducted in partnership with UN Women



Representatives from Gov of Kenya, JICA and other donors

8) Promoting Gender Mainstreaming in the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) Program

In February 2025, the Project supported the development of a policy brief aimed at promoting the participation of women and youth in rice production under the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) initiative. CARD is a regional framework established in 2008 by the Government of Japan/JICA in collaboration with African governments, international organizations (such as FAO, the World Bank, and IFAD), research institutions (including AfricaRice), and the private sector. Its mission is to increase rice production in Africa by advancing agricultural technologies, improving infrastructure, building human resource capacity, and supporting policy development—all to enhance productivity and food security across the continent.

As a co-founder of the CARD initiative, JICA has been supporting the formulation and implementation of National Rice Development Strategies (NRDS) in member countries. In this context, JICA supported the CARD Secretariat in organizing a two-day intensive consultation with gender specialists from AfricaRice and IFAD to mainstream gender and promote the inclusion of women and youth in the rice sector. The Project also contributed to this effort, providing inputs based on its field experiences and lessons learned. The resulting policy brief is scheduled to be presented at the upcoming CARD General Meeting in Madagascar in 2025.

3. Achievements, Lessons Learned, and Future Directions

At the onset of this project, a change in government led to a forced transition of the designated counterpart (CP) institution. As a result, no field-level activities could be conducted during the initial six months, limiting the implementation period to just one and a half years. Despite this constraint, thanks to the dedication of the NGECC and other partner stakeholders in the target counties, the project was able to make tangible progress—particularly in the areas of capacity development for service providers and support actors, as well as the establishment of more seamless and coordinated service delivery systems for survivors. Furthermore, through collaborations with local communities, schools, the private sector, and other JICA projects, a variety of pilot activities were conducted to explore effective approaches for the prevention and elimination of GBV and generated valuable insights and lessons for future scale-up and replication.

Below is a summary of the Project’s key achievements and corresponding key learnings and takeaways that can inform and guide future efforts toward the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) in Kenya.

Key Achievement 1: Strengthening the Capacity of Specialized Personnel

First, the project contributed to improving the capacity of service providers involved in GBV response, particularly in relation to survivor-centered support approaches. These specialized personnel include not only shelter and one-stop center staff, but also government officers in health and gender departments, as well as actors in the legal and judicial sectors—those who work on GBV-related issues as part of their official duties. Through this project, at least 219 government officials received training on survivor-centered support. It was confirmed that each of these individuals took at least one concrete action to enhance the protection, case management, empowerment, or reintegration of survivors following their participation in the training.

Key Achievement 2: Empowerment of Local Actors to Lead GBV Prevention and Response

The project also led to increased awareness and proactive engagement among a diverse range of community actors—including religious leaders, local influencers, women’s group leaders, private sector representatives, educators, students, and village administrators—regarding the underlying causes of GBV and its personal and societal impacts. These individuals began taking action to prevent GBV and support survivors.

Effective GBV prevention and elimination requires not only the involvement of specialized service providers but also the transformation of attitudes and behaviors across the broader community. Through the project’s interventions, positive changes in awareness and behavior were observed among approximately 1,019 individuals, who are positioned as “support local actors” within their respective communities. These

individuals have begun addressing GBV within their own roles and spheres of influence, becoming key contributors to the local support ecosystem. Their active involvement marks a significant step toward building a more sustainable, community-based response to GBV.

Key Achievement 3: Improvements in the Lives of GBV Survivors and Children

Furthermore, approximately 1,392 GBV survivors, including women and children, have begun to gain self-esteem and a stronger voice, while reinforcing mutual support networks and taking steps to break the long-standing "culture of silence" surrounding GBV in their communities. For example, in the "Smart Village Free from GBV" initiative implemented in Kajiado County, women engaged in vegetable farming and solar lantern use have started earning an average of 1,500 to 2,000 Kenyan shillings per month—demonstrating early signs of economic empowerment. The introduction of solar lanterns and energy-efficient stoves has improved the efficiency of domestic chores and reduced the time burden, contributing to a decrease in the risk of domestic violence. In addition, women's available hours for evening activities increased by an average of 3 hours, with approximately 50 minutes of that time dedicated to self-study, which has contributed to improvements in literacy. Solar lanterns have also proven useful in supporting protection activities for GBV survivors.

Positive changes have also been observed in schools. In Machakos County, the number of children reporting GBV cases and seeking support has increased, indicating a rise in student-led efforts toward GBV elimination. Moreover, initiatives to promote GBV-related businesses have begun to show promise, with the development of products and services such as safe transportation solutions, sanitary products, and GBV reporting apps—nurturing the emergence of social entrepreneurship aimed at addressing GBV challenges.

Key Achievement 4: Rehabilitation of the GBVRC in Kajiado, Shelter in Nairobi and Improvement of Service Delivery

The Project also contributed to enhancing survivor-centered service delivery at the Gender-Based Violence Recovery Center (GBVRC) within Kajiado County Referral Hospital. Following targeted training provided through the Project, the hospital now offers free medical services to GBV survivors. Previously, survivors were required to cover part of the medical costs, which posed a significant barrier to timely and appropriate care. In addition to financial accessibility, the Project led to improvements in case documentation and survivor handling, reflecting a shift toward more dignified, empathetic, and survivor-focused care. This transformation—adapted from best practices at the Kisumu GBVRC—marks a critical step toward building a more accessible, equitable, and survivor-centered support system.

Furthermore, the Project supported the physical rehabilitation of the GBVRC, ensuring that the infrastructure aligns with survivor-centered principles. The upgraded facility now includes accommodation for survivors in need of temporary shelter and is also equipped to provide services to male survivors, thereby

enhancing its inclusivity, safety, and effectiveness.

In Nairobi County, the Project supported the Kayole Women's Centre, helping equip it with a safe kitchen and a kitchen garden for GBV survivors. These facilities are not only improving the living conditions of survivors in shelter care but also contributing to their well-being, recovery, and reintegration.

Key Achievement 5: Institutionalization of Gender Justice in Kajiado Law Court

With the support from the Project, a dedicated GBV registry desk was set up to streamline case management in Kajiado Law Court. Additionally, the court designated two days per week—Tuesdays and Thursdays—exclusively for hearing GBV cases, and appointed a judicial officer specifically to preside over them. This innovation has not only enhanced the efficiency of GBV case flow management but also strengthened coordination between the judiciary and the Kajiado GBV Recovery Center, contributing to more timely and survivor-centered support.

Key Achievement 6: Enhanced Collaboration, Networking, and Partnerships to address GBV

The Project also contributed to strengthening collaboration and coordination among key institutions involved in GBV response and justice processes. In Kajiado County, a working relationship has been established between the GBV Recovery Center (GBVRC) and the Law Court. The court proactively informs the GBVRC in advance when GBV cases are scheduled for hearing and communicates expectations for court proceedings. This coordination has improved case preparedness and enabled more survivor-centered support throughout the legal process.

In Machakos County, the safe shelter has established close working relationships with the Machakos Law Court, the Machakos GBV Technical Working Group—including duty bearers such as the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Police, the Department of Children, the Department of Health, and the Probation Office—as well as with civil society, faith-based organizations, and other concerned stakeholders. The court ensures that shelter staff including paralegals are informed of GBV hearing schedules and has facilitated direct linkages between the shelter and the GBV registry within the court. These partnerships have strengthened communication and coordination among frontline actors, ensuring survivors are supported to attend court and that their cases are addressed in a timely and coordinated manner. In addition, emerging collaboration is underway between the safe shelter and vocational training institutions in Machakos, aiming to support the economic reintegration and self-reliance of GBV survivors.

Key Achievement 7: Advancing Innovative Business Approaches to Address GBV

The Project successfully introduced an innovative perspective in Kenya by positioning business as a key actor in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence (GBV). Through the Ideathon and Business Idea Contest "Innovate Against GBV," stakeholders from the business community and GBV sectors came together to explore how entrepreneurial solutions can be harnessed to address GBV. This marked a pivotal step in expanding private sector engagement and shifting the narrative toward business-driven social impact in the fight against GBV. The initiative not only broadened awareness of the idea that businesses can play a meaningful role in eliminating GBV, but also led to the emergence of concrete business models aiming to address the issue.

4. Knowledge and Lessons Learned – Effective Approaches and Methods for the Elimination of GBV

To support the prevention and elimination of GBV, this project implemented and tested a range of initiatives in collaboration with communities, schools, government bodies, and the private sector. Through this process, several effective models were developed, and valuable insights and lessons were gained that can inform the design and scaling of future interventions. The following are key learnings and takeaways derived from the project that can guide future efforts toward the elimination of GBV:

1) It is effective to continuously build the capacity of personnel across diverse fields and sectors to implement survivor-centered support.

Typically, GBV-related training and interventions tend to focus on specific sectors, such as healthcare providers or social workers. However, this project demonstrated that effective prevention and response to GBV requires engagement across multiple sectors—including education, public transport, agriculture and rural development, water and infrastructure—where stakeholders must deepen their understanding of GBV and enhance their capacity to respond appropriately.

It is critically important for personnel in these sectors to understand the structural causes of GBV and to adopt practices that respect the rights and dignity of survivors. In this project, training sessions on the survivor-centered approach were conducted not only for police officers, healthcare workers, teachers, and government officials, but also for community members and local leaders. As a result, participants demonstrated changes in attitude at the field level and showed improved awareness of the need for inter-agency coordination.

The project also highlighted that when actors from diverse backgrounds share a common understanding and set of values, they are better positioned to collaborate and deliver seamless support to survivors. Moving forward, it will be important to expand survivor-centered training efforts to a broader range of influential community actors, including religious leaders, teachers, and those involved in agricultural development or infrastructure projects.

Particularly crucial across all sectors is the development of skills to respond in a way that prioritizes survivor safety, dignity, and autonomy—while also holding perpetrators accountable. Another key lesson learned is the value of incorporating participatory and experiential learning methods—such as field visits and practical exercises—rather than relying solely on classroom-based lectures, as these approaches help translate

learning into tangible change on the ground.

2) Survivor-centered infrastructure development is essential to support the practical implementation of a survivor-centered approach.

To effectively implement survivor-centered support, it is not enough to build human resource capacity alone. Ensuring the dignity and safety of survivors also requires the development of well-designed physical infrastructure. One key lesson from this project is that the quality and design of facilities—not merely their existence—have a significant impact on the effectiveness of support services. Infrastructure must be designed from the survivor’s perspective.

Future GBV-related infrastructure efforts must prioritize privacy and safety in their design philosophy. For example, when constructing GBV Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) or shelters, it is crucial to ensure that the reception area, waiting room, counseling space, and medical room are shielded from external view. This allows survivors to access services without fear of being seen or identified. Secure internal layouts are vital to protecting survivors from retaliation or pursuit by perpetrators. This includes features such as surveillance cameras, on-site security, and separated entry/exit pathways.

Equally important is the establishment of dedicated medical and storage facilities (including refrigeration and sealed storage) for proper forensic evidence collection in sexual violence cases. Furthermore, given that many survivors of domestic and sexual violence are accompanied by children, it is also essential to create child-friendly spaces. Kitchens, toilets, communal areas, playrooms, and nursing rooms must be designed with the needs of mothers and young children in mind. Such survivor-sensitive physical environments form the foundation for survivors to feel safe, begin healing, and take steps toward rebuilding their lives.

In Kenya, while the development of GBVRCs and shelters is advancing, future policy and project design must go beyond simply “constructing buildings.” What is needed is a shift toward rethinking the purpose and function of these spaces—placing survivors’ lived experiences at the center of design decisions. This means mainstreaming survivor-informed design philosophies into infrastructure planning, institutional procedures, and project implementation.

The project also found that visual tools such as clearly posted survivor rights and support options, along with complementary facilities like kitchen gardens, can contribute to survivors’ psychological recovery and foster autonomy.

3) The Urgent Need to Establish Comprehensive, Community-Based Support System

To ensure the effective implementation of survivor-centered support, it is essential not only to strengthen

human resource capacity and build safe, dignified infrastructure, but also to enhance coordination with the diverse resources available in the community. In particular, the development of GBV Recovery Centers (GBVRCs) and shelters must be accompanied by the establishment of systems that can provide a wide range of services in an integrated and seamless manner—including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, police response, and vocational counseling.

This requires thoughtful facility planning and the integration of various support functions under one roof. Furthermore, the introduction of ICT systems that enable remote court appearances and consultations with lawyers or police officers can help reduce the psychological, physical, and financial burdens placed on survivors and lower the risk of secondary victimization.

It is also vital to strengthen linkages with vocational training institutions and economic empowerment programs to establish comprehensive support systems that accompany survivors through protection, recovery, and reintegration into society. Currently in Kenya, many shelters offer small-scale economic empowerment activities with limited resources, often supported by NGOs. However, there is an increasing need to shift toward a more medium- to long-term institutional framework for support.

As part of this shift, county governments should invest in placing career counselors and dedicated counseling spaces within GBVRCs and shelters, and establish stronger partnerships with vocational training centers or other concerned institutions. This would allow survivors to gain practical skills and take concrete steps toward economic independence and reintegration.

In the area of legal support, establishing specialized court divisions for GBV cases and implementing systems that allow for online court participation and legal consultation are also considered effective approaches. For psychosocial support, local resource networks should be strengthened and expanded to provide integrated, community-based services.

Ultimately, the development of such comprehensive, survivor-centered support systems is not only effective but also indispensable for ensuring the quality, continuity, and sustainability of GBV response services.

4) It Is Crucial to Believe in and Nurture the Innate Potential of Women and Girls – Insights from the Experience in Orinie Village (1)

One of the key insights gained from the “Smart Village Free from GBV” initiative implemented in Orinie Village is that support approaches that focus on believing in and nurturing the innate potential of women and girls can serve as a powerful catalyst for both individual behavior change and broader social transformation.

At the outset, women in the village hesitated to engage in land preparation or community activities, constrained by rigid gender norms such as “land cultivation is a man’s job.” However, as gender training and dialogue sessions progressed, the women gradually came to understand that they themselves could be agents of change. This shift in mindset led to a transformation in behavior: women began preparing land on their own and actively participating in local activities. Furthermore, through this process, they gained confidence by accumulating small but meaningful successes, and gradually developed the capacity to speak out and assert their voices within the community. This experience reinforces the lesson that the core of effective support lies in unlocking the potential of survivors and enabling their self-determination and agency.

At the same time, the initiative demonstrated that efforts to challenge deeply rooted gender norms in the community require more than the provision of external knowledge and information. Sustainable change is more likely to occur through processes of dialogue and practical engagement, in which individuals are encouraged to reflect on and reinterpret their own lived experiences and values. Women and girls possess the capacity to initiate significant behavioral change with minimal external input.

In many communities, women organize themselves into informal support structures, such as savings groups, which play a vital role in their daily lives. In Orinie Village, for example, women-led savings groups have become a key vehicle for mutual support and economic empowerment, enabling access to resources for healthcare, education, or small business initiatives. These groups have fostered a cycle of financial independence and solidarity, reinforcing women’s roles as active contributors to their communities. It also acts as grassroots safety nets—strengthening social cohesion, enabling early identification of GBV cases, and providing trusted pathways for support and referral. Recognizing and strengthening such community-based mechanisms is essential for fostering resilience and sustainable change.

In this context, institutionalizing participatory platforms—such as Women’s Forums—has proven highly effective. These forums offer a safe space where women can freely express their views, learn from one another, and collectively reflect on issues affecting their lives. Making such forums a regular and structured part of village governance can foster intrinsic empowerment and stimulate collective action toward the elimination of GBV. In addition, efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV must go beyond awareness-raising and educational activities. It is essential to adopt an integrated approach that takes a broader view of the realities faced by women and girls, emphasizing the reduction of their unpaid labor burden and promoting their social, psychological, and economic empowerment.

5) Efforts to build a Shared Culture through Inclusive Community Forums is needed—Insights from the Experience in Orinie Village (2)

In addition to women-only spaces, holding regular Community Forums that engage the entire community

in dialogue on gender equality and GBV is essential to fostering a shared culture of reflection, accountability, and collective responsibility. These forums serve as inclusive platforms for encouraging open conversation, building mutual understanding, and gradually transforming entrenched attitudes and behaviors at the community level.

However, one of the key challenges observed during implementation in Kenya, including in Orinie Village, is the widespread expectation that participation in community meetings or workshops should come with incentives such as meals or transportation allowances. While such incentives may encourage attendance in the short term, they pose a risk to the long-term sustainability of community-led dialogue initiatives. There is thus an urgent need to develop alternative models that reduce dependence on external resources. This includes promoting a mindset shift that encourages community members to participate not because of material benefits, but out of a genuine commitment to addressing the issues that affect their lives.

Moreover, current GBV-related interventions often fall short of addressing the structural and root causes of violence. Many are limited to short-term awareness campaigns or one-off information sessions. While useful as entry points, these activities rarely lead to sustained change unless they are embedded within broader, community-driven efforts that tackle underlying gender inequalities and power dynamics.

Moving forward, it is essential to adopt a more integrated and transformative approach. This means going beyond awareness-raising to address the lived realities of women and girls—reducing the burden of unpaid care work, strengthening access to economic opportunities, and supporting psychosocial well-being. Community forums should be positioned not only as spaces for learning, but also as mechanisms for collective problem-solving and action. When communities are empowered to take ownership of these processes, the path toward the elimination of GBV becomes both more effective and sustainable.

6) In Engaging Men in GBV Prevention, a Shift Toward Practical, Action-Oriented Approaches Is Needed – Insights from the Experience in Orinie Village (3)

In GBV prevention and response, it is essential to advance both support for women and the engagement of men as two interconnected pillars. However, when promoting male engagement, efforts must go beyond simply explaining why men should be involved. There is a pressing need to shift toward practical, action-oriented approaches that focus on how men can take concrete steps to become part of the solution. In other words, a paradigm shift is required—from raising awareness to facilitating actual behavioral change.

In the initiative conducted in Orinie Village, Kajiado County, men were not only educated on the realities and serious consequences of GBV, but also given opportunities to engage in dialogue on gender equality alongside women in the community. The project actively involved influential male figures, such as religious leaders and village elders, to help demonstrate the importance and impact of men leading by example.

These leaders were also encouraged to develop their own action plans for promoting gender equality and preventing GBV, and were supported in implementing them. This approach helped foster a sense of ownership and accountability, and contributed to building a culture in which men became active participants in driving social change.

What was particularly important in this initiative was that men were not blamed or accused for their potential to perpetrate violence. Instead, they were encouraged to participate and take action from a positive and forward-looking perspective—emphasizing that “your actions can contribute to the safety and future of your community.” This framing proved effective in fostering engagement.

Moreover, having men develop their own concrete action plans for promoting community transformation—and supporting them in putting these plans into practice—helped enhance their sense of ownership and responsibility as agents of change. As a result, many of the participating men began to re-evaluate their roles and behaviors at home, and even started speaking to younger generations about the importance of non-violent relationships using their own words and experiences.

This approach stands out in contrast to many male engagement initiatives that tend to be limited to awareness-raising or short-term educational activities. It clearly demonstrates the need for and effectiveness of strategies that go beyond awareness to foster actual behavior change.

Moving forward, it is essential to build sustained and practical systems that support men's behavioral transformation, rather than focusing solely on raising awareness. This includes establishing regular community forums, promoting dialogue in churches and local gatherings, and embedding such interventions in everyday spaces. These efforts will be key to creating an enabling environment that supports men's voluntary engagement and responsible action, while strengthening community-based support systems.

7) Schools Are Effective Entry Points for Preventing and Eliminating GBV

Schools play a critical role in helping children learn the values of gender equality and develop attitudes and behaviors that reject violence. This project confirmed that when teachers and students work together on GBV prevention, schools not only function as safe spaces, but also contribute significantly to the prevention of GBV and the protection, recovery, and reintegration of survivors into society.

In particular, establishing systems that allow students to safely report concerns and promoting student-led awareness activities (such as school club activities) helped to foster an environment where students feel empowered to speak up. These efforts contributed to the early detection of abuse and the prevention of reoccurrence. Moreover, such initiatives also led to positive shifts in the attitudes of teachers and parents,

resulting in broader changes in awareness and behavior at the community level—with the school acting as a catalyst.

Empowering children through these initiatives is also crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and GBV. For example, helping girl survivors remain in school and improving their self-esteem has been directly linked to a reduction in early marriage and teenage pregnancy—both of which are significant GBV risk factors.

The school-based interventions implemented under this project required relatively limited financial resources (except for teacher training), making them a highly cost-effective and impactful approach. Moving forward, it will be important to institutionalize a comprehensive school-based GBV prevention and elimination model, drawing from these experiences.

8) Harnessing the Power of Sports is an effective strategy to address GBV

Numerous studies have pointed to the positive impact of sports on psychosocial aspects such as self-esteem, trust-building, and teamwork. In this project as well, many survivors and women and girls vulnerable to GBV—who had previously lacked opportunities for self-expression—gained confidence, developed a stronger sense of self-worth, began to raise their voices, and built connections with others through participation in sports activities. This marked a significant change in their recovery and empowerment process.

Team sports in particular have shown strong potential to support survivors' emotional and physical recovery and rebuild their self-esteem by promoting collaboration, trust, and a sense of belonging. The formation of social networks through sports has helped reduce social isolation and strengthened peer support among individuals with shared experiences. In fact, many adolescent girls in the recovery phase found “friends to rely on” through these activities, gaining much-needed emotional support.

Moreover, sports events and dialogue forums involving local government and community stakeholders contributed to enhancing understanding and cooperation at the community level. The flexible engagement and relationship-building by Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) were particularly instrumental in ensuring participants felt safe and satisfied, underscoring the importance of their continued involvement in future program design.

Sports hold great potential as a psychosocial tool in GBV prevention and survivor support. Moving forward, it is crucial to systematize the lessons learned from sports-based approaches and establish them as practical models that can be utilized in policy making, education, protection, and community-based support initiatives.

9) Leveraging Business can be powerful tools to address GBV

Efforts to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) should not be confined to public sectors such as police, justice, health, or education. Rather, they require the active participation and collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders—including private companies, entrepreneurs, investors, educational institutions, financial institutions, and civil society—as part of a whole-of-society approach. Through “Ideathons” and “business competitions”, this project demonstrated the importance of such multi-stakeholder cooperation and empirically showed that business can be an effective means of addressing the structural causes of GBV.

Economic independence enhances women’s negotiation power and decision-making ability and is key to escaping violence. In fact, some GBV survivors who engaged in business activities were able to regain their dignity and empower themselves psychologically and socially. Moreover, social-impact-oriented startups proposed new solutions for GBV prevention, survivor protection, and the promotion of independence and reintegration.

However, cultivating socially meaningful and innovative businesses also requires comprehensive support. Many entrepreneurs and citizens who empathize with the seriousness of GBV often lack perspectives on profitability and business sustainability. While addressing GBV through business is an innovative concept, the reality is that understanding and interest from investors and donors remain limited.

Moving forward, it is necessary to explicitly position GBV elimination alongside economic growth within national strategies and development plans. At the same time, building an ecosystem that supports both business feasibility and social impact will require coordinated efforts, including expert mentoring, technical accompaniment, and networking opportunities. Visibility of success stories, increased public awareness through media engagement, and incentive schemes for companies promoting gender equality are also effective measures.

Furthermore, educational institutions and companies should incorporate training and curricula on “Gender and Business,” and human resource development should be promoted continuously for students, entrepreneurs, and corporate employees. It is also essential to establish GBV-specific funds and impact investment programs, and to secure both financial and technical support for GBV-responsive businesses led by startups and social enterprises.

It is expected that, based on the knowledge and lessons gained through this project, efforts should be continued to share and scale up a "Business-Based GBV Elimination Model" in collaboration with other African countries and international organizations.

10) The Potential for Preventing and Eliminating GBV through the Integration of Public Space Development

In this project, collaboration was promoted with actors from other sectors—such as public transportation, water, and agricultural and rural development—to explore opportunities for GBV prevention and elimination. As a result, workshops with stakeholders in the public transportation sector highlighted the urgent need to create safe environments that enable women and girls to use public spaces without fear. Key measures included the installation of CCTV cameras, street lighting, secure waiting areas, women-only toilets, and onboard emergency reporting systems. These discussions underscored the necessity of redesigning public infrastructure from the perspective of GBV prevention and elimination, and highlighted the importance of incorporating a "gender and security" lens into urban planning and infrastructure development.

Likewise, in the rural water supply sector, gender-sensitive measures are essential—such as ensuring safe access routes and revisiting the location of water facilities—to reduce GBV risks faced by women and girls when fetching water. Public infrastructure development serves as a critical entry point for GBV prevention and response. Future efforts must ensure that gender and safety perspectives are mainstreamed across all areas of infrastructure development and service delivery. This will help advance the creation of integrated rural and urban communities that contribute to the prevention and elimination of GBV.

Conclusion

Grounded in the principle of a survivor-centered approach, this project succeeded in catalyzing a shift in mindset among professionals and strengthening the quality and responsiveness of GBV-related support services. By actively integrating innovative and previously underutilized approaches—such as sports-based engagement, business development, and school based programs—into GBV prevention and response, the project took bold steps to drive social value transformation and behavioral change, yielding notable empirical results. The project demonstrated that transformative change is possible when interventions are grounded in people’s lived experiences and local realities.

Importantly, the project’s impact extended beyond individual empowerment. It played a critical role in enhancing the awareness of government officials regarding their institutional responsibilities and the strategic direction needed for effective GBV prevention. This growing recognition of the need for coordinated, multi-sectoral engagement marks a foundational step toward sustained policy and system-level change.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that the project’s interventions were limited in scale and geographic reach. Moving forward, it will be essential to refine the models and methodologies developed through this project to ensure they are practical, context-responsive, and scalable across diverse settings, including communities, schools, institutions nationwide. Institutionalizing these approaches and embedding them into national and county-level policy frameworks will be vital to ensuring sustainability.

Finally, the strategic dissemination of the project’s outcomes—through knowledge-sharing platforms, government engagement, and civil society networks—will be key to expanding the reach and impact of these efforts. By building on the foundation laid by this initiative and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, there is strong potential to accelerate progress toward a society free from gender-based violence, where all individuals—especially women and girls—can live with dignity, safety, and agency. It is hoped that these efforts will continue to expand, both in scope and in impact, paving the way for more inclusive, resilient, and just communities.

END

Annexures

Annex 1: National Gender and Equality Commission- organogram

Annex 2: Kisumu Exchange Study Tour- Participants list

Annex 3: Training on case management on survivor centered Approach - Participants list and Training materials

Annex 4: Shanzu Gender Justice Court study tour- Participants list and Program

Annex 5: Rapid Gender Analysis and Baseline Survey Study of Orinie Location, Kajiado County

Annex 6: Religious leaders training on gender based violence- A Training manual

Annex 7: Teachers training on gender based violence- Program, Participants list and Training materials

Annex 8: Anti-GBV School Policy

Annex 9: 10 Karate principles for the Eli

Annex 10: Business Idea Contest- 10 business cohort presentations

Annex 11: Proof of Concept: Final report from Growth Africa

Annex 12: A Regional Workshop on Women Peace and Security in Africa- Program

Annex 13: A list of Videos Produced