



**EASTERN AFRICA**  
**AGENCY, SOCIAL**  
**& GENDER NORMS**  
**LEARNING**  
**COLLABORATIVE**

# **DOCUMENTING POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS AND NORM SHIFTING IN EAST AFRICA**

DOCUMENTING POSITIVE  
SOCIAL NORMS AND NORM  
SHIFTING IN EAST AFRICA

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is the result of a collaborative effort by numerous individuals and organizations dedicated to documenting and promoting positive social norms across East Africa. We extend our sincere gratitude to all contributors whose insights, research, and experiences have shaped this important work.

We appreciate the Eastern Africa Agency, Social and Gender Norms Learning Collaborative (EALC) for its leadership in fostering a platform for shared learning and action. We also extend our gratitude to the University of California, San Diego, United States, that facilitated the production of this publication. Special thanks to the authors who provided compelling narratives and case studies, demonstrating the impact of positive norms in transforming communities. Your dedication to gender equality, social cohesion, and community empowerment is truly commendable.

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Finally, we acknowledge the communities featured in this document—their resilience, agency, and innovative approaches serve as a testament to the power of positive social norms in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society.

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# BACKGROUND ON THE EASTERN AFRICA AGENCY, SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE (EALC)

The Eastern Africa Agency Social and Gender Norms Learning Collaborative (EALC) brings together researchers, implementers, policymakers, advocates, and many more to collectively advance social norms and agency theory, research, and practice.

The EALC envisions a world where partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and thought leadership converge to ensure sustained equity, social justice, and health for all people. To work towards this vision, the EALC aims to strengthen research and practice on gender, social norms, and agency by building a network of practitioners, researchers, evaluators, and advocates who share knowledge, generate evidence, and develop resources to support social and behavior change programming. Membership in the EALC is open to individuals and organizations from the Eastern Africa countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia.

# INTRODUCTION

This publication highlights positive social and gender norms within communities across East Africa. Social norms—shared beliefs about acceptable or expected behavior within a specific group—play a crucial role in shaping individual actions through perceived social approval or disapproval (Social Norms Atlas, 2021).

Traditionally, efforts to shift social norms have focused on eliminating harmful behaviors, particularly those that negatively impact marginalized groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and migrants (Institute of Reproductive Health, 2019). However, an overemphasis on harmful norms can sometimes reinforce feelings of fear, hopelessness, and disempowerment—barriers to community-led transformation (Linkenbach, 2009-2016).

In contrast, interventions that identify, reinforce, and amplify positive norms have proven more effective in shifting behaviors and fostering sustainable change. By focusing on existing protective and empowering norms, communities can build on their strengths to address challenges, rather than being defined solely by problems. This approach also helps to reframe societal perspectives, moving away from a deficit-based view of social change.

Understanding and documenting positive social norms provides a balanced, contextualized perspective on how communities operate. By identifying the beneficial aspects of norms—along with the rewards or sanctions associated with adherence—this publication aims to showcase the power of positive norms in influencing social behavior and driving meaningful change.

## PROCESS

The process of compiling the publication entailed putting out a call for stories, aimed at documenting positive social and gender norms in the Eastern Africa region. The call was shared widely with EALC members within the Eastern Africa region. The contributors to the publication were encouraged to use creative approaches such as; poems, videos, blogs, pictures, brief reports from project interventions, to show case positive aspects or stories of change, in line with social and gender norms throughout Eastern Africa. The publication features eight (8) authors (their personal details are set out at the end of each story); three (3) from Tanzania, four (4) from Uganda, and one (1) from Rwanda.

While each of the stories capture a different theme, they address a series of interrelated aspects including; the role of protective norms in addressing sexual and gender-based violence, using community and family centered approaches to address family conflict. The stories further showcase interventions that have used community centered approaches such as; music, dance, drama, sports, and religious leaders, to influence behaviour change in areas around women's access to education, men's effective participation in care work, economic empowerment at family level, women's access to agriculture markets systems, enhanced uptake of HIV/AIDS services, and malaria prevention campaigns.



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN UGANDA'S AGRICULTURE MARKET SYSTEMS THROUGH THE "KWELI, WOMEN OF LAND CAN" SBC CAMPAIGN. (AGRICULTURE, MARKET SYSTEMS, WOMEN, SBC)



In Uganda's agricultural sector, women have long been the backbone of food production and trade. Despite their critical role, they face persistent gender and social norms that limit their full participation in agricultural markets. These ingrained traditions hinder women's access to opportunities, preventing them from becoming traders, securing credit, or expanding their businesses.

To address this pressing issue, WEKOnnect Group partnered with USAID's Feed the Future Uganda Inclusive Agricultural Markets (FtF IAM) Activity, to drive meaningful change. Together, they embarked on a mission to design and implement a Social and Behavior Change (SBC) strategy and campaign, dedicated to dismantling the harmful norms that have held women back in agriculture for far too long.



## FIRST STEP

The first step in this journey was a comprehensive exploration of the root issues. Through the Norms Diagnostic Study, conducted by FtF IAM, eight specific harmful gender and social norms were identified as primary obstacles to women's success in agricultural markets. These norms, akin to invisible chains, silently restricted women's progress, and limited their opportunities to thrive. The study revealed the profound impact of these deeply embedded beliefs and behaviours, emphasizing how they curtail women's potential in the sector.

The challenge, then, was clear: how could we disrupt and transform such long-standing barriers? Through Social and Behavior Change approaches, WEKOnnect and FtF IAM, we set out to confront these norms directly, fostering a more inclusive environment, where women could finally achieve their full potential in Uganda's agricultural landscape.

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Through the **Norms Diagnostic Study**, conducted by FtF IAM,

» **8** specific harmful gender and social norms

were identified as primary obstacles to women's success in agricultural markets.

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*The Strategy: Ideation for Transformation*

We understood that meaningful change requires more than raising awareness—it calls for a transformation in mindsets, beliefs, and values. To achieve this, we grounded our approach in the Ideation Model of Communication, a framework designed to reshape the fundamental drivers of behaviour: beliefs, values, emotional responses, self-efficacy, and the willingness to advocate for change. Our goal was not just to help people recognize the barriers women face, but inspire them to actively challenge, and dismantle these obstacles.

This vision gave birth to the KWELI SBC campaign, under the empowering slogan, “Women of Our Land Can.” KWELI became more than a campaign; it evolved into a rallying cry for a movement devoted to uplifting women, strengthening communities, and transforming perspectives on equality within agricultural markets. By fostering unity and reshaping social norms, KWELI envisions a future where women’s contributions to agriculture are fully recognized, valued, and supported, enabling them to thrive as leaders in their fields.

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## The Power of Collaboration: It takes a Village



  
A total of  
**23**  
organizations

  
**71**  
staff members  
were trained  
on how to integrate the  
campaign into their work

Executing a Social and Behavior Change (SBC) campaign at this scale requires the collective commitment of an entire community. We began by gathering direct insights from the ground, through participatory research workshops held across four Regions. These workshops helped us understand the unique challenges and opportunities within each area. A subsequent National workshop then validated the SBC strategy, ensuring it resonated broadly and meaningfully.

With the strategy in place, the creative elements of the campaign came to life. We designed vibrant posters, an uplifting campaign jingle, radio dramas, and more—all delivering powerful messages about women accessing credit, stepping into roles as traders and aggregators, investing in quality agricultural inputs, and thriving in safe, supportive environments free from gender-based violence.

The campaign launched internally, engaging FtF IAM and WEKOnnect staff, and was followed by extensive training sessions for private sector partners. A total of 23 organizations and 71 staff members were trained on how to integrate the campaign into their work, emphasizing the pivotal role of SBC in their implementation processes.



Our mission was to connect with people where they lived and worked—in fields, markets, and homes. The centerpiece of our outreach was the KWELI EXPO, a series of community events that brought together local leaders, community members, and organizations. Through edutainment—a blend of drama, music, and community dialogue—we addressed harmful norms, and encouraged communities to adopt more inclusive behaviours. These events took place across 14 districts in five regions, creating a powerful platform for engagement and reflection.

At each gathering, the campaign’s message was clear: women belong at the heart of agricultural markets. Through participatory edutainment, 14 local drama groups (with 140 performers) brought real-life scenarios to the stage, illustrating the barriers women face in agriculture, and demonstrating ways to overcome these obstacles. These performances did more than entertain; they ignited essential conversations, inspired deep reflection, and spurred communities to take meaningful action.

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## Creating Conversations: Interpersonal Communication & Mass Media



While the large community events created significant momentum, we knew that lasting change would require more personal engagement. Equipped with KWELI chart and story sets, facilitators led focused group dialogues and one-on-one discussions, allowing participants to explore how these gender norms impacted their communities and families, at a deeper, more personal level.

Simultaneously, we leveraged mass media to extend our reach. Over 580 radio spots and DJ mentions broadcasted the KWELI message widely, while 12 radio talk shows provided a platform for community leaders, and influencers, to lend their voices to the campaign. By combining interpersonal engagement with the expansive reach of mass media, we amplified our message, connecting with diverse audiences across the region, and fostering a community-wide commitment to change.



*Measuring Impact: How Change Unfolded*





Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>



#### Key Lesson:

## It Takes Consistency and Community



Changing deep-rooted social norms is a gradual process, yet our efforts quickly began to yield meaningful results. To track shifts in attitude and beliefs influencing behaviour, we employed an adapted Net Promoter Score (NPS). At the baseline stage, detractors—those resistant to change—outnumbered promoters, who supported positive ideation. However, post-campaign data revealed a striking transformation: detractors decreased by 18%, while promoters increased by 24%, signaling a strong movement toward gender equality.



By the campaign's conclusion, ideation—the beliefs and mindset driving behaviour— had grown by 23.8%, and gender-related norms in agriculture saw an exceptional improvement of 80.7%. The final NPS indicated a 34.7-point rise in positive ideation, culminating in an 18.9% overall improvement in social norms. These shifts reflected real progress in changing attitudes and behaviours surrounding women's roles in agriculture.

While the numbers are compelling, they only tell part of the story. The true impact of the KWELI campaign is evident in the lives transformed along the way. Throughout the campaign, we worked closely with community members and leaders to document powerful stories of change. These personal testimonies—from women and men across our implementation districts—serve as living proof of the power of challenging, and reshaping harmful norms.

### **The Key Lesson:** It Takes Consistency and Community

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POST-CAMPAIGN DATA REVEALED  
A STRIKING TRANSFORMATION

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Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>

The KWELI campaign highlighted a crucial insight: changing social norms requires a multifaceted approach, that combines consistent effort, integrated interventions, and a focus on the specific needs and preferences of the target audience. Our success stemmed from a theory-driven, evidence-based methodology that allowed us to effectively design, monitor, and evaluate the program. By integrating interpersonal communication, participatory edutainment, and mass media, we created a fertile ground for change to take root.

Most importantly, we learned that real transformation happens when communities unite—when people engage in open dialogue, listen to each other, and reflect on their shared experiences. This participatory process can shift deeply ingrained norms, that once seemed unchangeable, thereby opening up new possibilities for women, families, and entire communities. Please find the attached WeTransfer link to WEKOnnect Group video's submission.

**Mindset driving  
behaviour**  
Grown by

⬆️ **23.8%**

**gender-related  
norms in  
agriculture**

⬆️ **80.7%**

**Final NPS  
indicated**

⬆️ **34.7%**

Point rise in positive ideation

**Culminating  
in an**

⬆️ **18.9%**

overall improvement  
in social norms.

## About the Author



**WEKOnnect Group**

WEKOnnect Group is a mission-driven agency dedicated to providing organizations in the development sector with accessible and effective social and behavior change solutions. These solutions empower individuals and communities to achieve sustainable success. Our core values—Honesty, Trust, Creativity, Innovation, Passion, Hard work, Discipline, and a warm culture—guide our efforts to create #BrighterTimes for the communities we serve. WEKOnnect Group has a diverse client portfolio, spanning the corporate and international development sectors. We have implemented projects focused on health communication in various areas, including; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Sexual Reproductive Health, Family Planning, Early Childhood Development, and Social and Gender Norms. Our clients include USAID-funded projects, UN agencies like UNICEF and the World Bank, and corporate organizations such as Bank of Uganda, MTN, and Stanbic Bank.



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>

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## VALUING THE WISDOM OF THE ELDERLY IN STRENGTHENING THE RWANDAN FAMILY. (ELDERLY, RWANDAN)

This short paper highlights how involving community members in problem-solving yields sustainable solutions for community members, builds their capacity to value the wisdom of the elderly, and uphold social values. Rwanda has initiated policies and programs aiming at ‘finding solutions from within’. To achieve this objective, Rwanda has embraced traditional and innovative practices known as Home-Grown Solutions (HGSs), or Home-Grown Initiatives (HGI) for social economic development, and has mainstreamed these into National development policies and programs. The aim is to use approaches and tools that are relevant and tailored for Rwandans realities. Therefore, Rwanda initiated HGSs in its mission for appropriate development approaches, instead of using models from other countries that may not be relevant for Rwanda (Twikirize &Spitzer, 2019).



Through the different initiatives in place, community members contributed to finding solutions to problems affecting families, especially by ‘giving voice to the wisdom of the elderly’ in reviving cultural and social norms, that used to sustain communities. The paper will not disclose the names and the exact locations of the participants for ethical considerations (anonymity and confidentiality). The first case is about a community platform known as “Mwiwusenya Turahari” translated as ‘do not destroy it, we are here’. As members narrate, it is about ‘not destroying neither the family nor the culture’. It is an initiative that was created to resolve conflicts between spouses, without involving the authorities, rather by using traditional social norms of uniting spouses going through family conflict. [7]



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>



“... Violence against women was not tolerated by the culture, even if some people tend to think that culture privileged violence against women.

As documented from the above links and from the conversation I had with two members of the community of this platform, the idea to start came, once local leaders went to solve a family conflict in a family where both spouses were above 60 years. The man told the authorities that these kinds of problems are solved by people of the same age, not by young people. Back in the office, the local authorities reflected on what they can do and resolved to work with the community to find solutions that are not directly linked to conventional laws. During a community meeting, which is also one of the HGIs in Rwanda, authorities shared the idea with participants, who welcomed it. Authorities therefore asked community members to choose men and women of good morals and integrity, trustworthy and responsible, to be part of the committees at the Village level. Committee members visit families in conflicts, and help them solve conflicts

in a peaceful and confidential way. The aim is to strengthen the families, not destroy them.

**When asked if this approach doesn't sustain violence against women, one participant replied;**

“No, it can't. Even in the past, cultural norms urged men to protect their wives, to make sure their wives were comfortable. Violence against women was not tolerated by the culture, even if some people tend to think that culture privileged violence against women. The platform is organized in such a way that both spouses can express themselves individually and together, then, we help them to understand their contribution in the conflict and accompany them in the process of seeking and giving pardon.



Source: <https://togetherwomenrise.org/programfactsheets/african-women-rising/>



As of January 2024, 85% of families were supported by Mwiwusenya Turahari, without the involvement of the local authorities. Thus, the platform is in place to revive the social norms that prescribed to the community to protect the integrity of the family members, on one side. On the other side, the platform is valuing the wisdom of the elderly people, who know about positive social norms and cultural practices of conflict resolution, and reconciliation.

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As of January  
2024,



**85%**

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## SECOND STEP

The second case concerns a community initiative known as “Ibanga ry’urugo” literally ‘the secret of home. [8]’ This initiative originates from another HGLs known as ‘Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi’ translated literally as ‘parents’ evening forum’, which is among the innovative approaches for the socio-economic development of Rwandan population. Through this platform, men and women meet to discuss and devise strategies for the wellbeing of family members (Uwihangana et al., 2019; Uwihangana et al., 2020). After realising that ‘Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi’ is a successful platform in addressing family problems, the initiative was scaled up to become ‘Umugoroba w’Umuryango’ literally ‘family evening forum’, to include children and youth. During this forum, problems are discussed openly, and participants find solutions together. However, this approach does not suit all the participants, so a more discrete platform was formed to resolve family problems, for those who prefer a level of privacy.

### One of the committee members narrated to me:

“

‘Ibanga ry’urugo’ is like a baby of ‘Umugoroba w’Umuryango’. We were once trained and told by our leaders that family problems should be solved within ‘Umugoroba w’Umuryango’. But we realised that some couples do not disclose family problems in public. I was the president of Umugoroba w’Umuryango’, and at the end of the meetings, people would disclose to me privately that they have problems in their families that they cannot reveal to the whole community.”

The above statement highlights some of the values of Ubuntu philosophy, that are applied to empower communities and family through; trust, love, unity, dignity, hope, and respect (Bhangyi et al., 2023). Community members trust in the platform (they attend the meetings and share their problems, hoping to find support from fellow neighbours). Additionally, some people disclose their problems, to the leaders, privately. The leaders also care about the members of the platform, to the point of noticing that some feel uncomfortable in disclosing publicly, so decide to respect their dignity by approaching them.

“

### A committee member had this to say:

“I was approached by a community member about a very complicated problem that had lasted for a long time in the family. I met the family, followed up on the problem, till it was solved, and the couple reunited. Another person exposed another family problem, but I told myself that I could not handle all these problems alone. I contacted fellow members of Umugoroba w’Umuryango, and suggested to them to start an innovative approach to family problems that I named ‘Ibanga ry’urugo’. They all agreed, and we started.”



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/east-africa>



The 'Ibanga ry'urugo' platform helped many families reunite, to conclude legal marriage in the region, where many couples were not legally married, and did not understand the value of legal marriage. Couples are happy to approach elders for their wisdom and life experiences.

In summary, the two platforms' achievements demonstrate that communities can solve problems themselves, using social norms that derive from indigenous knowledge of individual communities. This is in line with the current definition of social work recognising the role of indigenous knowledge, in solving social problems. This definition aligns well with Ubuntu philosophy and practice, as disclosed by Mayaka et al. (2023, p.20):

“

By taking into consideration the person's humanity, values, norms, and culture, the Ubuntu approach supports people's wellbeing, and helps achieve tangible results in their social environment.”

Africa is rich in social norms and practices that can contribute to the wellbeing of communities, and address societal problems. It is our duty as social workers to document these sources of knowledge, by approaching the elderly, learn from their wisdom to build our families, communities, and countries. Therefore, “the Ubuntu philosophy has crucial implications for the elderly, as it is about the continuity of generations (Aharimpisya et al., 2023, p.351), and the preservation of positive social norms that sustain societies.



Committee members attending a meeting discussing the achievements of “Mwiwusenyi Turahari” CBO in Nyagasozi Village, Rukoma Cell, Sake sector, Ngoma District, Eastern Province. It was on December 11, 2020, during a visit by the then Minister in the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), Honourable Professor Jeannette Bayisenge.

Courtesy to Ngoma District News webpage/Information webpage:  
[http://197.243.22.137/ngoma/index.php?id=38&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bnews%5D=578&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=3f3bbb80db779cfe20ba9b7b520ff19f](http://197.243.22.137/ngoma/index.php?id=38&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=578&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=3f3bbb80db779cfe20ba9b7b520ff19f) accessed on October 21, 2024

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**Title of the news:** Gahunda ya “Mwiwusenya Turahari” igisubizo mu gukemura amakimbirane yo mu miryango. (“Mwiwusenya Turahari” program is a solution to resolve family conflicts).

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## About the Author



**Mrs. Uwihangana Consolée**



Mrs. Uwihangana Consolée is an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Rwanda, College of Arts and Social Sciences, and a PhD candidate in Social Work from Gothenburg University, Department of Social Work. Mrs. Consolée is a member of different Social Work research platforms on indigenisation of Social Work Education and Practice. She has contributed to publications on social work practice in Rwanda, Africa and beyond. Her research interests focus on disability, women, gender/gender equality and family, indigenisation, decolonisation in Social Work education and practice. Mrs. Consolée is passionate about reading, gardening and culinary arts.





Source: <https://iafrica.com/why-african-families-are-getting-smaller/>

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, COMMUNITY AND FACILITY-BASED PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND HEALTH PROMOTION INTERVENTIONS, IN MKURANGA DISTRICT,

### *PWANI REGION TANZANIA*

#### **Paza Sauti (Speak Loudly against GBV) Success Story**

The Tanzania Health Promotion Support (THPS) implemented the ‘Paza Sauti’ project in Mkuranga District, Tanzania. Funded by the United States Ambassadors Fund for HIV/AIDS Relief (AFHR), the project aimed to address harmful gender norms that hinder healthcare access, and to prevent and respond to sexual violence. The project utilized the Men as Partners (MAP) methodology, focusing on both men and women, to enhance community capacity. Collaborating with various stakeholders, including the police, community development officers, and peer mentors, the project reached a large audience, including primary and secondary school students. Through focus group discussions and educational sessions, the project successfully facilitated the reporting and trial of numerous sexual and physical/emotional abuse cases. This intervention significantly shifted societal perceptions towards gender equality in the district.

One notable success story is that of Mr. Revocatus Adam Rwegasira, who initially believed household chores were solely a woman’s responsibility. After participating in the project’s gender learning sessions, he realized the importance of sharing household tasks, and now actively supports his wife. This highlights the project’s positive impact on transforming gender roles, and promoting a more equitable division of labour within households.





Revocatus Rwegasira, resident of Ngunguti Village, Vikindu ward in Mkuranga district Pwani, Tanzania, helping his wife Avelina Rwegasira to wash dishes. This was possible after attending GBV gender learning sessions through Paza Sauti Project (2020-2021) that was funded by United States Ambassadors Fund for HIV/AIDS Relief (AFHR).

### **Paza Sauti increases community confidence in tackling the challenges of violence**

Siwema, a 51-year-old woman from Mkwalia Kitumbo village in Mkuranga ward, Pwani district, Tanzania, actively participated in community dialogue sessions, led by peer mentors, through the Paza Sauti project. As a caregiver of five children, including two from her late brother, she demonstrated remarkable resilience and strength when her family was tragically affected by violence.

In August 2021, Siwema's daughter, a secondary school student, was tragically raped after leaving a friend's house during Eid celebrations. Attacked and sprayed in the face with a substance that caused her to lose consciousness, she regained awareness to find herself covered in blood. With the help of a nearby resident, she managed to return home.

Upon her daughter's arrival, Siwema noticed the bloodstains and immediately took her to a private room for examination. Drawing upon the knowledge gained from gender learning sessions, she discovered the devastating truth—her daughter had been raped. Siwema wisely instructed her daughter not to clean herself, preserving crucial evidence. The following morning, Siwema took her daughter to the hospital for medical treatment and then

proceeded to the police station to file a report. Her quick thinking and determination ensured that the case was brought to court, where the perpetrator was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

The Paza Sauti project empowered Siwema, by providing her with vital training on gender, power dynamics, violence, and family care. This knowledge enabled her to stand firm for her daughter's rights and address gender-based violence, not only within her own family, but also within the broader community.



***GBV Joint Mentorship to Healthcare providers, police gender desk officer and social welfare officer at Irine-Kilimahewa health Centre in Mkuranga, Pwani Tanzania***

### **A male champion in reducing GBV and VAC cases in the community**

Agrippa Chidiel Mwanyika, a 54-year-old resident of Picha ya Ndege Village in the Vikindu ward of Mkuranga district, Pwani, Tanzania, is a proud participant of the Paza Sauti gender learning sessions. A devoted husband and father to three children, he has become a strong advocate within his community, teaching and counselling others about the importance of stopping gender-based violence (GBV).

His transformation began after participating in the Paza Sauti gender training sessions, which equipped him with new skills and knowledge, to address GBV. One memorable incident put Agrippa's new skills

to the test, when he encountered a conflict between a husband and his second wife. The wife felt neglected, as her husband spent most of his time with his first wife, leading to a heated argument, and the husband's threat of divorce. Agrippa intervened, drawing on the knowledge he had gained from the Paza Sauti Men, as Partners gender learning sessions. He offered guidance on building healthy relationships, promoting respect over violence, and the importance of communication. Thanks to Agrippa's timely intervention, the husband reconsidered the divorce, and the couple eventually reconciled. Agrippa's ability to handle GBV cases within his community and promote healthier relationships, demonstrates the positive impact of the Paza Sauti gender training session.



Participants of Paza Sauti Project in a group discussion during gender learning sessions in Vikindu Ward, Pwani region Tanzania



*L-R Agrippa Chidiel Mwanyika and Participants of Paza Sauti Project in a group discussion during gender learning sessions in Vikindu Ward, Pwani region Tanzania*

## About the Author



Evetha Erasto, a dedicated advocate for gender equality and social justice, brings over a decade of experience in empowering vulnerable populations. Holding a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Dar es Salaam, and currently finalizing her Master's in Gender Studies at the Open University, Evetha possesses a deep understanding of the complex issues surrounding gender-based violence (GBV).



Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/>



## MY RIGHT: NO VIOLENCE”. A GENDER NORMS SHIFTING PROJECT IMPLEMENTED BY – ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT (ACFODE) IN KYEGEGWA DISTRICT, UGANDA. (VIOLENCE, GENDER NORMS)

### ***Success stories from Kyegegwa District, Uganda***

In Kyegegwa District, Uganda, and its surrounding areas, communities are increasingly adopting positive behaviours and beliefs among all genders and ages. This positive shift is partly due to the work of organizations like Action for Development (ACFODE), a national women’s rights organization established in 1985, to promote women’s rights, empowerment, and gender equality in Uganda. ACFODE’s “My Right: No Violence” project in Kyegegwa District, has produced encouraging outcomes, demonstrating the impact of such initiatives on fostering positive social change.

### **Education**

Many families are now actively encouraging both women and men to pursue education, by supporting them to complete their studies, and compete effectively in the workforce. Education is increasingly viewed as a valuable asset across various societies, with particular emphasis on initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in schools, and reducing dropout rates for girls. Many communities are increasingly valuing education for both girls and boys. Initiatives aimed at encouraging girls to stay in school and complete their studies, are gaining traction, leading to higher enrolment and retention rates.

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#### **Below is a success story of how Namara Viola made a transformational change to return back to school**

Viola had dropped out of school when she was in Senior 2, after being neglected by her father. She had no interest in returning to school, when she encountered Action for Development (ACFODE) facilitators, who offered training, and encouraged her to consider returning to school.

“After sitting down, seeing what all our trainers and facilitators kept telling us on the importance of education, I realized the value of education, and started looking for ways to go back.”

Viola returned to school, and even became a community mobilizer for the Listeners’ Club in Kanyinya, thanks to ACFODE’s programs. She took on a leadership role, encouraging others to join and benefit from the programs offered by ACFODE. She then transitioned to the Gender Based Violence Prevention (GBV) Club at Kibuye Secondary School, continuing to spread the message of the positive influence of ACFODE interventions.

“My persistence has paid off; I am now continuing my studies, with renewed Vigor and confidence. My public speaking skills have improved. Before, I couldn’t stand in front of people and act in a play. But we are currently acting in churches, meetings and other public speaking engagements.”

Their community performances address issues around violence, early pregnancies/ marriages, and how to protect themselves against exploitation, aiming to educate and inspire the community to make positive changes. On top of the knowledge and skills that they have acquired, Viola, her peers, and the overall community benefit from the continued support provided by ACFODE. She feels empowered, knowing that there is a network of support available to help in times of need.



***Namara Viola shares her pride in education***



***Viola taking a bold step to champion education in her community***

“

“My persistence has paid off; I am now continuing my studies, with renewed Vigor and confidence.



***Figure1: Girls from Kibuye Primary school support each other to avoid early marriages and complete their studies.***

## Economic Empowerment

Men and boys are also being recognized as vital allies in promoting women and girls' rights. Initiatives that engage men in discussions about gender roles, encourage them to advocate for, and protect women's rights, while also participating in domestic responsibilities. Programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women at the household level, have seen men become supportive partners in income-generating activities. One example is the joint production of liquid soap at home, which not only enhances family income, but also strengthens their bond, through working together.

The couple training organized by Action for Development (ACFODE) helped us to address the root causes of family violence. A lot of the family conflicts stems from economic pressures. Therefore, capacity building in this area was very much needed. They taught us about financial management, saving, investing, and how to start small income-generating activities, to increase our shared earnings." They say an idle mind is the devil's workshop, and that's true. When you are both contributing, it is different. Now, when I'm busy harvesting, my wife is making soap—a skill we learned from ACFODE. "We used to spend money buying soap for the children as they went to school, but now we make our own. It's not just for home use; we also sell it." Beyond the changes in their home, the couple attests to transformation in other homes.

"I've seen families that were struggling before the training, and now they've turned their lives around. We now solve many issues within the village, which would have otherwise ended up in the police or LC1 office". The model couple approach is voluntary, cost-free, and fosters harmony. It allows others to learn by the example of the model couple in their village, but also provides couples with support from their peers, as they too start to change their relationship. As a result of the program, the community formed a Model Couple Association, which has strengthened their problem-solving abilities. "I've learned that when we are organized, there's so much we can achieve," the model couple says. "We have various points of reference, and people we can turn to for help with supporting couples in the community, to be their best.





*A couple working together during Liquid soap making Right: Helping each other in packaging and ready for sale in their community.*

### **Another female, who participated in the program, had this to say**



“As a woman, I appreciate ACFODE for involving both men and women. When an issue affects a woman, she comes to me; when it affects a man, he turns to a fellow man. This approach creates a balance in family leadership. Money matters are at the heart of domestic violence. As such, the income generating training is a game changer, as it helps create financial independence for families, especially the aspect of fairness in sharing resources. Most of the issues we used to face as women were related to economic violence, but now we feel respected, and appreciated. We appreciate ACFODE for the good work they are doing in helping us create peaceful families and communities. Women no longer feel manipulated like they used to; we now feel valued, and share roles and responsibilities in a home.”

Model families who practice equitable sharing of responsibilities serve as examples within communities, helping to reduce intimate partner violence, and foster healthier relationships. Such families act as role models, significantly contributing to a decline in intimate partner violence cases. Communities are promoting non-violent conflict resolution methods, which reduces violence, and enhances social cohesion.

Communities that celebrate and promote women’s contributions, and actively challenge harmful stereotypes, are paving the way for future generations to thrive in an environment that equally values and respects women and men. The emphasis on non-violent conflict resolution and supportive community networks enhances social stability, enabling both women and men to contribute meaningfully to society.

These positive norms enhance individual well-being, and drive collective progress, demonstrating that a commitment to gender equality is essential, for sustainable development. As these norms evolve, they hold the promise of creating a more equitable and prosperous future for all genders and ages in East Africa.

## About the Author



Happy Ainomugisha is a Programme Manager at Action for Development (ACFODE), where she oversees initiatives focused on GBV/VAWG prevention. She is a Trainer and Facilitator in Gender Mainstreaming, GBV/VAWG Prevention approaches, Advocacy, and Leadership. Outside of her professional pursuits, Happy enjoys dancing and cherishing moments with her family.

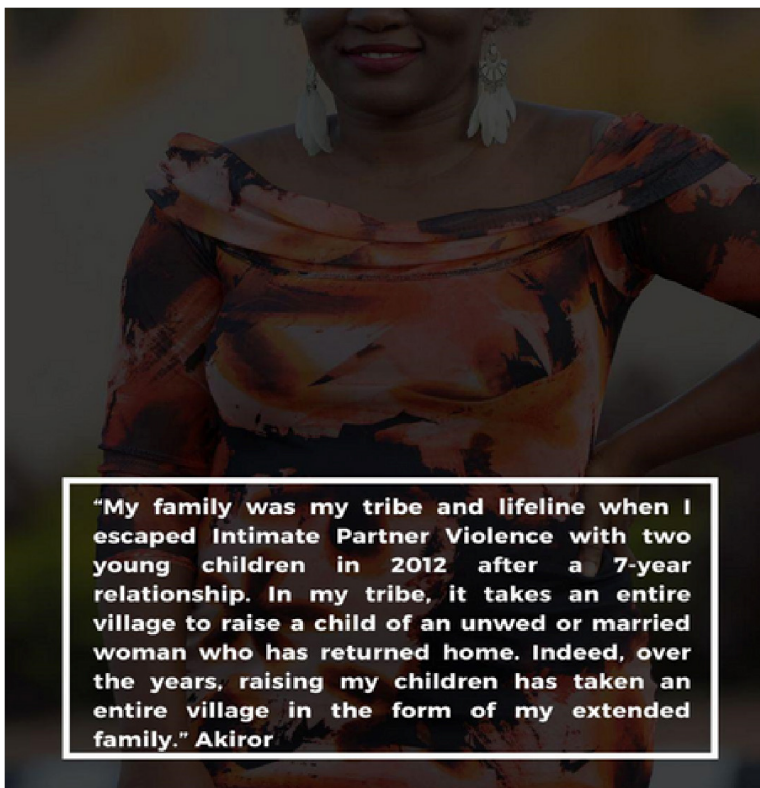


Source: <https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/african-women>

## HOW GENDER NORMS SAVED AKIROR AND HER CHILDREN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. (CULTURAL, NORMS, CHILDREN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

In the Iteso culture, unpaid dowry allows women to return to their families, providing a crucial safety net against domestic violence. This tradition offers a safe haven for women escaping abusive relationships, enabling them to protect themselves and their children. In patriarchal societies, where women often bear the brunt of domestic challenges, this custom provides vital support and resources, especially when legal recourse is slow, or ineffective.

Akiror, a 40-year-old Iteso woman, exemplifies the impact of this cultural norm. In 2012, she left her abusive partner, seeking refuge with her family. The emotional abuse and escalating physical aggression prompted her to leave, for her and her children's safety.



A pivotal moment for Akiror occurred one Sunday morning, when on the way to church, her partner spat in her face in front of their children. This act of disrespect, coupled with the ongoing emotional and physical abuse, made her realize she needed to leave, to protect herself and her children.

Two weeks later, after another episode of intense verbal abuse, Akiror left her partner and sought help from her family. Her brother welcomed her and her children into his home, demonstrating the supportive nature of the Iteso culture, where family provides refuge and resources in times of need.



Life at her brother's home was a source of support and stability. His wife helped care for the children, and her extended family provided essential assistance, enabling Akiror to rebuild her life.

Akiror's story highlights the positive impact of cultural norms that protect women and children. Despite the trauma she endured, she remains grateful for the cultural traditions, that provided her with the support and safety she needed, to leave an abusive relationship.

## About the Author



**Aidah Agwang**

Aidah Agwang is a passionate communications professional with over 11 years of experience in fundraising and advocacy across Uganda's government, private, and NGO sectors. She specializes in crafting and executing impactful communication, advocacy, and fundraising strategies. Aidah's work with organizations such as East-West Management Institute, Compassion International, USAID, UCRNN, Child's I Foundation, NASWU, IIDC, and WOUGNET has honed her expertise in content creation, storytelling, and digital campaigns. Outside of work, she is committed to empowering women and enjoys creating spaces for reflection and personal growth.

# BREAKING NORMS, INCREASING ACCESS: ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO ENHANCE UPTAKE OF HIV SERVICES AMONG MEN IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA- USAID AFYA YANGU SOUTHERN PROGRAM. (RELIGIOUS LEADERS HIV, MEN, TANZANIA)

## Background


Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) remains a significant public health challenge globally, with Tanzania being one of the most affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2023, approximately **1.8 million Tanzanians** were living with HIV, of which **1.5 million** knew their HIV status (UNAIDS, 2023). However, HIV services uptake among men remains critically low, primarily due to entrenched cultural norms, gender expectations, and social stigma. The Tanzania HIV Impact Survey (2022-2023) shows that while HIV status awareness among men has increased **from 52.5% in 2017 to 78.5%** in 2023, it's still least to **women**, which rose from **64.9% to 84.85%**, over the same period.

The PEPFAR-funded, USAID Afya Yangu (My Health) Southern Project, aims to provide integrated HIV and tuberculosis (TB) services in six Southern Regions of Tanzania. A Gender Baseline Analysis conducted at the project's inception, revealed that cultural norms surrounding masculinity, often drive risk-taking behaviours, and deter men from seeking HIV services.

The analysis recommended involving community influencers, including religious leaders, to challenge harmful masculine norms, and promote health-seeking behaviours. Below are several stories of showcasing the importance of acknowledging and centering religion and religious leaders in HIV Focused Interventions, and in efforts aimed at combating Gender Based Violence (GBV).

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In 2023,  
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**Of which**  
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## Background

Abbas Tagamtwa, a respected Lutheran church leader from Lukani in Iringa region, Tanzania, has undergone a personal transformation that had a profound impact on his congregation, and the wider community. Once deeply rooted in traditional norms that discouraged open discussions around issues like HIV, Abbas is now a passionate advocate for HIV awareness and testing, using his influence to challenge long-held beliefs, that hinder access to essential health services.

Growing up in a conservative community, Abbas was shaped by cultural norms that framed HIV as a taboo topic, especially in church settings. Like many religious leaders, he hesitated to address the disease, believing it to be outside the realm of faith. In his congregation, men often felt invulnerable, viewing HIV as a problem of others, while young couples hesitated to discuss sexual health, and women were rarely included in conversations about HIV prevention.



However, as the HIV crisis deepened in the Iringa region, Abbas could no longer ignore the pressing need for action. He began engaging with health organizations, including USAID Afya Yangu Southern, who offered him training on HIV awareness, prevention, and the importance of testing. His transformation was not immediate, but through conversations with health experts, and seeing the growing number of lives affected by HIV, Abbas

realized his role as a religious leader could be instrumental in breaking down the barriers surrounding the disease.

Abbas's newfound knowledge gave him the courage to speak out against traditional masculine behaviours, that hinder men from seeking HIV testing. He used his influence in the church to encourage men to view testing not as a sign of weakness, but as a responsible



and courageous act, that protects their families and communities. His sermons began to weave in messages of compassion, responsibility, and the importance of health care, including HIV testing for both men and women.

Abbas also recognized that pre-marriage counselling sessions, traditionally focused on spiritual matters, provided a valuable

opportunity to discuss sexual health. He encouraged young couples to get tested for HIV, before marriage, challenging the deep-seated belief that discussing such matters was inappropriate in religious contexts. His approach was grounded in scripture, framing health as a gift from God, that required stewardship and care.

## **Leveraging Faith and Community Gatherings**

In addition to sermons, Abbas saw the potential of religious gatherings, to serve as platforms for promoting HIV awareness. The choir concerts organized at his church were particularly popular, drawing large crowds from across the Region. Understanding the power of these events, Abbas collaborated with health organizations to integrate HIV testing services into the concerts. These gatherings, filled with music and faith, created an atmosphere of openness, allowing men, women, and young couples to access HIV services, without fear or stigma. At each concert, mobile health units were stationed outside the church, offering discreet HIV testing. Health workers provided education on HIV prevention, and the importance of early diagnosis. The result was a significant increase in the number of men and women getting tested, particularly those who had been hesitant to visit health clinics.

The journey was not without challenges. Abbas initially faced resistance from some members of his congregation, who felt that the church should not be involved in discussions about HIV or sexual health. Some accused him of promoting ideas that were contrary to religious teachings. Additionally, the stigma surrounding HIV persisted, with many viewing it as a disease associated with immoral behaviour.



To address these challenges, Abbas remained steadfast in his commitment. He held open dialogues with congregation members, explaining that discussing health, including HIV, was not in conflict with faith, but rather an extension of the church's mission to care for the wellbeing of its people. He also worked closely with other church leaders and health experts, to ensure that his messages were aligned with both religious values, and health goals. Over time, the resistance softened, and more congregants began to embrace the message of health and wellness.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Today, Abbas Tagawa's church is not only a place of worship, but a hub of health education, and transformation. His integration of HIV information into sermons and events like choir concerts has brought critical health services to those most in need. Through his leadership, men, women, and young couples are accessing HIV services in a safe and supportive environment.

Abbas's journey from a leader bound by tradition, to a champion of health, has inspired many, showing that faith and health can work hand in hand to create stronger, healthier communities. His vision is to continue organizing events that reach even more people, and he is encouraging other church leaders in the Region to follow suit. By addressing the cultural norms that have long kept people from accessing HIV services, Abbas is breaking the cycle of stigma and silence, helping to build a future where everyone, regardless of gender or marital status, feels empowered to take charge of their health. Abbas's courage and commitment to saving lives have made him a beacon of hope in Iringa, showing that with the right approach, even the most sensitive issues can be addressed in ways that honour both tradition and progress.

### **Sheikh Rajabu Mustafa Songambele: A beacon of hope in the fight against Gender-Based Violence in Ruvuma Region, Ruvuma Tanzania**



In a determined effort to combat gender-based violence (GBV) within the community, a sensitization meeting coordinated by the USAID Afya Yangu Southern Program Ruvuma's team was conducted in the Region, involving key Social Welfare and GBV stakeholders. It focused on the critical issues of intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic violence. Among the attendees was Sheikh Rajabu Mustafa Songambele, a respected sheikh, who also serves as the Regional BAKWATA (National Muslim Council) Secretary for Ruvuma Region.

“

“After the sensitization meeting, I felt I have a responsibility to bring change to my fellow Muslims, and community at large.”



During the meeting, participants engaged in a short orientation and deep discussions afterwards, exploring the root causes for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and domestic violence. The insights shared sparked a transformative journey for Sheikh Songambe. Inspired by the sensitization meeting, he reflected, “After the sensitization meeting, I felt I have a responsibility to bring change to my fellow Muslims, and community at large.”

Upon returning to his community, Sheikh Songambe took immediate action. He began using his platform as a religious leader to preach about the importance of recognizing and combating GBV in families, and community. His sermons emphasized compassion, understanding, and support for victims, encouraging his congregation to become active participants in the fight against violence.

Sheikh Songambe didn't stop there. He started offering counselling to couples facing conflicts and violence, applying the GBV skills he acquired during the training. “I have used the skills I got from the sensitization meeting to counsel couples, and restore peace in their families,” he shared, highlighting the importance of healing and reconciliation in resolving conflicts.

Recognizing the importance of broader outreach, Sheikh Songambe used local media to expand his impact. He partnered with Jogoo FM Radio, where he hosted two live sessions aimed at raising public awareness about GBV. “These were live radio sessions, and I received a lot of questions and concerns from the public. I believe the message reached a big audience, and hope for better community transformation,” he expressed, emphasizing the importance of open dialogues in driving change.



**Figure 2: sheikh Songambe with other stakeholders during the live radio session, creating awareness on GBV prevention in Ruvuma**

Sheikh Songambe's initiatives have helped bring change in the community, empowering individuals to speak out against violence, and seek support. His commitment to education and advocacy has fostered a more informed and compassionate community, one that stands firmly against gender-based violence.

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## **Breaking Chains: Emiliana Mgeveke's Journey from Stigma to Strength, Iringa Tanzania**

Emiliana Mgeveke, a vibrant 39-year-old woman, is a beloved fixture at the bustling Mwembetogwa Bajaj station in Iringa town. With her infectious smile and tireless work ethic, she nourishes the community, selling food to drivers and passengers alike. Emiliana's days are filled with the lively sounds of the market – laughter, bargaining, and the constant buzz of motorbikes.

Yet, beneath her cheerful exterior, Emiliana carried a heavy burden. A devout member of the Lutheran Church, she found solace in her faith, attending Sunday services and singing in the choir. However, this very faith inadvertently became an obstacle to her well-being. Emiliana, like many in her community, believed in the harmful myth that devout church members were somehow immune to HIV. This misconception, deeply ingrained in her mind, fueled her fear of judgment, and prevented her from seeking essential healthcare.



This powerful opening introduces Emiliana and her vibrant world, while subtly hinting at the internal conflict she faces. It effectively sets the stage for exploring the complex interplay between faith, community beliefs, and health-seeking behaviours.

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## **The Burden of Stigma**

For Emiliana, the idea of HIV was something distant, something that didn't apply to her or the people she knew. She was dating a fellow church member, and the relationship gave her a false sense of security. "We are people of God," she often told herself, echoing the beliefs held by many in her church. HIV, in her mind, was a problem for others—those outside her faith, those who didn't live according to God's teachings. This belief kept her in a state of denial, even as she began experiencing recurring health issues.



For months, Emiliana dealt with bouts of illness. She suffered from unexplained fatigue, persistent fevers, and infections that seemed to take forever to heal. Despite these signs, the thought of getting tested for HIV filled her with dread. She worried about what her church community would say, if they found out she had been tested. She feared judgment, gossip, and being ostracized. “What will people think?” became the question that dominated her thoughts. Her status as a regular churchgoer and choir member seemed incompatible with the possibility of being HIV positive. And so, she continued to avoid the health facilities, even as her health declined. “I don’t know what pushed me to do it,” Emiliana recalls. “Maybe it was the pastor’s words, or maybe it was seeing other people I knew getting tested. But I just stood up and walked to the tent.”

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## The diagnosis

Though the test was quick, waiting for the results felt agonizingly long for Emiliana. When the health worker finally gave her the results, her heart sank. She was HIV positive. In that moment, all her fears seemed to materialize, and the shame she had carried for so long threatened to overwhelm her. She worried about the implications of this diagnosis for her future, her place in the church, and her standing in the community.

However, Emiliana didn’t have to face her diagnosis alone. Pastor Mwakalinga, who had been instrumental in promoting HIV testing, was there to offer immediate support. He took her aside and began a series of counselling sessions, helping her

process the news, and challenging the misconceptions she had held for so long. The pastor reassured her that being HIV positive did not change who she was, nor did it diminish her worth as a person, or a member of the church. He emphasized that HIV was a medical condition like any other, one that could be managed with the right treatment and care. With his support, Emiliana began to confront the stigma she had internalized for so many years.

“I had always thought that if you were HIV positive, it meant you had done something wrong,” Emiliana shares. “But Pastor Mwakalinga helped me understand that this wasn’t a punishment. It was just a health issue, and I could live a normal life with the right treatment.”



“I had always thought that if you were HIV positive, it meant you had done something wrong,”

### Starting Treatment and Finding Hope

With Pastor Mwakalinga's guidance, Emiliana was linked to the Ipogolo Health Centre, where she learned about the benefits of antiretroviral therapy (ART). The medical staff explained how ART suppresses the virus, helping her maintain her health, and preventing the progression of HIV to AIDS. They emphasized the importance of accepting her diagnosis, and understanding that it was not a death sentence, but a manageable condition.

Emiliana began her ART regimen with determination. The first few weeks were challenging as her body adjusted to the medication, but the support she received from her healthcare providers and church community, helped her stay committed. One month after

starting ART, Emiliana noticed a remarkable improvement in her health. The opportunistic infections that had plagued her for months disappeared, and she felt stronger.

“I couldn't believe how quickly my health improved,” Emiliana says with a smile. “The sickness that had been holding me back for so long was gone. I had energy again, and I could go back to work without feeling weak.”

As her physical health improved, so did her mental and emotional well-being. The counselling sessions with Pastor Mwakalinga continued, helping her not only to manage her health, but to also reconnect with her faith in a deeper way. She realized that her diagnosis was not a reflection of her spiritual standing, and that God's love for her remained unchanged.

“I couldn't believe how quickly my health improved,”

### A New Chapter in Faith and Life

Today, Emiliana is a testament to the power of resilience and support. She has returned to her business at the Mwembetogwa Bajaj station, where she serves food with a renewed sense of purpose. Her ART regimen has become a part of her daily routine, and she is committed to taking her medication as prescribed, to maintain her health. More importantly, Emiliana has rejoined the church choir, where she continues to sing praises to God. Her voice, once weighed down by fear and stigma, is now a symbol of hope and renewal. Through her experience, Emiliana has become an advocate for HIV awareness in her church, sharing her story with others, and encouraging them to get tested and seek treatment, if necessary.

“ I want people to know that HIV is not the end of the world,”  
Emiliana says.

“It’s not something to be ashamed of. I’m living proof that you can live a full, healthy life with HIV, and that’s the message I want to share.”

Her willingness to confront her fears and seek help has not only transformed her life, but also challenged the myths and misconceptions that continue to

surround HIV in her church, and beyond. She is living proof that with the right support, anyone can overcome the challenges of an HIV diagnosis, and live a life full of hope, strength, and purpose. Her story serves as a powerful reminder that HIV does not define a person, and that the love and support of a community can make all the difference in breaking the chains of stigma. Today, Emiliana continues to shine as a beacon of hope, singing, not just for herself, but for all those who are on their own journeys toward health and healing.

## About the Author



**Mr. Rehani**

Rehani (Mr.) is a dedicated Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion specialist with over 12 years’ extensive experience in promoting gender equity and equality. He has successfully taken leadership role in researching, designing, and implementing gender-differentiated approaches, and Social Behavioral Change (SBC) strategies in large scale Sexual and Reproductive Health Right (SRHR), HIV/TB, and Reproductive, Maternal, New-Born, Child, and Adolescent Health Services (RMNCAH) and HIV/TB programs using human rights-based approaches. Currently, Rehani works as a Gender and Youth Manager at the USAID Afya Yangu (‘My Health’) Southern Project through T-MARC Tanzania.

## EXPLORING AND DIAGNOSING POSITIVE SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS FOR EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL PROGRAM DESIGN. (POSITIVE SOCIAL, GENDER NORMS, PROGRAM)



Source: [https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/cheerful-african-american-father-taking-care-having-fun-with-his-baby\\_17247655.htm](https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/cheerful-african-american-father-taking-care-having-fun-with-his-baby_17247655.htm)

The Impact and Innovations Development Centre (IIDC) is leading a consortium to expand the Responsible, Engaged, and Loving Fathers (REAL Fathers) program in Uganda. This evidence-based program aims to reduce violence, and promote early childhood development, through play-based learning.

To ensure the program's success and sustainability, IIDC conducted a social norms diagnostic study, to understand the influence of social norms on men's

aspirations and behaviours, related to intimate partner violence (IPV), and child caregiving.

The study identified positive social and gender norms that encourage healthy relationships. In some regions, religious and cultural leaders actively discourage violence against pregnant or breastfeeding wives, thereby promoting responsible fatherhood. The Bahima culture also discourages spousal abuse, particularly for young fathers living with their parents.



These insights have been used to enhance the REAL Fathers program, by customizing interventions to reinforce positive behaviours among young fathers. The program emphasizes respect and non-violence, engaging religious and cultural leaders, as well as parents, as advocates for positive change.





## About the Author



***Aloysious Nnyombi***

Aloysious Nnyombi is a Technical Advisor on Social Norms at Impact and Innovation Development Center (IIDC). In addition, he lectures at the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, at Makerere University. He has developed evidence-based impactful social norms transformation interventions in the Eastern Africa region, as well as disseminated learnings on social norms. Away from work, he loves being around his young family and playing football.



Source: <https://stockcake.com/i/>

# BREAKTHROUGH ACTION TANZANIA – HEALTH FOCUSED NORM SHIFTING INTERVENTIONS. (HEALTH, TANZANIA, NORM SHIFTING INTERVENTIONS)



## BREAKTHROUGH ACTION

PHOTO CREDIT: BREAKTHROUGH ACTION TANZANIA FOR USAID

FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.USAID.GOV/TANZANIA](http://WWW.USAID.GOV/TANZANIA) AND [WWW.CCP.JHU.EDU/PROJECTS/BREAKTHROUGH-ACTION/](http://WWW.CCP.JHU.EDU/PROJECTS/BREAKTHROUGH-ACTION/) AND USAID/TANZANIA SOCIAL MEDIA SITES.



Breakthrough ACTION Tanzania is a USAID-funded three-year program (2022-2024), led by Johns Hopkins Center for Communications Programs (JHCCP), dedicated to empowering Tanzanians to lead healthier lives, by fostering positive social and cultural changes. Through technical assistance to the Government of Tanzania (GoT), the program strengthens policy and coordination in Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) activities, designing, implementing, and monitoring initiatives across both National and Local levels. The program addresses critical health areas, including; reproductive health, family planning, maternal and child health, HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, Global Health Security, and other infectious diseases.

Key achievements include the Sitetereki youth platform, engaging young people in discussions around HIV and family planning, and the Chanjo ni Maisha vaccination campaign, which has reached over 24 million people nationwide. The Holela, Holela Itakucosti campaign promotes behaviours that prevent antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases, while the Furaha Yangu campaign and Ndondo Cup initiatives deliver HIV prevention messages to approximately 20.3 million people.

**Furaha Yangu campaign & Ndondo Cup initiatives** ▶



**Deliver HIV prevention messages** to approximately

**20.3 Million**  
PEOPLE.

**Chanjo ni Maisha vaccination campaign** ▶



Has **reached over**

**24 Million**  
PEOPLE **NATIONWIDE**

The program's targeted outreach has reached over 13.7 million people with maternal and child health messages, encouraging early antenatal visits, HIV retesting in late pregnancy, and modern contraceptive use. Breakthrough ACTION also revamped the NAWENZA platform, which utilizes an integrated and modified life-stage approach, to equip audiences with the information, motivation, and skills needed to adopt healthy behaviours throughout various life stages—from pregnancy and childbirth, to caregiving and malaria prevention—while addressing social norms for sustainable health

practices. Through robust SBC coordination, Breakthrough ACTION strengthens public health, ensuring that behavioural change efforts are impactful, and aligned with National health priorities.

Below are two video narrations depicting innovative norm shifting approaches, focused on addressing critical health areas. One is a Poem titled, 'Scoring Health Goals', and another is a video narration, highlighting the mass malaria prevention campaign conducted in Kagera.

## SCORING HEALTH GOALS

This video submission by USAID Breakthrough ACTION-Tanzania, is a poem titled “Scoring Health Goals”. It describes an innovative approach to engaging young men (aged 15-24) in HIV care, by integrating health services-such as HIV testing, condoms, and vaccinations-into football events like the Ndondo Cup. The campaign addressed gender norms that often hinder men from seeking healthcare, by bringing services to spaces where they naturally gathered. Insights from COVID-19 showed the value of integration, and the initiative successfully reached over 70,000 young men, breaking barriers to healthcare access.

### WATCH THE VIDEO HERE:

Scoring Health Goals (Ndondo Cup 2024) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7C6xhQFHxg>

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### POEM NARRATION

Reaching young men, 15 to 24, Blocked  
by norms that shut the door. Lagging  
behind in HIV care, the numbers show  
the gap laid bare. Testing and treatment  
left behind, a health crisis we had to  
unwind. The gap was clear, the stakes  
were high, we had to act, we had to  
try. Then came a spark, a guiding light,  
COVID eased, revealing insight. The  
pandemic showed a new way through,  
how to reach folks where they already  
drew. Football draws them, side by  
side, Ndondo Cup, where passions  
collide. A grassroots stage where men  
unite, Gathered by the game’s delight.

COVID taught us, in its wake, that  
integration is the path to take. In  
this space where crowds engage, we  
brought HIV care to center stage.  
Vaccines, testing-we made our stand,  
Meeting men where they proudly band.

So, we stepped in with a winning play,  
HIV care that’s here to stay. Testing,  
condoms, linked to care, Vaccinations  
offered there. Mass campaigns took  
to the air, spreading knowledge  
everywhere. And then the magic: they  
came in droves, Seventy thousand  
strong in rows. Ten thousand left with  
health in hand, young men engaged  
across the land. Lives were saved, care  
was shared, barriers broken, because  
we dared.

What excites us most is seeing the  
change, from distant to engaged.  
Young men who once avoided care,  
now accessing services everywhere.  
This model’s impact, its reach so grand,  
shows we can make a difference when  
we meet them where they stand. The  
future looks bright as we continue this  
stride, with confidence in the positive  
change we’ve amplified.



## BREAKING BARRIERS: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN COMMUNITY MOBILIZATIONS

This video submission by USAID Breakthrough ACTION - Tanzania features Dr. Julian Mgendi, Kagera Regional Malaria Focal, as he highlights the mass malaria prevention campaign, conducted in Kagera. Dr. Mgendi acknowledges the critical role of Social and Behavior Change (SBC) strategies and community mobilization, in addressing social norms around malaria prevention. He emphasizes the involvement of community volunteers, innovative approaches, and the successful distribution of mosquito nets to remote areas, breaking barriers, and achieving a sustainable impact.

**WATCH THE VIDEO HERE:** VIDEO NARRATION: SBC Kweli Campaign - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7C6xhQFHxg>

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Hello everyone! I am Dr. Julian Mgendi, Kagera Regional Malaria Focal.

Today, we're exploring the dynamic world of innovation and community mobilization, a journey made possible through PMI and Breakthrough ACTION. In our recent mass replacement campaign in Kagera, we witnessed a transformative shift in reaching the seemingly unreachable.

Breakthrough ACTION played a pivotal role in supporting our community mobilization efforts. During our planning meetings, we recognized Kagera's unique geography, challenging, yet full of opportunities. With vast areas to cover, we adopted alternative approaches. Our network of dedicated community volunteers became the backbone of our engagement across councils.

To maximize impact, we engaged and trained these community heroes. Through targeted orientation sessions, we equipped them with scripts, to enhance communication

skills, thereby empowering them to conduct interactive sessions within their communities.

Innovation didn't stop there. Thanks to Breakthrough ACTION, our volunteers received additional support-portable speakers, and motorcycles. These tools amplified their reach, overcoming the region's geographical challenges. The results were outstanding. Our volunteers reached even the most remote areas, ensuring 99% of registered households received ITNs.

Let's celebrate this innovative approach-a collaboration that demonstrates resourcefulness, and commitment to positively impact lives in hard-to-reach communities.

A heartfelt thank you to PMI and Breakthrough ACTION, for your invaluable support. Your dedication has reshaped the narrative of community mobilization in Kagera. Together, we continue to push boundaries, and create lasting positive change for the communities we serve.





## CONCLUSION

This publication highlights positive social norms emerging from interventions across East Africa. It showcases protective community norms that help prevent gender-based violence and other forms of harm, particularly against women, children, and vulnerable groups. It also illustrates how approaches such as community participation in music, dance, drama, and sports; leveraging existing networks; respecting elders; and engaging religious leaders can contribute to conflict resolution, improved health outcomes, economic empowerment, and shared caregiving responsibilities.

This publication aims to support implementing organizations, researchers, community representatives, and funders in recognizing the transformative role of positive social norms. It encourages stakeholders to build on existing protective norms, empowering communities to identify and implement solutions from within. While acknowledging the persistence of harmful norms, this approach fosters hope and motivation for sustainable social change.

The diverse approaches presented here should inspire creative, community-centered programming. Key strategies include prioritizing knowledge from elders, engaging men as partners in gender equality, promoting joint economic participation, safeguarding women through protective norms, and using innovative methods such as storytelling, peer mentorship, and media to shift harmful norms.

Researchers are encouraged to examine both positive and negative norms, ensuring a balanced perspective that informs effective interventions. Funders and donors, in turn, should adopt a holistic and context-sensitive approach to supporting social norms work. Ultimately, a deep understanding of how norms shape behavior will lead to more impactful, community-driven social change initiatives.

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