



**BEYOND ZERO**

INSPIRING ACTION. CHANGING LIVES.

# BEYOND ZERO TECHNICAL REPORT

**2023-2024**







# TECHNICAL REPORT 2023-2024

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**Design & Print:** Altrac Communications Ltd | +254 724 501026

**Photography:** Beyond Zero

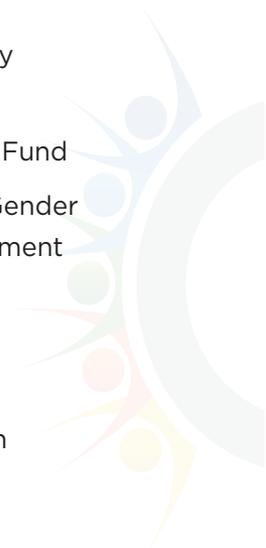
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## Acronyms

<b>ASALs</b>	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands	<b>MKI</b>	Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>BETA</b>	Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda	<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>BMCF</b>	Beth Mugo Cancer Foundation	<b>NCCP</b>	National Cancer Control Program
<b>CARMAA</b>	Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa	<b>NCD</b>	Noncommunicable Diseases
<b>CHPs</b>	Community Health Promoters	<b>NCI-K</b>	National Cancer Institute, Kenya
<b>CIFF</b>	Children's Investment Fund Foundation	<b>OAFLA</b>	Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS
<b>DED</b>	Deputy Executive Director	<b>PS</b>	Principal Secretary
<b>ECHN</b>	Enrolled Community Health Nurse	<b>SBCC</b>	Social and Behavior Change Communication
<b>eMTCT</b>	Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission	<b>S.C.K</b>	Supreme Court of Kenya
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>GFLA</b>	Global First Ladies Association	<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence	<b>ToTs</b>	Trainer of Trainers
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	<b>UHC</b>	Universal Health Coverage
<b>HPV</b>	Human Papillomavirus	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>IDEOF</b>	International Day to End Obstetric Fistula	<b>UNCSC</b>	United Nations Civil Society Conference
<b>KDHS</b>	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>KMTC</b>	Kenya Medical Training College	<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>KSG</b>	Kenya School of Government	<b>Women4Cancer</b>	Women4Cancer Early Detection and Treatment
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning		
<b>MHM</b>	Menstrual Hygiene Management		



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**BEYOND ZERO**  
INSPIRING ACTION. CHANGING LIVES.

**NIA**  
Live Your Purpose  
10 ULTRA SOFT FIT  
SANTITARY PADS

**NIA**  
Live Your Purpose  
10 ULTRA SOFT FIT  
SANTITARY PADS

**NIA**  
Live Your Purpose  
8 ULTRA SOFT FIT  
SANTITARY PADS

**TOWER**  
WHITE

**BEYOND ZERO**

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**TOWER**  
WHITE

**BEYOND ZERO**



**Through every chapter, one truth stands out: Beyond Zero is not just an initiative—it is a collective movement deeply rooted in partnerships and collaboration. It is inclusive. And above all, it is built on the belief that better is always possible.**

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## Foreword

Over the past ten years, Beyond Zero has grown from a bold call to action into a movement of what is possible when collective resolve meets commitment, and when service is guided by shared purpose. At its heart, Beyond Zero's work has believed in change, and these past years have reminded us—again and again—that true impact is born of collaboration. Guided by our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, we look back on our journey with a deepened sense of responsibility.

Each chapter in this report is more than an account of activities—it is a living narrative of lives touched, challenges met, and futures reimagined.

**Chapter 1** brings us to the very soul of our mission: maternal and newborn health. Through the Enrolled Community Health Nursing (ECHN) Program, the scholarship initiative, we are contributing to building a stronger frontline health workforce—one that ensures no mother or newborn is ever left behind.

**Chapter 2** unfolds the delicate, but powerful work of restoring dignity to women and girls affected by obstetric fistula. These are stories of pain turned into purpose, and despair turned into healing. Our approach here is not only medical—it is holistic, grounded in community, and anchored in justice.

**Chapter 3** delves into our efforts in cancer prevention and early detection—a space where awareness can mean survival. We share stories of how knowledge, timely diagnosis, and accessible services are making a tangible difference for women and families across Kenya.

**Chapter 4** explores our broader commitment to gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence. The joint collaboration of the establishment of the Institute for Gender and Social Development marks a significant step forward—a space to nurture leadership, dialogue, and action. Through campaigns, wellness programs, and county-led initiatives, we are challenging norms

and championing equity.

Finally, **Chapter 5** lays out the path forward, our new way of working, refined strategies for advocacy and dedicated efforts to scale up our efforts for impactful change.

Through every chapter, one truth stands out: Beyond Zero is not just an initiative—it is a collective movement deeply rooted in partnerships and collaboration. It is inclusive. And above all, it is built on the belief that better is always possible.

**Margaret Kenyatta**

**Founder and Patron, Beyond Zero**



## Background and Context

For over a decade, Beyond Zero has been at the forefront of transforming healthcare access and advancing the rights and well-being of women, children, and vulnerable communities across Kenya. Launched to tackle persistently high rates of maternal and child mortality as well as champion for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the Initiative has evolved into a powerful platform for driving systemic change in primary healthcare.

Beyond Zero functions as a catalytic force – mobilizing resources, influencing policy and fostering inclusive partnerships that bridge gaps in the health system. Through strategic collaboration with national and county governments, healthcare institutions, civil society and both public and private sector stakeholders, the initiative champions affordable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare for all. Its continued efforts prioritize equity and dignity in service delivery, ensuring that no one is left behind, especially the most marginalized and underserved communities.

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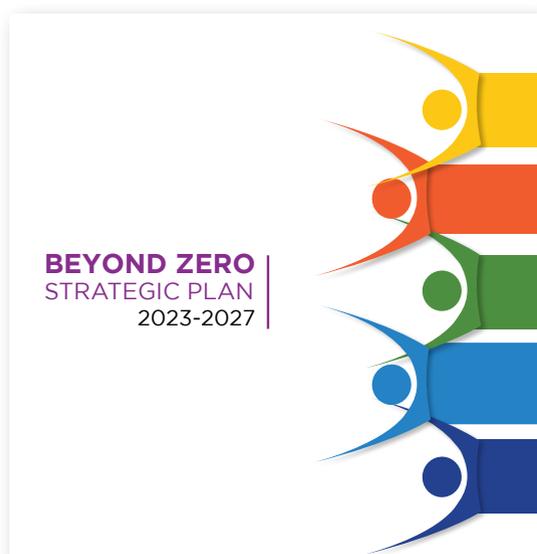


The vision for Beyond Zero was conceived in June 2013, when Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta, the Former First Lady of Kenya, made a bold and heartfelt pledge to champion maternal and child health and end preventable deaths. This defining moment took place during her first appearance at the Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) Conference, where her powerful commitment set the stage for transformative action.

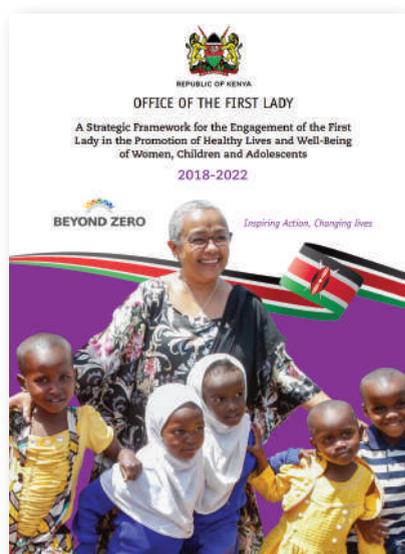
Fuelled by urgency and compassion, Her Excellency mobilized national attention around the health of women and children. Months later, on January 24, 2014, the Beyond Zero Campaign was officially launched, with Her Excellency serving as its visionary Founder and Patron. What began as a passionate promise has since evolved into one of Kenya's most impactful and enduring health movements.

Over the years, Beyond Zero has expanded its scope to tackle a broader range of health and social challenges such as: the intersection of menstrual health and education; promotion of early detection and screening for breast and cervical cancer; and addressing neglected health issues such as obstetric fistula and disability.

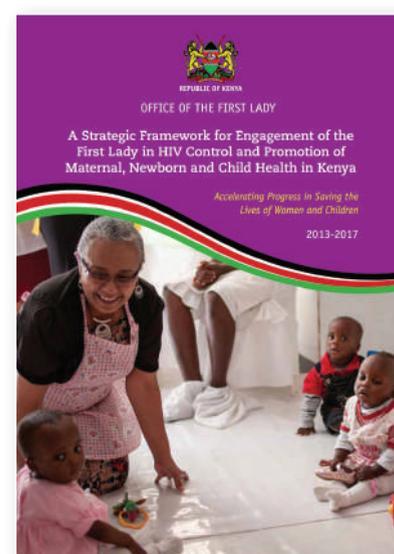
The work of Beyond Zero is informed by three Strategic Frameworks.



**Beyond Zero Strategic Plan  
(2023-2027)**



**Strategic Framework for the  
Engagement of the First Lady  
in the Promotion of Healthy  
Lives and Well-Being of Women,  
Children and Adolescents  
(2018-2022)**



**A Strategic Framework for  
Engagement of the First Lady  
in HIV Control and Promotion  
of Maternal, Newborn and Child  
Health in Kenya  
(2013-2017)**

These frameworks are aligned to global, regional, and national instruments committed to enhancing health outcomes and promoting gender equality.

## GLOBAL

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3



To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5



To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

### GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM



To ensure that the bold ambitions of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action on women's rights are finally implemented, and that the SDGs are achieved

### THE GLOBAL SUPER FAST TRACK FRAMEWORK



## REGIONAL

### CARMMA



To trigger concerted and increased action towards improving maternal and newborn health and survival across the African continent

### AFRICA AGENDA 2063



Africa's development blueprint to achieve inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development over a 50-year period

### MAPUTO PROTOCOL



The Protocol guarantees extensive rights to African women and girls and includes progressive provisions on harmful traditional practices

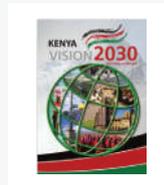
## NATIONAL

### THE CONSTITUTION OF KENYA, 2010



It enshrines rights and fundamental freedoms and provides for economic and social rights including the right to reproductive healthcare.

### KENYA VISION 2030



A Kenyan development program, aiming to raise the average standard of living in Kenya to middle income by 2030

### BOTTOM-UP ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AGENDA (BETA)



The manifesto of Kenya Kwanza administration that is geared towards economic turnaround and inclusive growth



## Beyond Zero: A Decade of Work

Beyond Zero has evolved into a transformative advocacy platform representing a collaborative effort to advance systemic change and strengthen the focus on maternal, newborn, and child health in Kenya. In close partnership with government, civil society, the private sector, and local communities, it has supported the transformation of healthcare delivery by prioritizing prevention and access to quality services, especially for women and children in hard-to-reach areas.

Recognizing that lasting impact requires more than service delivery, Beyond Zero has focused on shifting mindsets, mobilizing political will, and strengthening the links between national policies and community-level action. Its work complements and amplifies public sector efforts by filling critical gaps and building momentum for sustainable reform.

With shifting healthcare needs and emerging public health challenges, Beyond Zero's work remains as urgent as ever. The Initiative is committed to adapting, innovating, and expanding its reach.





  
**BEYOND  
ZERO**  
INSPIRING CHANGE

## About the Beyond Zero Strategic Plan 2023-2027

In 2023, following a review of the health landscape, achievements, and emerging challenges, Beyond Zero developed its Strategic Plan 2023-2027. The Plan is grounded on analysis of lessons learned, stakeholder consultations, and a forward-looking approach to making changes and impact. It reflects the initiative's renewed commitment to advancing healthcare and social challenges affecting women and girls.

With the support of committed partners, Beyond Zero has expanded its scope to contribute to broader health and social systems, including:





► Promoting early detection and screening for breast and cervical cancer within primary health care



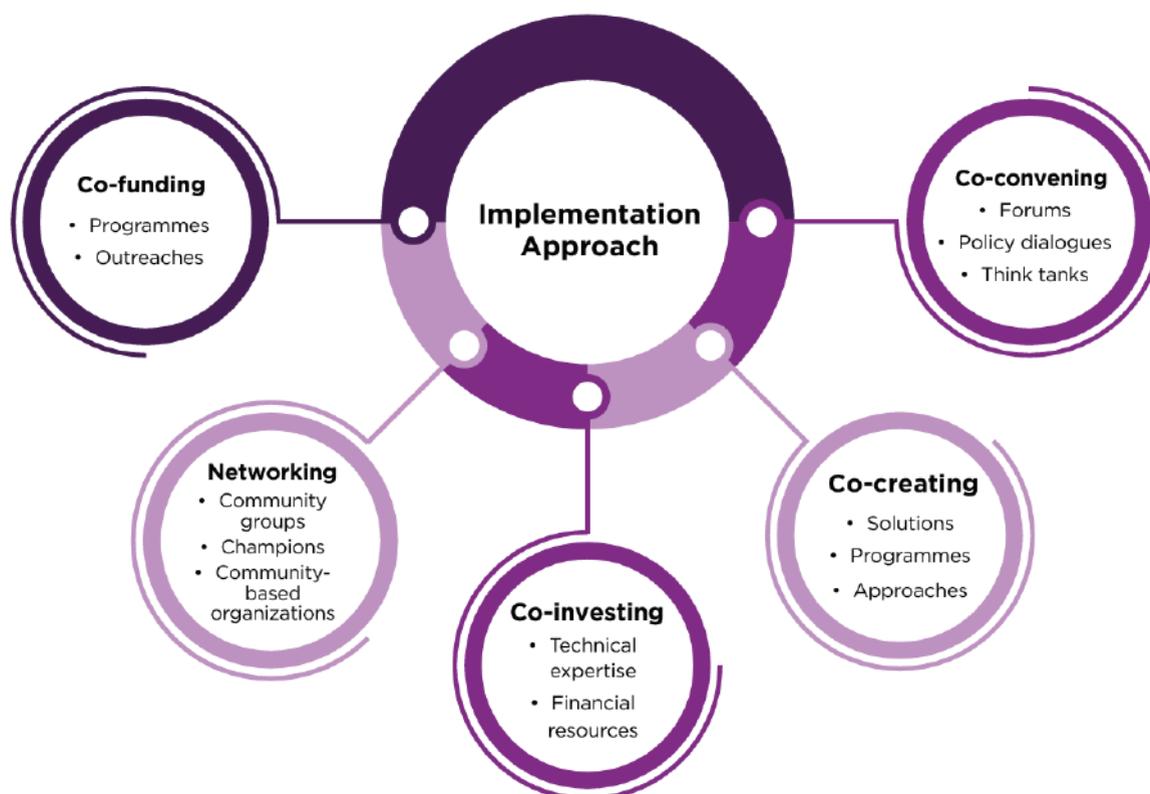
► Elevating neglected issues such as obstetric fistula and disability into the national conversation and programming



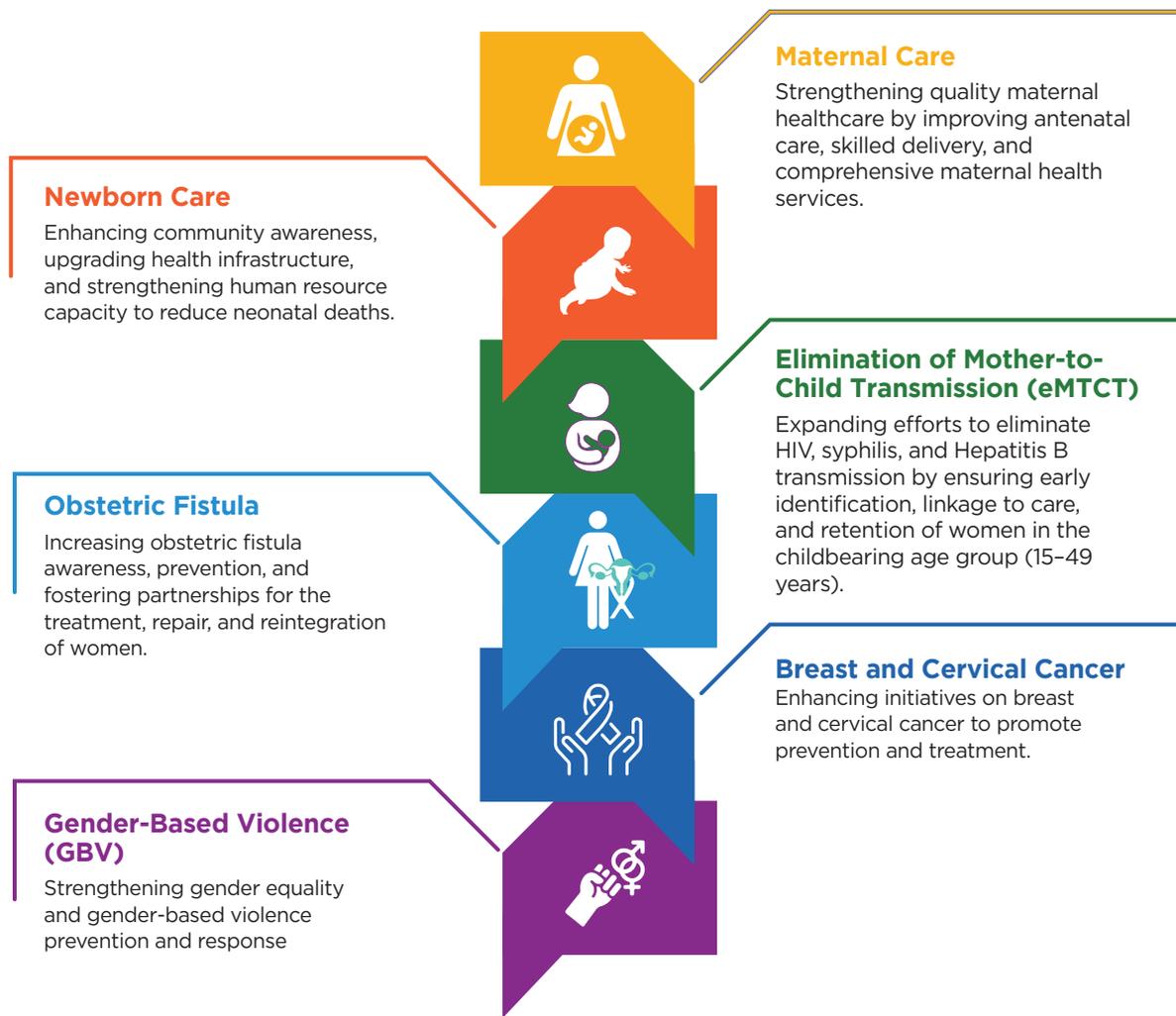
► Advancing menstrual health as a lever for improving girls' education and dignity

By anchoring its interventions in partnership and system-wide thinking, Beyond Zero contributes to building more resilient, responsive, and inclusive health systems for all.

The Plan is implemented through a strengthened partnership model to co-create, co-invest, and co-implement targeted interventions that address Kenya's most pressing health challenges.



The Strategic Plan focuses on:



This report captures the progress made during the period 2023 to 2024, and the lessons learned to inform the future. It is a testament to the power of collective action and unwavering commitment to saving lives and strengthening healthcare systems.



# Promoting Access to Quality Maternal and Newborn Care in Kenya

# 01



## Introduction

Maternal and newborn health remains a key priority in Kenya's national health agenda, underscoring the government's commitment to reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. The persistently high rates highlight an urgent need for targeted interventions, especially in underserved regions, to strengthen maternal healthcare services.

*Table 1: KDHS Maternal Mortality Rate Trend*

SURVEY YEAR	Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) (per 100,000 live births)
KDHS 2008-09	488
KDHS 2014	362
KDHS 2022	355

The Beyond Zero Initiative continues to play an instrumental role in promoting maternal and newborn healthcare. The Initiative advocates for equitable investments in strengthening primary healthcare systems as a pathway to universal health coverage and social justice. In line with this commitment, the Initiative prioritized investments in training and capacity building for enrolled community health nurses aimed at equipping frontline providers with skills and support to improve community-based maternal and newborn care.

One of the most significant constraints in maternal and newborn healthcare is the shortage of human resources for health, particularly in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). In 2016, Beyond Zero in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Kenya Medical Training College (KMTc), established the Beyond Zero Nursing Scholarship Program. The Program was designed to strengthen the health workforce at the primary care level through a certificate course in enrolled community health nursing. It directly contributes to Kenya's

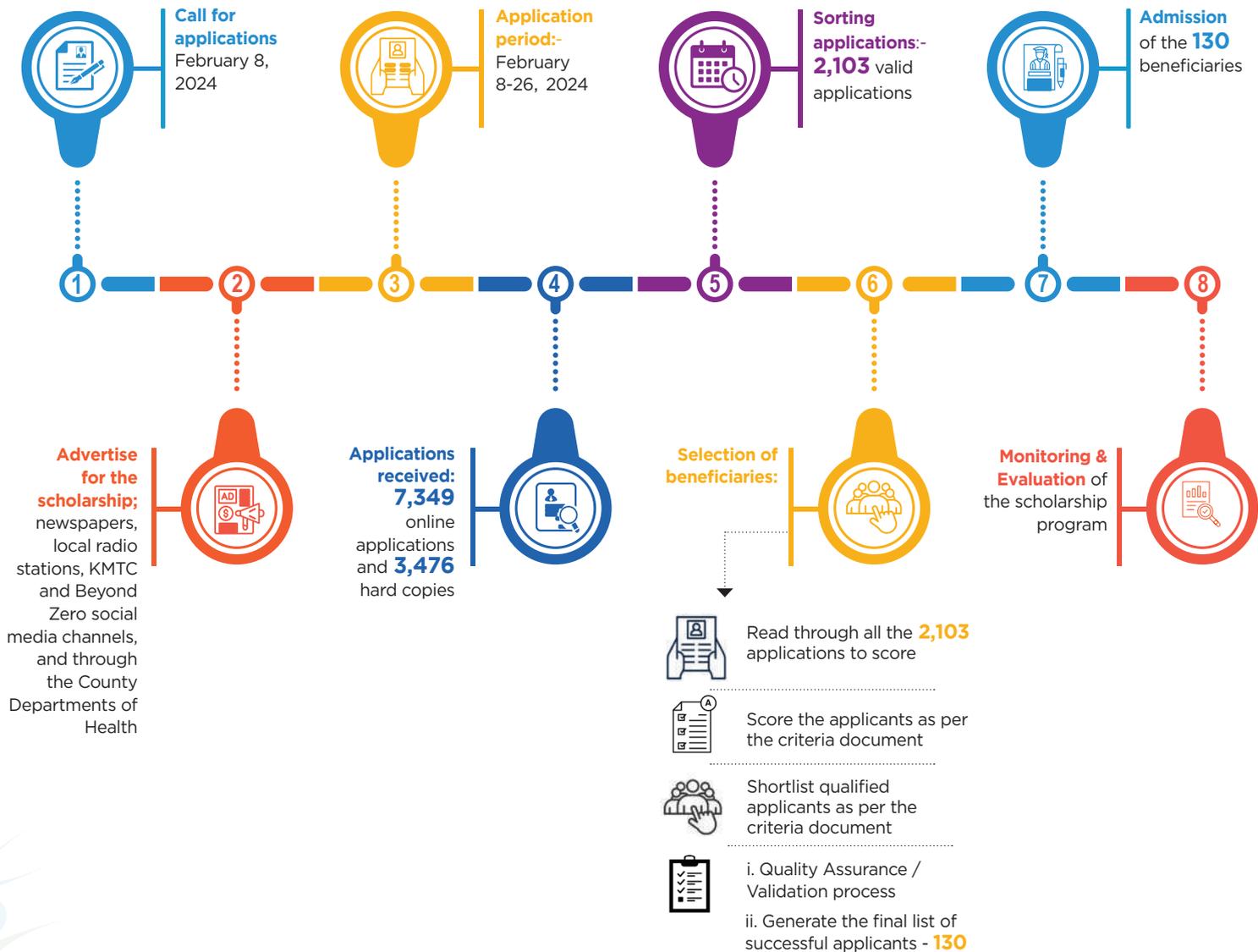
Universal Health Coverage (UHC) goals, ensuring more skilled healthcare workers are deployed in underserved regions.

From the outset, the program deliberately targeted arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) counties, as well as marginalized and vulnerable communities. The rationale for this was simple and clear: with the right support, the beneficiaries return as skilled health professionals to serve in their own communities, enhancing access to health services, supporting their families, and contributing to long-term solutions that improve maternal and child health outcomes.

This program has been funded by the World Bank (2016-2018) and Roche (2020-2025), sponsoring the training of 1,454 enrolled community nurses. To date, 1,100 have graduated, with the majority working in health facilities within their respective counties.

In the reporting period, Beyond Zero provided scholarship opportunities for 130 beneficiaries for the certificate course in Enrolled Community Health Nursing. The call for applications was disseminated across various platforms: County Departments of Health through the Council of Governors; newspapers; local radio stations; and KMTc and Beyond Zero social media channels. The students are enrolled in eight KMTc campuses: Garissa, Kitui, Loitokitok, Kilifi, Msambweni, Bomet, Kabarnet and Kapenguria for the two-year certification course.

# The Selection Process for Scholarship Beneficiaries





“Your generosity has made a significant impact on our journey. Because of you, we have been able to pursue our dreams with renewed hope and confidence. You have not only lightened the financial burden but also uplifted our spirit, reminding us we’re not alone in this journey. Through your sponsorship, you have shown us the true meaning of community, compassion and kindness. We’re committed to working hard, achieving our goals, serving our communities and, one day, paying forward the support we have received.”

**Garissa scholarship beneficiaries**





### Lessons Learned

This section captures our reflections and insights gained during the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project. It captures ‘real world’ experiences - what worked, what did not and why - and distils them into actionable guidance to inform future efforts.

#### High Demand Signals the Need for Expanded Funding Mechanisms

The overwhelming number of scholarship applications highlights both the relevance of the program and the demand for skilled primary healthcare workers in underserved regions. However, limited grant resources have constrained the program’s ability to meet this need.

This experience illustrates the importance of aligning funding mechanisms with actual demand on the ground. To sustainably expand access to training—particularly in maternal and child health—there is a need to diversify funding sources and scale up investment. Doing so will

enable the program to reach more qualified candidates and build a more resilient and equitable health system.

#### Addressing Last-Mile Barriers Is Essential for Equitable Access

Despite meeting eligibility criteria, many beneficiaries particularly female applicants faced significant barriers such as: remote location; lack of affordable transportation; and limited access to basic hygiene supplies (including menstrual health products). This not only delayed timely school attendance but also compromised their personal dignity and well-being.

This highlighted the need for the program to envision broader and targeted interventions to support equitable participation. Strategic investment in last-mile solutions such as hygiene kits is essential to enhance program reach, promote dignity, and improve overall access. In response, the program will integrate additional support measures, ensuring that no eligible beneficiary is left behind due to poverty or distance.

## Osman Juma Bamaro

Kimbusu village, Tana River County

*“Even if we never meet, their success will reach where it’s meant to be.”*

*Growing up in the remote village of Kimbusu, deep in the Tana Delta, Osman Juma Bamaro carried a nickname with purpose; “Doctor.” The name was given to him at birth after a difficult delivery, when the attending doctor declared, “Huyu atakuwa daktari.” [This one will be a doctor] From that day, his parents and neighbors in his home - Minjila, Garsen - called him by that name.*

*Now 29, Osman is the second-born in a family of five and the only one to have completed secondary school. He finished high school in 2012 but couldn’t afford to continue his education. Like many young men in his community, he turned to boda boda riding to earn a living.*

*One ordinary day changed everything. “I was doing my boda boda business when I carried a public health officer,” he recalls. “He told me about a scholarship through the Beyond Zero program that helps students who can’t afford college. He encouraged me to apply, and I decided to try my luck.”*

*Osman’s application was successful, and his dream*

*of becoming a healthcare provider is now within reach. At college, Osman is thriving both in class and beyond. His favorite subject is pharmacology—he proudly shares that he once scored 100%. He’s also passionate about reproductive health, immunization, and family planning. But his ambitions stretch far beyond college. “I promised my mother that I’d earn my PhD one day,” he says. “I want to be the first person in our community to do that.”*

*Osman belongs to the Malakote community, also known as Ilwana, a marginalized ethnic group of about 1,500 people living in Tana River County. “We’re a small community, and most people don’t speak Kiswahili or English well,” he explains. “That language barrier makes access to healthcare difficult. It’s one of the reasons I’m studying health—I want to be their voice and help raise their wellbeing.”*

*The Beyond Zero scholarship, he says, changed his life. “We are sincerely grateful,” Osman says. “Without this program, people like us might never have been recognized. I thank God, even though I don’t know who helped us behind the scenes. But one day, God willing, even if we never meet, their success will reach exactly where it’s meant to be.”*



**Without this program, people like us might never have been recognized. I thank God, even though I don’t know who helped us behind the scenes. But one day, God willing, even if we never meet, their success will reach exactly where it’s meant to be.”** Osman

## Cynthia Kazungu

Bamba, Kilifi County

*“After I joined, all my doors opened”*  
**A**fter I joined, all my doors opened”  
For over a decade, Cynthia dreamed of becoming a nurse. She finished high school in 2011 but couldn’t afford college. “I’ve been passionate about nursing since I completed school,” she says. “That’s over ten years ago. I didn’t join because of lack of finances.”

That changed in March 2024, when she received a message confirming her selection for the Beyond Zero Scholarship Program. “When I saw the message, I couldn’t believe it. I even thought it was a dream,” she recalls.

Cynthia, 31, is the third-born in a family of eight and the most educated. She comes from Bamba in Kilifi County, where opportunities for higher education—especially for women—are rare. Married for six years, she became a mother while studying at KMTC. “After I

joined this course, all my doors opened,” she says. “I even became a mother. I’m grateful to God.”

Determined not to lose her chance, she returned to school one month after giving birth. “I begged the school to allow me to continue. They agreed and have supported me a lot.”

Now one year into her studies, Cynthia is thriving. “We recently did our first nursing care assessment. The experience was amazing,” she says. “I’m now in maternal and child health—that’s where my heart is. I’d like to specialize in gynecology in the future.”

Her family and community celebrate her achievement. “My mother was very happy,” she says. “In my area, it’s rare for someone to go to school, especially to study medicine. Everyone is proud and supportive.”

“I’m very happy to be one of the beneficiaries,” Cynthia says. “My dream has come true. I pray that this program continues—so it can help others the way it helped us.”

## Maryam Faki Abdalla

Lamu West, Lamu County

**W**hen Mariam learned she had been selected for the Beyond Zero scholarship, she could hardly believe it. “By Allah’s grace, I got that scholarship,” she says.

Maryam comes from Lamu West in Lamu County and belongs to the Bajun community. She is the third-born in a family of four and completed high school in 2022. Her father passed away when she was still in school, leaving her mother, a housewife, to raise the family alone. “My dad is dead,” she says quietly. “My hope is to help my mother and to also help my younger sister, who is still in high school.” Her brother, who works in Nairobi, told her about

the Beyond Zero scholarship and helped her apply. When she was accepted to KMTC Samburu Campus in Bomet County, Mariam was overjoyed—until nature stood in her way. “The ocean went away for three days,” she explains. “I couldn’t get a boat from my village.”

As days passed, the school called to ask why she hadn’t reported. Mariam explained her situation, and the administrators responded with compassion. They offered her a place at KMTC Kilifi Campus, which was closer to home.

Now settled in Kilifi, Mariam has found her footing. “It’s good. I’m doing well. There’s no stress. We help each other,” she says. Soft-spoken but determined, Mariam carries deep gratitude for the opportunity. “I’m very grateful to you,” she says. “You helped me to get an opportunity.”



# Obstetric Fistula - Restoring Dignity and Transforming Lives

02





Obstetric fistula is a profoundly unjust and preventable childbirth injury, that disproportionately affects women in low-resource settings. It is not only a reproductive health issue but also a stark violation of human rights and gender equality. Caused primarily by prolonged, obstructed labor without timely access to quality maternal care, obstetric fistula reflects systemic failures in health systems, social protection, and gender justice. Contributing factors such as early pregnancy, female genital mutilation (FGM), and sexual violence are rooted in deeply entrenched gender inequalities. This condition - characterized by an abnormal opening between the birth canal and the bladder or rectum - leads to chronic incontinence, social isolation, and loss of dignity. Addressing obstetric fistula is therefore both a medical imperative and a call to action to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind in the pursuit of health, rights, and bodily autonomy.

The nature of the fistula problem makes it difficult to determine the true burden as most patients live in fear, silence and isolation following stigma that delinks the women from the mainstream healthcare delivery system<sup>1</sup>. Globally, obstetric fistula continues to affect **over two million women**, with approximately 100,000 new cases annually. In Kenya, the Ministry of Health estimates that **1,000 to 3,000 new cases** occur each year, with many women living with unrepaired fistulas.

Obstetric fistula represents both a critical health challenge and a violation of women's rights. A meaningful and lasting response requires a holistic approach that tackles the root causes such as poverty, gender inequality and harmful cultural practices. This involves not only prevention through timely, respectful

maternal care but also ensuring that survivors receive quality treatment and are fully supported in reclaiming their dignity and reintegration into their communities.

### Beyond Zero's Response to Obstetric Fistula

Obstetric fistula has long been a neglected health and human rights issue in Kenya. In 2018, Beyond Zero partnered with key stakeholders during its first Medical Safari in Narok County to conduct fistula repairs and train health workers, while also using the platform to shine a national spotlight on the issue. Through sustained advocacy efforts, Beyond Zero played a pivotal role in influencing the Ministry of Health to develop and launch a National Strategic Framework for Prevention and Management of Obstetric Fistula,



**2 million**

Globally, obstetric fistula continues to affect over **two million women, with approximately 100,000 new cases annually.**



**1,000- 3,000**

**In Kenya, the Ministry of Health** estimates that **1,000 to 3,000 new cases** occur each year, with many women living with unrepaired fistulas.

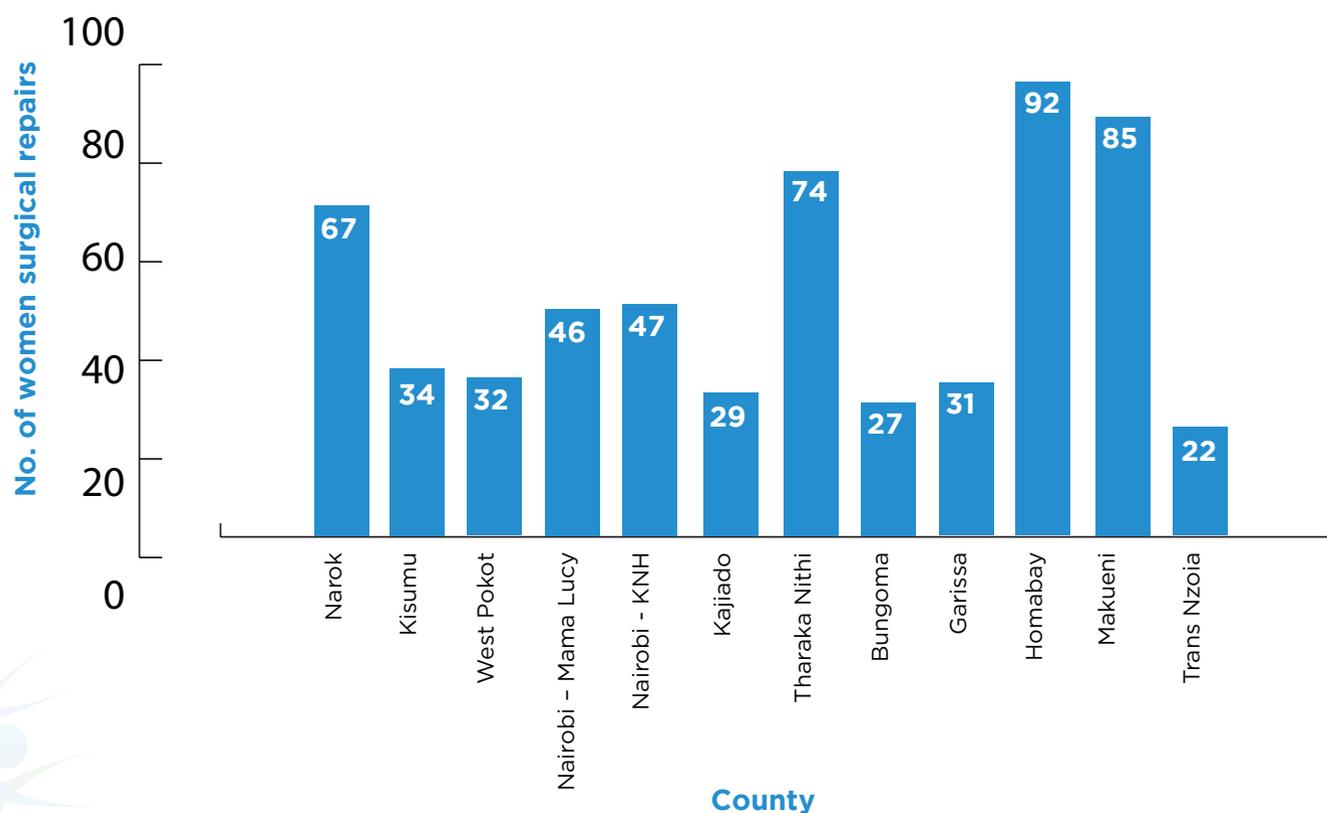
<sup>1</sup>National Strategic Framework for Prevention and Management of Obstetric Fistula, 2019

2019. This strategy aimed to integrate fistula repair into routine health services and address critical gaps in emergency obstetric care, marking a significant step forward in prioritizing women’s health and dignity.

Beyond Zero has conducted and participated in targeted obstetric fistula interventions across 11 counties<sup>2</sup> in partnership with the Ministry of Health,

Amref Health Africa, Flying Doctors Society of Africa and other partners in fistula programming. These efforts have combined service delivery with community-based advocacy, dedicated free fistula surgical camps, training and equipping community health promoters (CHPs) with knowledge to conduct community level screening using a checklist and refer cases for diagnosis and repairs.

**Figure 2.1. Data on Obstetric Fistula Camps**



<sup>2</sup> Narok, Kisumu, West Pokot, Nairobi, Kajiado, Tharaka Nithi, Garissa, Homa Bay, Makueni, Trans Nzoia, & Bungoma Counties

**Critical structural barriers persist—namely, paucity of data, limited number of trained fistula surgeons, persistent stigma, low rates of case identification, and weak referral and support structures.**

Additionally, healthcare providers have been technically equipped to screen for obstetric fistula and provide integrated pre- and post-operative case management, improving the quality and continuity of care. Surgical repairs have not only restored the health of affected women but also their dignity, agency, and ability to participate fully in community life—powerfully reflected in the voices of survivors.

However, critical structural barriers persist—namely paucity of data, limited number of trained fistula surgeons, persistent stigma, low rates of case identification, and weak referral and support structures. These systemic barriers hinder data-driven planning and reduce the overall uptake of services, including surgical interventions.

In the reporting period, Beyond Zero participated in five fistula camps including commemoration of the International Day of Ending Obstetric Fistula (IDEOF) in Bungoma and Makueni counties.

### Bungoma County

The global community has dedicated May 23 as a day to commemorate, raise awareness and advocate for the ending of obstetric fistula. Towards the commemoration day, the Ministry of Health convenes relevant partners to:

raise awareness; sensitize community health promoters to conduct community screening and mobilize women with fistula for repairs; train healthcare workers on obstetric fistula; and conduct a one-week free fistula camp.

Beyond Zero supported the fistula camp through the provision of medical supplies. Through the partnerships, awareness and public education messages were disseminated through SMS messages and local media, to encourage women to seek treatment.

This was how 40-year-old Brenda Khaemba from Kiminini, a small town located in Bungoma County, heard about the Obstetric Fistula outreach at Webuye County Hospital grounds.

Brenda, a mother of three aged 15, 9, and 3, carries a story that speaks for thousands of women whose voices are often unheard.

Her painful journey began in 2020, during the birth of her youngest child. *“It was a very long and difficult labor. After delivering my baby; I did not know what was happening to me. I assumed my condition of uncontrolled passing of urine was a result of the difficult childbirth”*. But as days turned into weeks, and weeks into years, Brenda was forced into silence and isolation.

*“I was too ashamed to seek help. I felt lonely. I stopped visiting my friends, I feared traveling, and I never spoke about my condition. I believed no one cared.”*

For three years, Brenda lived with the stigma, shame, and daily disruption of fistula. What she could not afford was the life-restoring surgery. Through the intervention of partners who made

specialized care accessible, Brenda underwent surgical repair.

Her words after recovery are filled with light: *“My hope, peace, and dignity have been restored. The cost of surgery is extremely high—I could never have afforded it on my own.”*

Brenda’s story is no longer one of hidden suffering but of renewed courage and purpose. She has committed herself to becoming a champion for other women. She wants them to know that help exists, and that dignity can be restored.

Her transformation is not just personal, it is systemic. Brenda’s story demonstrates why collective action matters. Obstetric fistula is not only a medical condition; it is a reflection of gaps in maternal health systems, inequities in access to care, and the need for communities, governments, and partners to work together to ensure that no woman suffers in silence.

These were similar words of touching testimonies shared from the eleven women admitted at the hospital awaiting treatment and surgical repairs. “Shame, despair, loss of hope and fear were echoes of what

used to be; for some over twenty years of suffering.” Women as old as 87 years were beneficiaries of the free Obstetric Fistula outreach.



## Makueni County

Beyond Zero supported a two-day sensitization workshop for 40 healthcare workers that was held on May 15 and 16 at the Mother and Child Hospital in Makueni County. The healthcare workers were sensitized on screening, pre- and post-surgical management of obstetric fistula patients. This was followed by a free week-long camp where Beyond Zero provided essential medical supplies.

**International Day to End Obstetric Fistula (IDEOF)** **MAY 23<sup>RD</sup> 2024**

Theme: **Breaking the Cycle: Preventing Fistula Worldwide**

Fistula is an abnormal communication between the urinary bladder or rectum and the birth canal, which leads to uncontrolled, continuous leakage of urine and/or stool.

SCREENING FACILITY	DATE
1. Sultan-Hamud Sub County Hospital	16/5/2024
2. Kibwezi Sub County Hospital	17/5/2024
3. Tawe Sub County Hospital	17/5/2024
4. Kalawa Sub County Hospital	18/5/2024
5. Makindu Sub County Hospital	20/5/2024
6. Mbooni Sub County Hospital	20/5/2024
7. Kilungu Sub County Hospital	21/5/2024
8. Maliliku Sub County Hospital	22/5/2024

**FREE FISTULA CAMP**  
17<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 **Makueni County Referral Hospital**

Fistula Hotlines: **0727 337337/ 0733 333004**  
Makueni FGF Clinic: **0706542651**

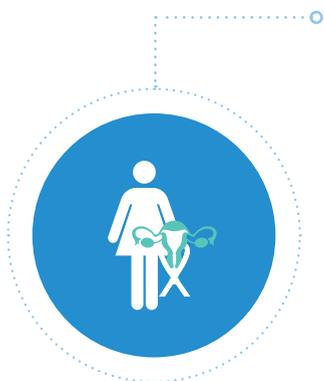
In addition to the two commemoration fistula camp outreaches, Beyond Zero also participated in fistula camps in Garissa, Homabay and Trans Nzoia counties.

*Mary, a mother of two boys, endured the burden of obstetric fistula for years. The condition developed after giving birth to her youngest son in September 2017, a 4-kilogram baby, at Tufani Hospital near her home. A grueling 18-hour labor left Mary with incontinence, a condition she had to live with in silence. Only her mother and husband knew the depth of her struggle, as she kept her ordeal hidden from her neighbors and friends.*

*Mary's lifeline came in the form of a phone call from the hospital, informing her about the free fistula surgeries taking place at the Garissa Referral Hospital. Determined to regain her dignity and independence, Mary and her family made the journey to the Referral Hospital, where she became a successful candidate for the surgery.*

*With her new lease on life, Mary now looks forward to starting a small business, having been unable to work due to her condition. Her story is a testament to the transformative power of accessible healthcare and community support.*

## Lessons Learned



### **Integration of Fistula Repairs into Routine Maternal Health Services has Potential to Resolve Systemic Health Gaps.**

The separation of fistula repair from routine maternal health services perpetuates a systemic health gap that impacts on women's equitable access to comprehensive reproductive health care. This reinforces the invisibility of fistula within the health system and undermines women's right to timely, continuous, and dignified care. When fistula repair is offered through surgical camps, or specialized

outreaches, services remain fragmented, unpredictable, and inaccessible for many women. Integrating fistula prevention, detection, and repair into routine maternal and reproductive health services has the potential to transform outcomes. Integration strengthens early identification and referral pathways, reduces stigma by normalizing fistula care within standard health services, and ensures sustainability.



### **Integrating Awareness, Education, and Stigma Reduction for Improved Fistula Response**

Low awareness of fistula as a treatable condition contributes to low levels of health-seeking behavior among affected women. This challenge is compounded by limited access to accurate information, stigma and social norms that normalize childbirth complications. As a result, many women are unable to recognize fistula and seek timely care. Silence and shame have kept fistula conversation limited, preventing open discussion and discouraging women from seeking care. Survivor-centered storytelling and

well-designed awareness campaigns can be transformative, reducing stigma, dispelling myths and encouraging women to seek treatment. Strengthening fistula interventions within health and community systems requires intensified health education on risk factors, prevention, signs and symptoms, and available treatment options. In addition, engaging community health promoters is likely to enhance screening and facilitate effective referral.



### Reliable Data is Foundational for Impactful Interventions

Efforts to eliminate obstetric fistula have long been undermined by weak health information systems. As such cases go unreported, planning is fragmented, and resources are limited, resulting in the invisibility of the problem scale.

Investing in strong health data systems is not just about numbers; it is about ensuring that women like Mary and Brenda are no longer invisible. Reliable data transforms isolated interventions into scalable solutions.

# Cancer Prevention & Early Detection

03



## Introduction



Breast and cervical cancers are major health threats to women in Kenya. Cervical cancer is the second most prevalent cancer among women in Kenya and the leading cause of cancer-related deaths, with an estimated 5,236 new cases and 3,211 deaths reported annually. Preventive measures like HPV vaccination, screening, and early treatment can drastically reduce these numbers. The persistently low uptake of cervical cancer screening in Kenya, at only 17%<sup>3</sup> compared to the global target of 70%<sup>4</sup>, represents a critical and unacceptable gap in prevention efforts. This contributes to avoidable morbidity and mortality and undermines progress towards national and global commitments to eliminate cervical cancer by 2030.

Beyond Zero's Strategic Plan 2023–2027 identifies breast and cervical cancer prevention, screening, and treatment as a key intervention area. This focus aligns with Kenya's National Cancer Control Strategy, which emphasizes awareness, early detection, capacity building, and advocacy. Through multi-sectoral partnerships, Beyond Zero has expanded access to screening services, increased community awareness, and strengthened the capacity of the healthcare workforce to effectively implement 'screen-and-treat' initiatives.

### Beyond Zero's Response to Breast and Cervical Cancer

In the reporting period, Beyond Zero contributed to prevention interventions through: targeted advocacy and awareness raising, provision of screening services,

and capacity-building of healthcare workers on 'screen & treat' at both national and county levels. These efforts aimed to improve early detection, increase community awareness, and support the delivery of prevention and treatment services.

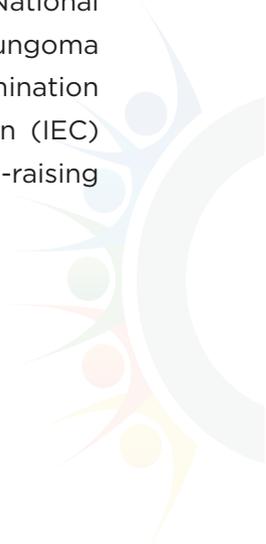
### Awareness and Advocacy

#### National Commemoration and Advocacy

In commemoration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October) and Cervical Cancer Awareness Month (January), Beyond Zero supported the National Cancer Control Program in Taita Taveta and Bungoma counties by facilitating the printing and dissemination of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials to enhance advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.

<sup>3</sup> Kenya Demographic Health Survey, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem





# STOP! Cervical Cancer

Now is the time to **PROTECT** my loved ones against cervical cancer!



Support the **WOMEN** in your life to screen – take your daughter to get the HPV vaccine

**HPV VACCINATION** for girls and routine **SCREENING** for women **PREVENTS** cervical cancer and **SAVES LIVES**.



For more information, visit your nearest health facility



# STOP! Cervical Cancer



*Sally Agallo Kwenda  
Cervical Cancer Survivor*

**Get screened TODAY!**

Routine **SCREENING** for women **SAVES LIVES** by detecting cervical cancer early before symptoms begin to show



For more information, visit your nearest health facility



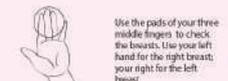
## Self-Breast Exam

### MONTHLY Breast Exam

The best time for a breast self-examination is about a week after your period ends, when your breasts are not tender and swollen (or the same time each month if you no longer have periods)



**Step 1: Lying down**  
Lie on your back. Place a pillow under left shoulder, and put left hand behind head so your breast is flat.



Use the pads of your three middle fingers to check the breasts. Use your left hand for the right breast; your right for the left breast.



Use light, medium and firm pressure in a circular motion without lifting your fingers off the skin. Follow an up-and-down pattern. Repeat same steps on right side.



**Step 2: Before a mirror**  
Look for any changes from normal. With arms at your sides, inspect both breasts. Then raise your arms above your head and compare breasts. Now place hands on your hips, flex chest muscles and compare again. Finally, bend forward with hands on hips.



Examine the entire area under the collarbone, under your arms, down across your rib cage and up the breastbone. Check for lumps, hard knots, swelling, dimpling or thickening. Look for changes in size, shape, or color or for discharge.



**Step 3: In the shower**  
Raise your right arm to examine your breast as you would do lying down. Repeat for left breast. Gently feel for abnormal lumps or thickening.



### WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer is a cancer that affects the breasts, mostly in women. Men have some breast tissue and may also develop breast cancer, though it is rare.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Kenya.

**9 WOMEN**

DIE EVERY DAY IN KENYA AS A RESULT OF BREAST CANCER

### WHO IS AT RISK?

All women are at risk of breast cancer. However, the risk is higher if you have a close relative (mother, sister, daughter) who had breast cancer, if you have a personal history of breast cancer or if you had previous treatment using radiation therapy.



### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- A lump or mass in the breast or armpit
- Swelling of all or part of the breast, even if no lump is felt
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Breast or nipple pain
- Nipple retraction (nipple turning inward)
- The nipple or breast skin appears red, scaly, or thickened
- Nipple discharge

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT BREAST CANCER?

The best protection is early detection  
1. Early detection through screening and early diagnosis is key in preventing breast cancer. Screening involves testing women to identify cancer before any symptoms appear.

## Public Lecture for Cervical Cancer Advocacy and Wellness

On January 23, 2024, Beyond Zero, in collaboration with the Margaret Kenyatta Institute of Gender and Social Development at the Kenya School of Government, hosted a hybrid public lecture to raise awareness on cervical cancer and its link to mental health and wellness. The event brought together 150 participants in person and an additional 70 virtually from various counties. The lecture further highlighted the important role of male engagement in championing cervical cancer screening and uptake of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

## Strengthening Advocacy for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer

Beyond Zero, in collaboration with the National Cancer Control Program (NCCP), developed and launched the *Advocacy Guide for Cervical Cancer Elimination* in 2020 to strengthen community engagement and prevention efforts. Since its launch, the guide has been instrumental in training advocates annually and building a network of champions dedicated to raising awareness. In 2024, Beyond Zero worked with NCCP and partners to generate a revised edition of the guide, which was subsequently applied during an advocacy training on January 24, 2024. The training convened 58 champions from diverse sectors, including county health departments, media, the County First Ladies Association, survivors' networks, and social media influencers. This comprehensive resource continues to play a central role in sustaining advocacy initiatives for cervical cancer elimination.



150

The event brought together **150 participants** in person and an additional **70 virtually** from various counties.



58

The training convened **58 champions** from diverse sectors, including county health departments, media, the County First Ladies Association, survivors' networks, and social media influencers.

## Screening and Capacity Support

### “Screen and Treat” Initiatives

Beyond Zero, in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute of Kenya (NCI-K), Africa Cancer Foundation,

Women4Cancer, Beth Mugo Cancer Foundation, and other stakeholders conducted 12 outreaches in Nairobi, Kajiado, Kiambu, and Kwale counties.

Facility	County	No. of women screened
Kenya School of Government	Nairobi	80
Amref Kibra	Nairobi	257
Pumwani Majengo	Nairobi	93
PCEA Thindigua church	Kiambu	96
Loitoktok health facility	Kajiado	175
Imbirikani county hospital	Kajiado	102

Facility	County	No. of women screened
Ack St Marks Westlands	Nairobi	78
Isinya Health centre Kajiado	Kajiado	331
Kenya School of Government	Nairobi	86
PCEA Riabai Church	Kiambu	70
Kwale County Referral Hospital	Kwale	104
Karura Community Chapel	Nairobi	72





Do I go or do I not go? “But with the medical camp in full sight outside the Convention Centre in KSG Lower Kabete Campus, I, filled with resolve, yet anxious and apprehensive, I visited the Medical Camp. “I was so nervous, but I found the courage”. Lisper

*On Tuesday, January 23, 2024, Kenya School of Government commemorated Cervical Cancer Month held in January worldwide. In Kenya, according to Globocan 2020, Cervical Cancer month was first commemorated in 2019, when it became apparent, through research and data, that it was the leading cause of death with 5,236 (12.4%) new cases and 3,211 (11.9%) deaths per year. The day commenced with a public lecture and a free Medical Camp for Breast, Cervical and Prostate Cancer screening. The services were offered by Beth Mugo Foundation, Beyond Zero and Women for Cancer in collaboration with KSG Clinic and Lower Kabete Health Centre. It was during this special day that Lisper Murugi narrated her story on why she values the benefit of advocacy and awareness talks, including medical camps and awareness.*

*Lisper’s experience started back in 2013, when she started getting back*

*pains, restricting and constraining any vigorous work or lifting of heavy items. She goes back in time, recalling her visit to a health facility that year who at that time, confirmed that she required further diagnosis, but fear and anxiety delayed her visit to the hospital to seek proper treatment. Lisper Murugi continued to endure the pain and discomfort for years, relieved only by painkillers. This was until she heard, through the memo and KSG internal mail and website, about the Cervical Cancer Advocacy and Medical Camp happening on February 3, 2023 at Kenya School of Government Lower Kabete Grounds.*

*That morning, Lisper asked herself “do I go or do I not go? “But with the medical camp in full sight outside the Convention Centre in KSG Lower Kabete Campus, I, filled with resolve, yet anxious and apprehensive, I visited the Medical Camp. “I was so nervous,*

*but I found the courage". When asked what made her interested in the camp, she narrated her experience of severe back pain to the healthcare worker. It was here that her journey began. The nurse upon examination confirmed that she had found a polyp. With calm professional disposition, she assured Lisper that the polyp, which is a growth of tissue from the surface of the body, was not malignant. Lisper was familiar with the term "malignant", especially, that it was used within the Cancer context; and that this meant that presence of the growth did not confirm the "presence of cancer". The nurse further encouraged Lisper to seek further diagnosis using the referral card which she presented her with.*

*This reassurance should have put Lisper at peace, however quite the contrary! The news caused more fear and apprehension, the result of which Lisper, though having shared her experience with her husband, did not seek further treatment, the whole dilemma continued to weigh heavily on her mind causing her mental anguish.*

*"I mitigated the constant pain through pain killers". It was not until January 2, 2024 that Lisper boosted with the confidence of a New Year woke up and full of courage visited a health center in Westlands. Unfortunately, the resident Gynecologist, perhaps due to the day of the year was not available so instead she was referred to a general practitioner. "General Doctors and Specialty Doctors, in this case Gynecologists, truly have different reactions," says Lisper.*

*Because when the General Doctor examined her, he was not as calm as the nurse she had seen at the Camp. He was disturbed that*

*Lisper had delayed her treatment and caused the growth to enlarge. But to the doctor's credit, his reaction injected determination, such that one day later, on January 4, 2024, she visited MP Shah Hospital where she was "sure to find all the specialists and equipment under one roof".*

*Following a set of tests and screening, the doctors at MP Shah confirmed the presence of one polyp, ruling out any other growth among them Fibroids both in the Cervix and the Uterus. The doctor however recommended immediate surgery. When asked when she would like to return for the surgery, Lisper, this time and the encouragement of her husband, chose not to leave the hospital and that day checked herself into hospital. That same evening of January 4, she underwent a successful surgery to remove the polyp. Today, Lisper is pain free and continues her treatment looking forward to a full recovery soon.*

*Lisper's story has a happy ending, and one that many can relate to. We can all share a time when we know we should have sought medical help and postponed it. But most critical, is the time we have delayed or ignored symptoms because of fear and the unknown...those voices in our heads!*

*Lisper's story is also one of encouragement too! She ends her story with these words "I am pain free, I feel lighter and can go about my business. I really advise people to go for checkup and visit medical camps when the opportunity arises. She applauded the Cancer awareness initiative presented by KSG, the knowledge gained through the Public Lecture and the free breast, cervical and prostate cancer medical camp'.*

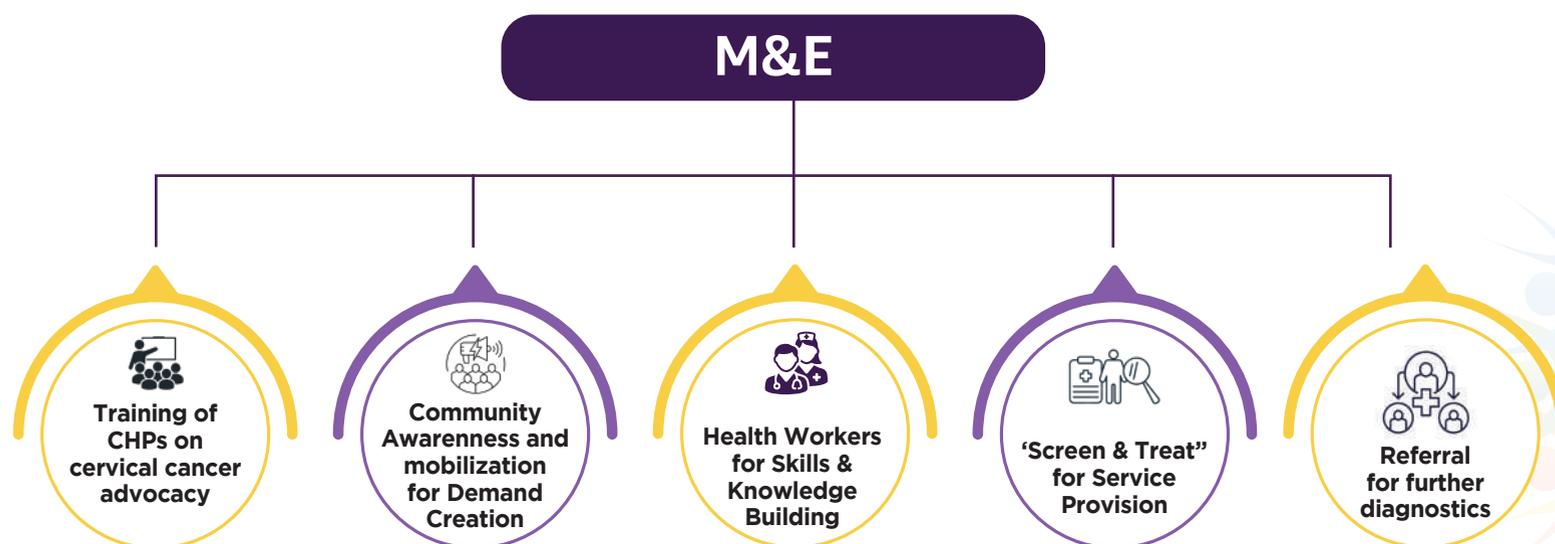
## Deep Dive Projects

As part of efforts to scale up cervical cancer screen-and-treat initiatives, three-year deep dive projects were established in collaboration with two county governments. In this report, a deep dive is understood as an intensive, county-specific process that goes beyond routine programming to advance women’s right to health. It seeks to address persistently low screening rates by exploring, testing, and refining interventions that remove systemic and social barriers, ensuring that all women—particularly those most marginalized—can access life-saving prevention and treatment services. The approach is designed to generate actionable insights on what works, why it works, and how these practices can be sustained and scaled. By addressing systemic, social, and behavioral barriers and strengthening health system capacity, the projects aim to generate practical lessons for scale-up across other counties, reinforcing Kenya’s commitment to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health and human rights priority



Embu and Kilifi counties were selected for the deep dive based on strong existing partnerships and prior collaborations that provide a foundation for meaningful community participation and county ownership. Beyond Zero hosted and facilitated co-creation workshops for both counties to develop county-specific implementation models that address existing gaps in cervical cancer prevention and control.

Figure 3: Strategies for Embu and Kilifi - Continuum of Screening Awareness



The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed with Embu and Kilifi counties on August 30, 2024 and October 29, 2024 respectively, to formalize and guide the implementation of the project.

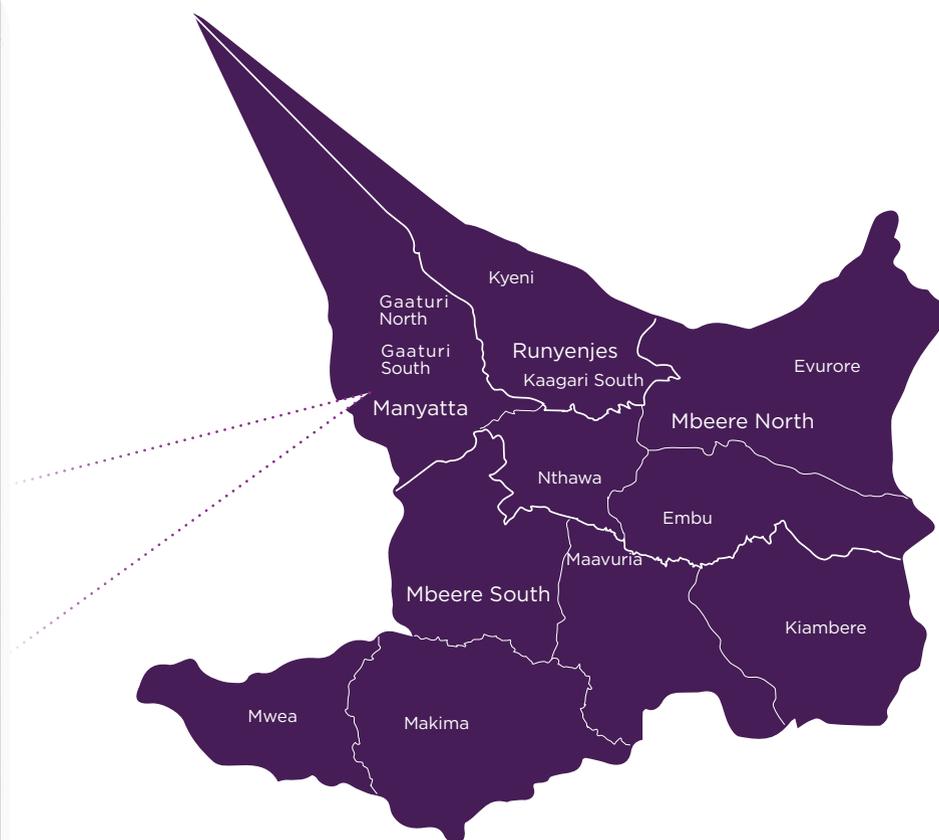


## Screening outreaches in Embu County

The Department of Health in Embu designated Manyatta Sub-County for the project's initial phase, implementing monthly two-day screening outreaches across ten health facilities throughout a one-year period (September 2024 - August 2025).

**Figure 4: Embu County Health Facilities**

MONTH	FACILITY
Aug 2024	Kairuri Health Centre
Sept 2024	Kibugu Hetet 26 th & 27 th
Oct 2024	Makengi Dispensary
Nov 2024	16 th & 14th Ngirimari market
Dec 2024	Kathangariri Disbensary
Jan 2025	16 th & 171 Kavutiri market
Feb 2025	Kiriari market Kirari market
Mar 2025	Karau Health Centre
April 2025	10 th & 11 th Kianjokoma arket
May 2025	Kairuri Health Centre
June 2025	11 th & 12 th Ndunduri village
July 2025	10 th & 11 h Karlie village
Aug 2025	Karau health Centre





## Key Results of the Outreaches (September - December 2024)



**Skills building for nursing students:** Through participation in the outreaches, **34 nursing students** have gained hands-on experience in cervical cancer 'screen and treat' procedures and clinical breast examinations, significantly strengthening their clinical competencies.



**On job training and mentorship for healthcare workers: Ten nurses** received practical, on-the-job training and mentorship from Trainers of Trainers (ToTs), strengthening their capacity and equipping them to conduct cervical cancer screening and ensure timely referrals for further management.



**Strengthening Community Health Promoters (CHPs) Engagement:** **One hundred Community Health Promoters** actively engaged in the screening outreaches through awareness creation, community mobilization, and referral of women for screening services. Their participation reinforced their role in promoting health education within households and communities, thereby contributing to the attainment of national cervical cancer prevention goals.



**Screening of cervical cancer:** A total of **600 women** screened for cervical and breast cancers. Among those screened using the VIA/VILI method, six were positive for VIA and received same-day treatment using thermocoagulation.



## Lessons Learned – Embu County



### Strengthening Follow-up and Referral Pathways

The project demonstrated that screening alone is not enough—timely diagnosis and treatment are only possible when referral systems are deliberately strengthened. Women who screened positive or presented with suspicious findings frequently encountered barriers such as limited transportation options and difficulties accessing referral hospitals, which put them at risk of delayed care. Recognizing this gap, the initiative is actively supporting the development of clear patient navigation protocols and reinforcing referral linkages. These efforts are designed to ensure that every woman who screens positive is guided and supported across the entire continuum of care, from initial screening to diagnosis and treatment, thereby transforming cervical cancer services into a truly life-saving pathway.



### Addressing Community-Level Barriers and Demand-Side Challenges:

The project affirmed that the right to health cannot be realized without tackling the social and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing cervical cancer services. Persistent myths and misinformation—such as fears of pain during screening and stigma associated with a positive result—continue to undermine women’s ability to make informed health choices. These barriers are not simply matters of awareness but of equity and justice, as they disproportionately affect women in marginalized and hard-to-reach communities.

A key lesson is that rights-based Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC), delivered in local languages and through trusted community influencers, is critical for dispelling myths, building trust, and transforming harmful norms. This approach not only increases service uptake but also empowers women with accurate information, safeguards their dignity, and strengthens their agency to claim life-saving screening and treatment as a fundamental right.

## Skills Enhancement in Kilifi County

To address gaps in cervical cancer prevention and management, the Department of Health prioritized strengthening healthcare worker capacity through targeted training in emerging technologies, approaches and updated clinical guidelines.



## The Training of Trainers on “screen and treat”

Beyond Zero supported the training of 21 health care workers drawn from 16 health facilities across the seven sub-counties of Kilifi County. These facilities included: Kilifi County Referral Hospital; Bamba Sub County Hospital; Vitengeni Health Centre; Vishakani Dispensary; Mariakani Sub County Hospital; Junju Dispensary; Mtwapa Sub County Hospital; Malindi Sub County Hospital; Muyeye Health Centre; Baolala Dispensary; Marafa Sub County Hospital; Sabaki Dispensary; Lenga Dispensary; Rabai Sub County Hospital; Gongoni Health Centre.

The five-day comprehensive training, conducted from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 1st November 2024, was facilitated by the Ministry of Health’s National Cancer Control Program. The training incorporated both theoretical

and practical sessions, covering critical topics including: HPV pathogenesis; cervical cancer screening methods; treatment of cervical pre-malignancies; integration of breast cancer screening and early detection; effective communication and patient counseling; thermoablation techniques; clinical breast examination; and community mobilization and advocacy. Following the training, participants were tasked with cascading up screening services in their respective facilities and supporting community-level demand creation activities. Each trainee was assigned a target to screen a minimum of 50 women for breast and cervical cancer, with support supervision scheduled within 3 to 6 months to assess their progress and provide additional mentorship as needed.





# Strengthening Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence Response - A Multi-Sectoral Approach

04



## Introduction

**Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary precondition for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Achieving gender justice requires intentional action to address structural inequalities and promote the full participation of women, girls, and marginalized groups in all spheres of life. Gender equality serves as a critical enabler for economic growth, institutional resilience, and social cohesion.**

Kenya's commitment to gender equality is reflected in the ratification and domestication of various global and regional frameworks<sup>6</sup>. Despite notable policy and legislative gains<sup>7</sup>, gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) remain entrenched in structural and socio-cultural systems, necessitating coordinated, multi-sectoral interventions. These disparities persist in

access to education, political representation, economic opportunities, and protection from violence—further compounded by entrenched harmful norms and practices.

To address these multidimensional challenges, Beyond Zero prioritizes gender equality as a catalyst for transformative development by:



Recognizing the need for sustained, structured action to advance gender equality and social transformation, the following sections outline the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development mandates

and strategic role, as well as Beyond Zero's integrated approach to advancing menstrual health management as a critical pathway for inclusive and sustainable development.

<sup>6</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions on Gender Equality, the Generation Equality Forum (GEF), and the Maputo Protocol. Domestically, constitutional provisions under the Constitution of Kenya (2010),

<sup>7</sup> the Sexual Offenses Act (2006), the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2011), the Children's Act (2003)



## Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development

One of the flagship initiatives of the Strategic Plan is the partnership between the Kenya School of Government and Beyond Zero, which led to the establishment of the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development (MKI). The Kenya School of Government Council resolved to establish the Institute for Gender and Social Development during the 65th Meeting held on April 30, 2021 in consideration of the emergent importance of gender and social development in the search for social transformation of the society, particularly in the developing world, and the realization of prosperity for all. As a result, a dedicated Center was established within the School to effectively address these emerging needs. The partnership with the Kenya School of Government (KSG) was cemented with the

signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 9, 2022.

The naming of the Institute, Margaret Kenyatta Institute, was to honor the pioneering work of Kenya's former First Lady, Margaret Kenyatta, through her Beyond Zero Initiative. The Institute was subsequently launched on March 8, 2022 as a delivery unit, under the auspices of the esteemed KSG. MKI is dedicated to advancing gender equality, social justice, and societal transformation. Its comprehensive suite of programs and initiatives is designed to empower public servants, foster innovation, and drive positive societal impact. It works to address these concerns through training, coaching and mentorship, research-based policy advisory, expert consultancy, advocacy, and community outreach.

MKI integrates gender-responsive strategies into public service training and development, while fostering policy coherence and implementation across national and county levels. Key programmatic interventions are anchored in the intersectionality of gender, health, and

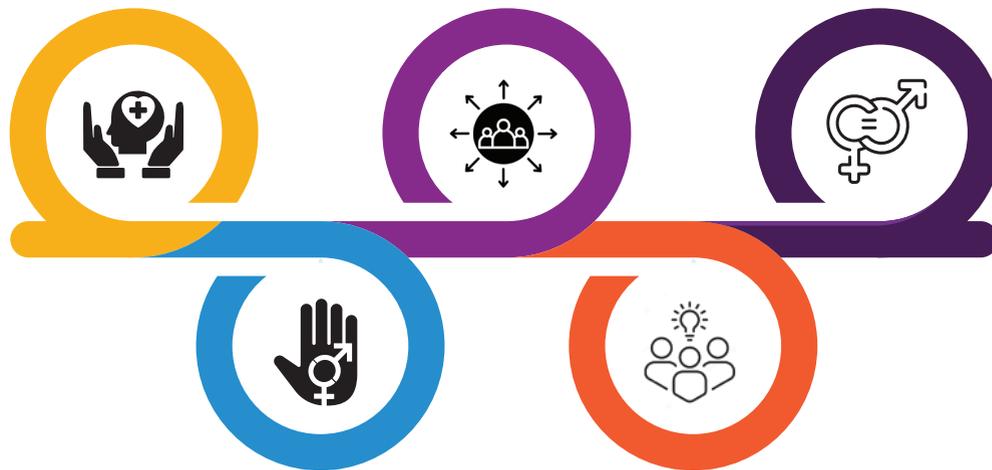
education, positioning these sectors as catalytic to the empowerment of women and girls.

In collaboration with MKI, Beyond Zero has supported the successful rollout of the following programs in training, advocacy and outreach:

**01 Wellness, Mental Health, and Self-Care** in the Workplace for Public Servants

**02 Public Lecture, Outreach and Medical Camp** for Breast, Cervical and Prostate Cancer

**03 Gender Integration for Efficient and Effective** Public Service Delivery



**04 The Sustainable Approaches to Eradication** of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and

**05 The Leadership Program** for County Social Transformation

Through these initiatives, MKI enhances the capacities of both duty-bearers and rights-holders. *Duty-bearers*—such as public servants—are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and accountability mechanisms needed to fulfill their obligations to protect, respect, and promote the rights of citizens. On the other hand, *rights-holders*—including women, youth, marginalized

communities, and persons affected by or at risk of social injustices such as gender-based violence or FGM—are empowered with awareness, voice, and agency to claim their rights and actively participate in the transformation of their communities. This dual approach ensures that social development is inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable.

## Key Achievements (2023-2024)

80

**Anti-FGM champions** across 14 high-FGM-prevalent counties.



18

**County First Ladies trained** in leadership and social transformation.

84

**Human resource managers** from different ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) participated in the five-day program, sharing experiences on mental health and wellness in the workplace.

Through these efforts, Beyond Zero and MKI continue to catalyze systemic change, reinforcing gender

equality as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development.

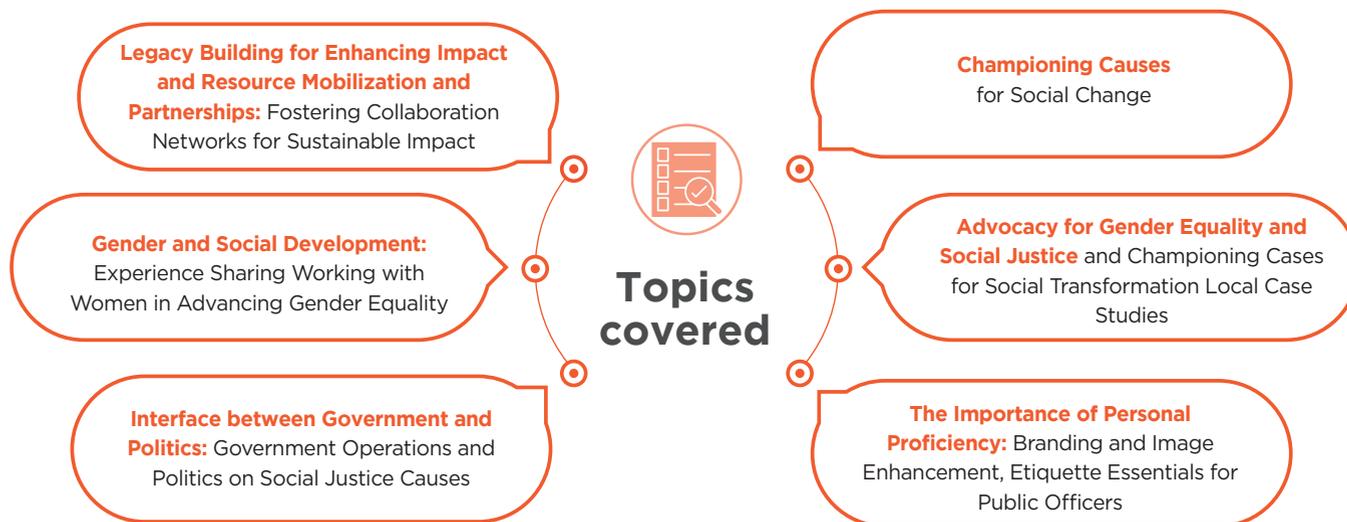
## Leadership Program for County Social Transformation

The KSG, in collaboration with Beyond Zero, developed a curriculum to enhance the leadership skills and advocacy capacities. The County Social Transformation Program aims to empower leaders with essential skills and knowledge to leverage their positions in championing social change and advocate for responsive policies and programs in their respective counties.

The program further recognizes and harnesses the unique position of leaders as influential change agents. It emphasizes their critical role in championing key development priorities such as the education of children, improved health outcomes, poverty alleviation, and economic empowerment. In addition, the curriculum promotes advocacy for the full inclusion of women in political, economic, and social spheres of development, reinforcing gender equity as a cornerstone of sustainable progress at the county level.

By December 2024, the Institute had successfully implemented two cohorts of its Leadership Program. The inaugural sessions were held in April and November 2024, bringing together esteemed Spouses of Governors from the counties of Kilifi, Elgeyo Marakwet, Migori, West Pokot, Kakamega, Narok, Siaya, Bomet, Nyandarua, Tharaka Nithi, Makueni, Nairobi, Nyamira, Marsabit, Kajiado, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, and Wajir. Structured as a phased initiative, the Leadership Program is designed to equip participants with the tools and knowledge needed to strategically leverage their influence in advancing meaningful and impactful causes within their counties.

The rich program was facilitated by experts in gender equality, social justice, governance, and leadership and was presented through participative and interactive participant-centered adult training approaches. Topics covered included:



What sets the Institute apart is its facilitation model: one that prioritizes experience-based learning, peer-to-peer exchange, and safe, reflective spaces where leaders can connect and lead with clarity. The Institute's greatest strength lies in its ability to design and deliver transformative leadership experiences that are both

purpose-driven and powerfully personal. Through its uniquely curated program, the Institute demonstrated its unmatched capacity to convene diverse expertise—from technical trainers to sector leaders and trailblazers—into a cohesive, deeply impactful learning journey.

### Quotes from participants in the peer-to-peer meeting



“ Thank you for the wonderful program. It was truly transformative. Alamitu, Marsabit County.



“ I wish to thank both KSG and Beyond Zero for the intense training that has equipped me to know myself better. This has surely ignited a transformation in my mind and will surely help become a better, well researched and intentional leader – Emily Nyaribo, Nyamira County.



“ It has been a great honor engaging and learning from the entire team. Thank you and may God bless you all. Anita Mutula, Makueni County.

To sustain and scale the impact of the Institute’s leadership program, continued strategic investment is essential. Key opportunities for strengthening program quality and long-term viability include: peer-to-peer learning; refining the curriculum with insights from previous cohorts; developing a standardized facilitator’s manual and curating case studies that highlight transformative outcomes.

Looking ahead, and to broaden the leadership pipeline, MKI aims to expand this model to support a wider cadre of women in public service—beginning with a customized course tailored for the Judiciary. This strategic scaling effort reinforces the Institute’s commitment to inclusive, empowered, and sustainable leadership at all levels of governance.





**Mental health and wellness are now widely recognized as essential human rights and key to personal dignity, productivity, and well-being. According to data from the Ministry of Health, “Approximately 3.7 million Kenyans, out of 24.9 million in the workforce, grapple with mental health conditions”.**

**– Ministry of Health**

## The Wellness and Self-Care Program in the Workplace

### Advocating for Mental Wellness as a Universal Health Right.

Mental health and wellness are now widely recognized as essential human rights and key to personal dignity, productivity, and well-being. According to data from the Ministry of Health, “Approximately 3.7 million Kenyans, out of 24.9 million in the workforce, grapple with mental health conditions”. This underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to support the mental well-being of employees. The Government of Kenya has demonstrated a strong commitment to this agenda through the Mental Health Policy (2015–2030), Mental Health Action Plan (2021–2025) and National Guidelines on Workplace Mental Wellness. These frameworks guide efforts to strengthen mental health systems, promote access to quality services, and align with both the Kenyan Constitution and international commitments.

Beyond Zero supported the Institute in developing a curriculum aligned to the aspirations of the government policies. This innovative program is designed to enhance the government’s capacity to prioritize mental health and well-being for its workforce. The wellness program is delivered in collaboration with experts from KSG, Chiromo Hospital Group, and the State Department for Public Service.

To date, Beyond Zero has supported the training and certification of two cohorts of 76 public servants from Government Ministries, Departments,

and Agencies (MDAs) on wellness and Self-care, promoting a culture of self-care and resilience. The inaugural Wellness and Self-Care Program was launched on October 2, 2023. The program targeted high-level human resource managers with the aim of cascading across all cadres, integrating wellness and mental health into broader HR processes and training. It brought together 46 participants, drawn from ministries, departments, state agencies and neighboring schools, namely: Mary Leakey High, Kabete High and Kabete Rehabilitation Centre.

The second cohort of 38 human resource managers was held from April 18 to 22, 2024. Through a participatory and skill-based methodology, both trainings highlighted the increasing mental health challenges, including burn-out, anxiety, absenteeism, alcoholism and low morale. The sessions led by the Chiromo Hospital Group provided critical knowledge on mental health conditions, addiction management and self-care. The program fostered open discussion on personal experiences, empowering participants to identify the mental health triggers. They committed to integrating wellness strategies in their workplace by developing interventions and support systems tailored to their unique organizational needs.

The wellness program model integrated a public lecture component, delivered

in a hybrid format, to expand the audience and respond to the growing interest in the program’s content. This approach aimed to broaden visibility around mental health and wellness, create an open

forum for community engagement and awareness, and contribute to breaking the silence and reducing stigma surrounding mental health.



The program underscores the critical link between mental health and the workplace, reaffirming responsibility of

institutions to prioritize employee wellbeing as a core element of sustainable development.



**The resilience of employees if healthy and happy is a solid investment”**

– PS State Department of Public Service.



Obstetric fistula



**475,000**

FGM remains a critical issue in Kenya where approximately **475,000 girls at risk of undergoing FGM by 2030**, with 15% prevalence across the country.



**22**

The twenty-two (22) counties with high FGM prevalence include: Kajiado, Narok, Taita Taveta, Migori, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, West Pokot, Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, Garissa, Tana River, Wajir, Mandera, Laikipia, Bomet, Bungoma, Kisii and Nyamira.

## Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns to End Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is both a human rights and public health issue that infringes on the right to bodily autonomy, health, freedom from torture, life, and education. As a form of gender-based violence, it is deeply rooted and denies women and girls agency over their bodies, exposing them to lifelong physical and emotional harm. Ending FGM requires legal and policy enforcement, community engagement, health sector involvement and education to shift social norms. Kenya is committed to advancing the elimination of FGM in line with the global call for the eradication of FGM by 2030, reinforced by the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2011).

Despite a steady decline in prevalence, FGM remains a critical issue in Kenya, where approximately 475,000 girls are at risk of undergoing FGM by 2030, with 15% prevalence across the country. The 22 counties with high FGM prevalence include: Kajiado, Narok, Taita Taveta, Migori, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, West Pokot, Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, Garissa, Tana River, Wajir, Mandera, Laikipia, Bomet, Bungoma, Kisii and Nyamira.

As part of its commitment to ending

GBV and harmful practices, Beyond Zero partnered with KSG’s Institute for Gender and Social Development, the Anti-FGM Board, and MYWO to review the Anti-FGM Champions training curriculum and implement two community outreach programs in March and May 2023. Leveraging MYWO’s deep grassroots network and legacy of women’s rights advocacy since the 1950s, the initiative created space for community champions and stakeholders to raise awareness, celebrate progress, and amplify calls for the total abandonment of FGM by 2030. The outreaches were designed to build on the momentum of global campaigns, including the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM and International Women’s Day. These efforts are also anchored on the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 5 on gender equality<sup>8</sup>; Goal 3 on health<sup>9</sup> and Goal 4 on education<sup>10</sup> by promoting education and empowerment, eliminating early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, reducing child labor, minimizing the risk of gender-based violence and HIV infection, and combating poverty.

The first outreach, held on March 6, 2023, at the Kenya School of Government’s Baringo Campus, brought together 40 Anti-FGM

<sup>8</sup> Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

<sup>9</sup> Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

<sup>10</sup> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities



champions from seven counties to strengthen their understanding of the law, emerging FGM trends, eradication strategies, and county-level best practices, while re-energizing their advocacy efforts in line with the global goal to eliminate FGM by 2030.

Following its success and increased demand, a second two-day outreach was convened with 42 champions from the seven counties. Facilitated by FGM experts, the session explored the cultural dimensions of FGM, rising trends such as medicalization and digital mobilization, the effectiveness of legal frameworks, and international best practices.

Governor of Embu Honorable Cecily Mbarire, acknowledged that data on FGM was limited as it is increasingly carried out in secret and only becomes visible when adverse effects are reported in the news. She committed to continue supporting the fight against FGM in the County.

## Lessons Learned

Emerging global evidence shows that growing resistance to gender equality efforts is contributing to the resurgence of harmful practices, including FGM, and the intensification of violence against women and girls, such as femicide. This trend highlights the importance of sustained commitment to advancing gender equality, and the need for inclusive, multisectoral responses an accelerated pace of action that engages all levels of government, communities, and duty bearers that center the rights, safety, and dignity of women and girls.

While awareness-raising has played an important role in addressing harmful social norms like FGM, the next step is to complement and deepen collaboration across sectors and communities. By bringing together key institutions, community leaders, and stakeholders at all levels, MKI aims to support collective reflection on the challenges that remain and identify practical ways to bridge the gap between policy and community lived experiences. Central to this effort is the inclusion of men and boys in shifting harmful cultural norms, and the continued centering of women's and girls' voices.



## Menstrual Health Management

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM), commonly known as ‘period poverty’, refers to the lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints brought about by gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, and lack of basic services.

According to the Menstrual Health in Kenya Country Landscape Analysis, girls will miss about four days of school each month or an average of 20% of the school year because they are on their period. Ultimately, this affects their academic performance and retention in school. Disrupted schooling has been shown to negatively impact the health and well-being of girls and young women whereas staying in school protects girls from early marriages and child motherhood, while

reducing HIV risk and other negative outcomes.

The inter-relationship between gender, poverty, education and health demonstrates the need for all sectors to address menstrual hygiene management as a central part to achieving SDGs 3, 4 and 5<sup>11</sup>. In Kenya, inequitable gender dynamics become pronounced during puberty and can leave adolescent girls and young women unable to negotiate access to vital health care services and products, including sanitary pads. In rural and slum areas, 2 out of 3<sup>12</sup> pad users receive feminine products from sexual partners. The adolescent girls are unable to negotiate for safe sex practices, thereby increasing their risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, or

<sup>11</sup> SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls).

<sup>12</sup> [https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FSG-Menstrual-Health-Landscape\\_Kenya.pdf](https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FSG-Menstrual-Health-Landscape_Kenya.pdf)

experiencing an unwanted pregnancy. While efforts have been made to provide free sanitary towels to female students, coverage remains limited and inconsistent, with significant challenges in distribution.

Kenya has made significant policy strides to promote menstrual health. The Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy (2019–2030) provides a national framework for integrating MHM in schools and public institutions. It seeks to address menstrual health challenges and promote dignity, equity, and empowerment, especially for women and girls. Whilst the Basic Education Act (Amendment, 2017) mandates the provision of free, sufficient, and quality sanitary towels to school girls and ensures access to proper sanitation facilities. These policies encourage incorporation of MHM in educational content and school health programs.

Beyond Zero recognizes the intersection between menstrual health and GBV, for adolescent girls in marginalized communities, and has therefore implemented the distribution of menstrual health dignity packs in West Pokot County.

### **Distribution of Period Packs to 1045 Adolescent Girls in West Pokot County.**

Through a consultative process with the County Department of Health, West Pokot County, Beyond Zero identified a strategic opportunity to advance the menstrual health hygiene initiative in North Pokot sub-County through the distribution of period packs and health education on menstrual hygiene management. Based on guidance from the County Department of Education West Pokot County, 12 primary schools were selected based on areas of high vulnerability.



In adopting our preventative approach, the MHM initiative identified girls on the onset of puberty, who face heightened vulnerability to early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and adolescent pregnancy. These risks are closely linked to misinformation surrounding reproductive health and menstruation. MHM programs can serve as an entry point to broader SRHR education, helping build knowledge, agency, and self-esteem early on. Introducing MHM at the primary school level helps normalize healthy hygiene practices and plays a key role in gradually reducing stigma and dismantling myths. It also encourages open and informed dialogue among pupils and teachers. This early intervention not only supports the well-being and school retention of young girls but also contributes to long-term gender equality and social transformation in the community.

The Initiative had two components: distribution of the period packs and awareness raising on menstrual health conducted by the Department of Health Services. The health education sessions targeted both boys and girls, providing information on: menstrual hygiene; personal hygiene; handwashing; proper disposal of sanitary

products; elimination of harmful practices such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation; and ending teenage pregnancies while encouraging girls to stay in school. The period packs were distributed in October 2023, February and May 2024 to coincide with school terms.

Name of School	Oct 23	Feb 24	May 24
Kacheliba Mix Primary School	130	172	156
Kacheliba Girls Primary school	237	260	314
Ngengechwo Primary School	84	79	79
Lokichar Primary School	57	56	56
AIC Asilong Primary School	75	81	96
Ngotut Primary School	47	45	36
Orolwo Primary School	61	20	20
Konyao Arid Zone Primary School	170	165	165
Kalas Primary School	39	35	35
Nakwijit Primary School	50	47	60
St. Dorcas Primary School	20	20	25
Karameri Primary School	40	20	20



Beyond Zero also participated in the Menstrual Health Day celebration under the theme “Together for a Period Friendly Kenya”.

*Menstrual hygiene kits will help to improve the sanitation and hygiene of school-going girls and in the process boost their class attendance. The sanitary pads will also relieve girls from stigma associated with periods.”* **County Reproductive Health Coordinator.**

*“The sanitary pads give girls the confidence to interact with their peers during periods without fear and shame. Menstrual hygiene kits secure girls’ education”.* **Deputy County Nursing Officer.**

*“We recognized the positive impact on girls’ school attendance, improved productivity levels and enhanced knowledge on the effects of teenage pregnancies as an adolescent.”* **School Health Coordinator, West Pokot County**

By providing these necessities, the menstrual hygiene kits help girls manage their periods with dignity and confidence, enabling them to stay in school and participate fully in their educational pursuits without interruptions or discomfort. Moreover, addressing menstrual hygiene needs contributes to promoting gender equality and empowering girls to reach their full potential.





## Humanitarian Response

Beyond Zero integrates humanitarian response into its programs, particularly during disasters and emergencies.

In April and May 2024, Kenya faced widespread flooding due to unusually heavy rains experienced in most parts of the country. The floods left approximately 170 people dead, more than 200,000 displaced and destroyed properties, infrastructure and livelihoods. Among the most affected areas included low-income neighborhoods in Nairobi County – Mathare, Mkuru Kwa Njenga, among others. These neighborhoods are characterized by poor structures and by poor sanitation facilities, leaving people at heightened risk of homelessness and water-borne diseases. Displacement of families and disruption of livelihoods plunged many households into poverty, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Beyond Zero responded to this unprecedented crisis through the donation of mattresses, blankets and sanitary pads. Social centers and community groups were identified as an avenue to reach the affected families. These were:

*Mathare Social Justice Centre (500 blankets, 200 mattresses and 1,000 sanitary pads) and Wangu Foundation (100 mattresses, 200 blankets and 1,000 sanitary pads). Additionally, Beyond Zero also donated the same items in Kimorori, Wempa and Wangu wards in Murang'a County (200 mattresses, 300 blankets and 1,000 sanitary towels) to households affected by landslides.*



## Partnerships and Collaborations

### *Pre-conference meeting for the 2024 United Nations civil society conference*

Beyond Zero attended the United Nations Civil Society Conference (UNCSC) 2024 pre-conference meeting on May 8, 2024 at Pride Inn Hotel Westlands - This

meeting culminated into the “Summit of the Future” that took place on September 22-23, 2024 at the UNHQ New York. The theme of the Pre-Conference was CSO Mobilization Day and Fun Run Catalyzing collaboration and strengthening CSO engagement in Kenya’s Development Agenda.

## Legacy Building; Global First Ladies Academy

The partnership between Beyond Zero and the Global First Ladies Alliance (GFLA) began in 2014 to strengthen the capacity of First Ladies’ offices through technical training for their advisors, particularly around advocacy, communication, and partnerships. Initially aligned with the UN General Assembly, the collaboration has grown in scope and influence, with Beyond Zero emerging as a global model, sharing best practices through case studies and virtual

engagements. The partnership now continues under the Margaret Kenyatta Institute, extending support to the spouses of governors through the Leadership Program for County Social Transformation, where GFLA contributes as a key facilitator and resource partner.

The ongoing collaboration was recently demonstrated at the 2nd Annual Global First Ladies Academy in 2024, where the former First Lady of Kenya was invited as a featured speaker for the VIP First Ladies Dinner held at Neuehouse. The invitation extended by GFLA was made in recognition to her role as First Lady of Kenya and the impact Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta has made through her “Beyond Zero” Initiative to eliminate maternal and child mortality and HIV/AIDS. GFLA also referred to Her Excellencies ongoing leadership through the Margaret Kenyatta Institute of Gender and Social Development.

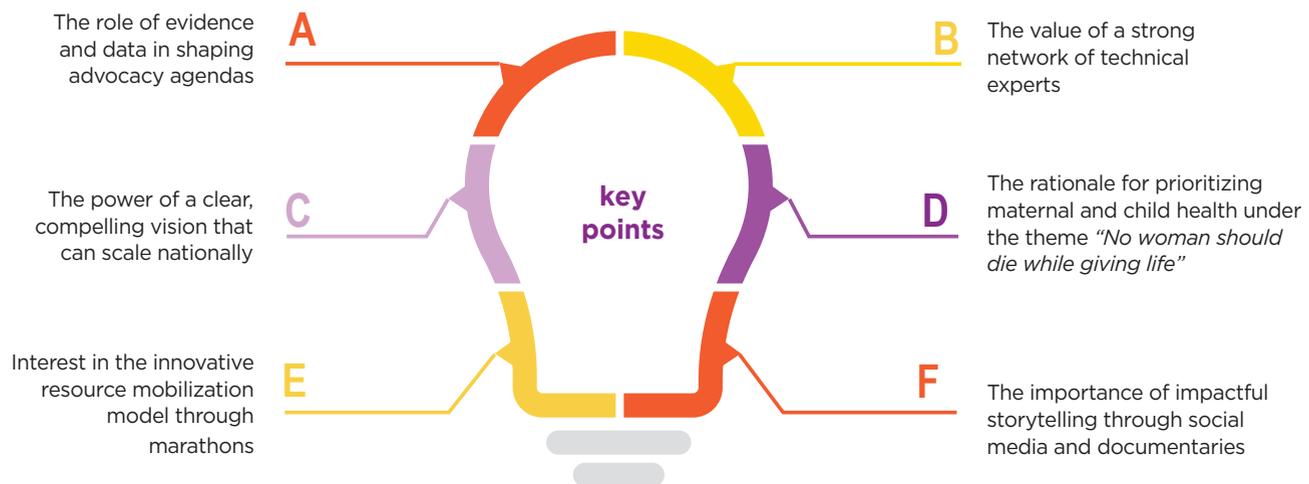


## First Ladies Senior Advisors Training

Beyond Zero was incorporated into the GFLA Academy platform, enabling peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing among its 66 members. During a session for senior advisors, Beyond Zero representatives presented “The Advocacy Model and Legacy Project,” highlighting the work of Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta in a

presentation titled “10 Years of Service and Building a Legacy.” The session offered insights into building a successful advocacy model with national reach.

The presentation sparked discussions on several key points:



# Next Steps

05





**At its core, Beyond Zero continues to serve as an advocacy platform that supports collective efforts, contributes to policy discussions, and brings attention to the needs of women, girls, and vulnerable communities across Kenya.**

Since 2023, Beyond Zero has entered a new phase of implementation, transitioning from broad national engagement to a more targeted focus on select counties. This strategic shift aims to build on previous achievements, strengthen the impact of localized interventions, and more effectively contribute to health equity, gender equality, and inclusive development at the community level.

As the initiative transitions into the next phase of implementation under the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, strategic investments, networking and deepened, coordinated partnerships will be essential to scale impactful models and institutionalize high-impact interventions across the country. Key priorities include:







**BEYOND ZERO**

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