

Building a movement of grassroots Women and Girls

WELCOME TO THE MOVEMENT

As we leap into the new year and dive headfirst into the first quarter, our passion and commitment for empowering grassroots women and girls burns brighter than ever! This quarter has been an electrifying journey of championing REPRESENTATION, amplifying VOICES that must be heard and stories that demand to be told. But that's not all - brace yourselves for the excitement of our 2nd transition, signaling a thrilling new chapter for our grassroots movement. Curious to know more about the whirlwind of activity swirling around us? Dive into the heart of our newsletter to uncover the thrilling adventures and impactful strides we've been making. We are eager to hear from you, feel free to reach out on email communication@grootskenya.org or on our social platforms!

Read more about what has been going on!

Welcoming the New Executive Director - Rachel Kagoiya

Rachel describes herself as a gifted communicator, seasoned knowledge & information enthusiast, an advocate for social justice, human rights and transformative leadership. She has an extensive experience honed in the last 19 years in gender and women's rights documentation, feminist analysis, solution-oriented programming, movement building, participatory training and mentorship/femtorship.

Rachel officially joined GROOTS Kenya on 20th February 2024. She joins GROOTS Kenya from FEMNET (African Women's Development and Communication Network), a pan-African network where she worked for 17 years. Prior to that she has served in different leadership capacities at the UNEP, Kenyatta University among others.



Rachel takes over from Fridah Githuku, our former Executive Director who dedicatedly served grassroots movement for 13 years. We thank Fridah for her exemplary performance as our former Executive Director. We celebrate her achievements, commitment, zeal, and passion in which she served our organization and movement. We wish her the very best in her new assignment.

This transition marks our second successful leadership transition, the first being that of our founder, Esther Mwaura-Muiru, marking a testament to the power of movements.

Amplified Call to Actions to End FGM

On February 6th, in collaboration with the County Government of Laikipia, **over 200 GROOTS Kenya Champions** joined the commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance towards FGM at Kimajo, Laikipia North. Themed "*Her Voice; Her Future: Every Survivor's Voice is a Call to Action*," the day was marked with resounding acknowledgement that every choice made by survivors contributes to the global movement to end female genital mutilation (FGM).

During the proceedings, the Deputy County Commissioner emphasized that carrying out, aiding, supporting, or using abusive language against individuals who had undergone FGM was punishable by law, underscoring the country's zero-tolerance stance towards FGM practices.



Additionally, local government officials reiterated that FGM remained a crime punishable by law and urged the community to report both enablers and perpetrators.

These sentiments were echoed by our GROOTS Champion, Loise Kimiriri, who called upon the community to take collective action as a means to curb FGM in Laikipia. She highlighted the changing tactics of FGM, noting that children were often taken to their grandmothers during school holidays, where the pervasive practice occurred.

FGM remains a deeply rooted cultural practice, although the reasons for practicing vary from one ethnic group to another. It's a manifestation of gender inequality that is deeply entrenched in socio-economic and political structures, and it represents the society's control over women and girls.

Bernadette Loloju, CEO, Anti- FGM Board

GROOTS Kenya's community responders tirelessly collaborate with local government authorities to combat this harmful injustice. Together, we are committed to protecting the rights and well-being of women and girls in our communities, working towards a future where all individuals can live free from all forms of gender- injustices.

Commit to Sustainably Invest in Grassroots Women

On 8th March, the world united to celebrate International Women's Day under the theme "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress." This powerful theme resonates deeply with our mission as we recognize that investing in women is not only an economic imperative but also a fundamental human rights issue. As an organization dedicated to enhancing the effective engagement of grassroots women and girls in development, by building their voice and agency, we facilitated **over 500 grassroots women** to attend and actively participate in International Women's Day celebrations in 9 counties: Kilifi, Embu, Kajiado, Kitui, Busia, Kakamega, Nakuru, Kiambu and Baringo Counties.

During the Kiambu County Celebrations, Pacifica Ongecha, Kiambu County Coordinator, emphasized the pivotal role of investing in women to drive progress, ignite change, and accelerate the transition towards a healthier, safer, and more equitable world for all. Kiambu Governor Kimani Wamatangi echoed this sentiment in his closing remarks, emphasizing that investing in women isn't just about their potential, but also about the progress and prosperity of families, nations, and the world at large. He highlighted how empowering women leads to inclusive growth and innovation.

During the same event, Rachel Kagoiya, our Executive Director, stressed the importance of ensuring investments reach grassroots levels, as empowering women leads to empowered communities. She called on the Governor to believe in the agency and voices of grassroots women, as they hold solutions and able to lead in development in the county. In Kajiado County, the IWD commemoration was marked by guests noting the significant milestones taken by educating women and girls, sensitizing the community against harmful practices on women and mentorship of young girls.

The County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Gender, Culture, Cooperatives, Tourism and Wildlife, Janet Sereu noted that the Kajiado County Assembly, had passed a policy on Women Economic Fund that would economically empower women, to embrace activities such as modern farming, especially during drought.

"As an organization, we call upon the government and development partners to involve grassroots women in decision-making platforms, both within their communities and on boards and leadership positions." Dorcus Kigera, GROOTS Kenya Nakuru County Coordinator noted during the county's celebration. Closing in on her remarks, Chief Officer for Gender, Social Services, and Inclusivity, Gladys Kamuren emphasized the importance of celebrating women's achievements, advocating for gender equality, and empowering women in all aspects of life.



As we cross over to Kitui, speaking in Nguutani, Mwingi West, Governor Julias Malombe noted that empowering women is a ripple effect beyond individual lives, urging society to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create pathways for equal opportunities. During the same event, we had **3 GROOTS Kenya Champions**: Munee Mbusya, Angeline Francis, and Ruth Samuel, recognized by the County Government for their significant strides in promoting gender equality, advancing financial inclusion, and championing clean cooking initiatives within the county.

International Women's Day



The IWD celebrations in Kakamega and Busia counties stressed the need to inspire and empower women to accelerate progress and drive swift and tangible progress in their communities.

President William Ruto, speaking in Moi Stadium, Embu County, emphasized the crucial role of women's inclusion and active engagement in leadership to accelerate progress. He pledged to expand empowerment efforts to enhance women's full and effective participation in decision-making processes.

We closed in our celebration together with our partners in Baringo County; Diakonia, Christian Impact Mission (CIM) and the message was clear **"Morosanyelot"** calling on the women in the community to push forward.

From the messages spoken across the counties, it's evident that investing in women enables us to ignite change and accelerate progress towards a more equitable world. Through meaningful allocation of resources and support, we can amplify the voices of grassroots women and drive sustainable progress. As an organization we remain steadfast in advocating for the rights and empowerment of grassroots women, striving for a future where every woman can thrive and contribute to a more just and prosperous world.



IWD in Pictorial



Innovation: Grassroots Market Assembly

On January 29th, we hosted our first National Grassroots Market Assembly in Nairobi bringing together **over 100 grassroots entrepreneurs from 17 counties**. The event brought together seasoned and newly onboarded champions, creating a diverse tapestry of value chains. The assembly served as a platform for networking, collaboration, market exploration, and peer learning.

The market assembly goes beyond simply exchanging goods. It's an incubator for collaboration, innovation, and collective empowerment. By connecting diverse entrepreneurs from across the country, the grassroots market assembly fosters a vibrant ecosystem where knowledge and resources flow freely, paving the way for sustainable development and prosperity for all.



Cultivating Food Security Together



From March 15th to 17th, we successfully conducted stakeholders and induction workshops in Laikipia West sub-county on the Community-led Food Forest Project (CFFP). The project aims to enhance climate and food resilience in four landscapes across Laikipia County, Kenya, through a sustainable food forest approach. GROOTS Kenya is committed to planting 155,000 trees, predominantly fruit trees, of 12 different species.

In the coming months, we will be working closely with GROOTS Kenya Champions to map and identify 800 farmers with whom we will collaborate over the next six years to enhance initiatives towards achieving food security.

The Community Food Forest Project is funded by TerraFund for AFR100, a consortium of World Resources Institute (WRI), One Tree Planted, Realize Impact and Barka.

Kenya's CSOs Voluntary National Review

GROOTS Kenya joined SDGs Kenya Forum, Open Institute for a 3-day CSOs progress report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Kenya is among the 43 Member states Presenting its 3rd Voluntary National Review Report at the High-Level Political Forum, 2024.

Since 2017 the CSOs in Kenya, have been complimenting the national process, by developing a shadow report that focuses on the interventions that foster progress to SDG implementation in Kenya

Kenya CSOs VNR report serves as a critical tool for advocacy, accountability & fostering dialogue among stakeholders involved in SDGs implementation offering actionable recommendations, advocating for inclusive, equitable & sustainable development outcomes.



Regenerative Seascapes for Planet, Nature and People (ReSea)

Safeguarding biodiversity, protecting vulnerable species from extinction, restoring degraded habitats & implementing policies and practices that promote ecosystem resilience, is fundamental in XXX.

The ReSea Consortium partners (Mission Inclusion, IUCN and GROOTS Kenya) held a 2-day stakeholders' consultative workshop in the Kilifi Seascape. This culminated in the consortium partners brainstorming and aligning key strategies and tactics for creating synergies between government, NGOs and CBOs, & the local community particularly women, youth and people living with disabilities (PWD) to ensure inclusivity, sustainability and ownership of the project.



The 2-year consortium-led project bringing together Mission Inclusion, IUCN and GROOTS Kenya seeks to enhance the physical and socioeconomic, improve the effectiveness, equity, and gender-responsiveness resilience of people living in coastal communities to adverse impacts of climate change in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region.

International Day of Forests

Forest conservation and protection ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

On 21st March, International Day of Forests GROOTS Kenya joined the County Government of Laikipia in commemorating the day at Lariak Forest in Laikipia West. The year's theme was 'Forests and Innovations for a Better World'.

Laikipia Governor Hon. Joshua Irungu, EGH noted that Laikipia is on the forefront leading the national quest to plant 15 billion trees to achieve 30% tree cover by 2032.

Thirty per cent (30%) of these will be fruit trees to enhance both nutritional and economic wellbeing of our people."

During the event, **GROOTS Kenya Champion** Mary Maina, a forest scout, was awarded for exemplary work she is doing in protecting and conserving the forest. Additionally, the chairman for Lariak Forest, Mr. Joseph, who is GROOTS Kenya's Men4Women Champion, was also recognized for the great conservation work he was doing in the county.

Launch of the Widows SACCO

Ahead of the Valentines Day, GROOTS Kenya Champions from Baringo partnered with Come Together Widows and Orphans (CTWOO) organization for a meet-and-greet dinner celebration. The event was themed "*Economic Empowerment for Widows*" and marked the launch of the Widows' SACCO. This collaboration with CTWOO has united partners to recognize widows from across the country and working towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of programmes led by widows.



Influencing Policy through Dialogue



GROOTS Kenya Nyandarua Champion, Mary Mwangi, along with programs officer Jane Wangari, participated in the Policy Dialogue Community of Practice (CoP) workshop in Kampala, Uganda. During the workshop, they aligned the thematic areas that the Policy Dialogue CoP would focus on. A CoP Steering Committee was established, with Uganda assuming the Chair role and GROOTS selected to support as the Secretary General. In the last 10 years, the Policy Dialogue initiative by GROOTS Kenya and HORIZONT3000 aims at influencing policy processes for the benefit of marginalized people and gender equality.

Rural Women Leaders Cultivating Change



GROOTS Kenya held a Group Leaders Reflection Meeting, that brought together **92 groups**, each accompanied by their two newly elected leaders from Laikipia and Kitui, marking their first encounter.

During the meeting the leaders engaged in mutual learning and reflection on the previous year's workplan. The meeting resulted in strengthening the capacities and expanding opportunities for women smallholder farmers.

Haki Ardhi App Launch

GROOTS Kenya joined Kenya Land Alliance on 8th March as they launched the HAKI ARDHI APP – a women land rights reporting tool. The Haki Ardhi App was last year rolled out in Kakamega County and Taita Taveta County and has been very instrumental in documenting land rights injustices faced by women, including land succession injustices, forced evictions, land grabbing, disinheritance and denial of access to their property among others.



“Our goal, in the next few months, is to roll-out the use of the HAKI ARDHI APP in more counties within Kenya, so that we can address the myriad of land rights injustices that women in Kenya face. Both rural women and urban women in the country face daily harassment, mistreatment and at times life threatening land rights related violence. It is our aim, to provide a free, secure and dependable reporting mechanism so that women can access the remedies that they so much need,” said Faith Alubbe, the CEO of Kenya Land Alliance.

Where are the Grassroots Women in the Media?

Earlier on in the quarter, our Kiambu Coordinator and GBV Responder, Pacifica Ongecha, had the opportunity to speak on Voice of America (VOA). She addressed the pressing issue of grassroots representation in media houses. The feature delved into the portrayal of women in media spaces, drawing on a 2022 report by Oxford University. The report highlighted the stark underrepresentation of women in news coverage and their portrayal in stereotypical and simplistic ways.



[WATCH VIDEO](#)

FACJ 55 stories of Change

The work of GROOTS Kenya was highlighted in the “55 Stories of Change,” a collection of Generation Equality Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ) Action Coalition impact stories showcasing the power of collaboration to make a real difference towards realizing a gender-just and sustainable future for all.

Full Article Link

<https://forum.generationequality.org/news/55-stories-change-launched-csw68>

GROOTS KENYA ASSOCIATION

	ORGANIZATION GROOTS Kenya Association
	COMMITMENT Strengthened voice, leadership and agency of grassroots women towards the adverse impacts of climate change
	TYPE & COUNTRY Civil society KENYA
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PHOTO: GROOTS KENYA
Mary Lemonsary, a grassroots leader, making an address during a climate action event in November 2023

GROOTS Kenya, dedicated to empowering grassroots women and girls, acknowledges the significant influence of climate change on gender disparities. The organization believes that grassroots women and girls possess distinctive insights and awareness regarding their communities, making them indispensable contributors to endeavors aimed at enhancing climate resilience. Notably, GROOTS Kenya has recently been honored with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Annual National Awards, a testament to the recognition of its impactful work in strengthening the resilience of grassroots women and girls against the effects of climate change.

Contrary to portraying grassroots women and girls as victims of climate change, GROOTS Kenya recognizes them as change agents with coping and mitigation strategies. These women have demonstrated resilience and innovation in developing approaches to mitigate the risks associated with climate change. The organization advocates for the meaningful involvement of grassroots women and girls in shaping climate policy, accessing funding, and driving actionable climate initiatives.

GROOTS Kenya is committed to elevating the voices and leadership of sole women on the male dominated land management committees, inspiring others through her resilience and dedication. Furthermore, Mary's commitment extends beyond leadership roles as she actively engages in capacity building endeavors such as training on agroforestry and the introduction of sustainable agricultural practices. Through initiatives like bean cultivation, maize planting, and land reclamation and restoration, Mary empowers women who are reliant on livestock for survival to diversify their income sources sustainably. These efforts also foster a just transition to a green economy, aligning with GROOTS Kenya's overarching objectives.

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GROOTS Kenya @ CSW68

GROOTS Kenya joined close to 5,000 feminist movement leaders, gender advocates, government representatives and women's rights activists, at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) from 11 - 22 March 2024. The priority theme was "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective". CSW is the largest global gathering that convenes annually to take stock of progress on gender equality, discuss pressing issues and agree on actions to transform the lives of women and girls everywhere. The Executive Director, Rachel Kagoiya and GROOTS Kenya Champion, Pacifica Ongecha attended physically and over 100 Champions and GROOTS Kenya staff followed the conversations online.



FUN FACT

**Globally, 26% of women are aged
50+years
(WHO, 2021)**

During the CSW68 parallel event hosted by HelpAge International, Pacifica Ongecha joined panelists to share their experiences on how poverty, injustice, and the rights of older women intersect and impact each other within the global development agenda. The event delved into the effects of normalized gender stereotypes, discrimination, and gendered ageism experienced by women from infancy to older age.

HelpAge USA @HelpAge_USA · Mar 12
"We see challenges around aging & property rights. There's a lack of social protection systems & older women are not taken through financials programs that would help them plan as they age. And, we must include them in this decision-making process." @GROOTSKenya @OngechaP #CSW68



During the Stand for Her Land CSW68 event themed "*Financing what works: Through the lens of women's land rights*," Pacifica Ongecha urged African governments to provide direct, meaningful, and sustainable resources to local community organizations and movements collaborating with grassroots women. This will strengthen the movements so that women are able to pursue collective actions such as advocacy for title deeds in their names and access to legal aid resources.

Commission on the Status of women (CSW68)

GROOTS Kenya's Programs Manager, Doris Munyingi, participated in the International Land Coalition and Stand for Her Land virtual event where they discussed "*CSW Addressing poverty and empowering women.*" The event provided a valuable platform for discussing and sharing insights on the crucial role that securing land ownership and control play in empowering women and alleviating poverty. Through storytelling, attendees had the opportunity to learn about the projects and experiences of young leaders and women involved in ILC's leadership program and the Stand for Her Land Campaign.



The Jasiri Consortium partners:- Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), and GROOTS Kenya, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, co-hosted candid discussions around the Jasiri fund during the CSW68 parallel event. The Fund has enabled over 1,000 survivors of gender-based violence in Kenya, majority being young women in vulnerable communities, to not only pursue justice but also to access psychosocial support, financial literacy programmes and affordable loans to revive their businesses, which were severely affected by the COVID pandemic. During the event, the Jasiri Consortium partners also shared valuable lessons learned from Kenya's experience in establishing and implementing the fund. The discussions delved into the potential of state and non-state actors partnering to finance and implement existing commitments to end GBV.





The Kitui County Government recognized and awarded GROOTS Kenya Kitui Champions:- Munee Mbusya, Angeline Francis, and Ruth Samuel, for their outstanding contributions in promoting gender equality, advancing financial inclusion, and championing clean cooking initiatives within the county.



Mary Alwanyi, Kakamega GROOTS Champion, being awarded the Haki Madini Kenya Awards, Women's Category for pioneering responsible extractive sector in the last decade.



In Laikipia, during the International Forests, Day, GROOTS Champion, Mary Maina (Mama Njeri), a forest scout, was awarded for her exemplary work in protecting and conserving the forest. The chairman for Lariiek Forest, Mr. Joseph, Men4Women champion, was also recognized for the great work he was doing in the county.



GROOTS Kenya Champions Monica Aluku, Pacifica Ongecha and Wairimu Kanyiri were recognized and honoured by the UN for championing the Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 17 on Partnerships respectively. This was during the national exhibition to celebrate the 17 Faces of Action by Kenyan women toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) organized by the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations in Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations in Nairobi (UNON).

GROOTS Kenya in the NEWS



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Newsletter by : Vivian Wangari

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