ANNUAL REPORT 2024
TUNAWEZA EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION (TEO)



"This report outlines the milestones we have reached, best practices and opportunities realized, the challenges we have encountered and the lessons that will guide our continued interventions."

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Dear Partners and stakeholders,



Faith Ijaruha

Chairperson, Board

As we reflect on the milestones achieved in 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the unwavering commitment demonstrated by our team, partners, and the communities we serve. This year has been transformative, marked by significant strides in our mission to empower girls, young women, and youth.

Our initiatives have not only reached wider audiences but have also deepened their impact, fostering resilience and self-reliance among beneficiaries. The recognition of our board member Aruna Varsani as a National Heroine and staff member, Emmanuel Mwita Rioba, with the Dr. Joyce Laboso Award during the International Women's Day celebrations, underscores the national acknowledgment of our efforts in combating FGM and promoting gender equality.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners. Your collective efforts have been instrumental in driving our vision forward. As we look ahead, let us continue to build on this momentum, striving for a society where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to thrive.

Dear Partners and stakeholders



Glory Ochola

Executive Director

"Greetings. Thank you for taking your time to interact with us at Tunaweza Empowerment Organization. If you are looking for a platform that nurtures, grows, and equips most vulnerable girls, young women and youth to lead sustainable change in their communities, then you are at the right place. That is all we do; we empower girls, young women and youth with knowledge and skills to not just prepare them for the future but to also support them to create the future they want to see. This report outlines the milestones we have reached, the challenges we have encountered, and the lessons that will guide our continued efforts. It stands as a testament to the power of youth-led movements and the undeniable impact of collective action.

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the remarkable strides Tunaweza Empowerment Organization has made in advancing our mission to uplift and empower communities, especially women, youth, and vulnerable populations. Despite the challenges faced, including economic uncertainty and persistent social inequalities, our team remained resilient, innovative, and unwavering in its commitment to create meaningful change at the grassroots level.

This year, we successfully expanded our programs to reach more communities with initiatives focused on economic empowerment, gender equality, education, and health. Our efforts to combat gender-based violence and harmful practices like female genital mutilation have gained significant momentum, thanks to the dedicated work of our staff, volunteers, and male champions. We also deepened partnerships with local leaders, government agencies, and international allies, allowing us to amplify our impact and share best practices in community transformation.

The strength of our organization lies in the people we serve and those who support us. I extend heartfelt gratitude to our partners, donors, and stakeholders whose belief in our vision fuels our daily work. I also commend our team for their passion, professionalism, and persistence in delivering life-changing programs. Every life we touch, every community we uplift, and every mindset we shift brings us closer to a just and equitable society.

As we look to the year ahead, Tunaweza remains steadfast in its pursuit of sustainable development, inclusion, and empowerment. Together, we will continue to build a future where everyone, regardless of gender or background, has the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for walking this journey with us.

, Free, Equitable, Progressive and Transformative Society.

Our Mission

To advocate for full realization of social, economic and political rights of women, girls and youth through sustained and structured empowerment interventions challenging injustices in the society.

Our Vision

A Just, Free, Equitable, Progressive and Transformative Society.

who are we

TEO is a non-profit women's rights, survivors-centered, and youth development advocacy community-based organization that exists to catalyze the power of the most vulnerable girls, young women, and youth to create the future they imagine –for themselves, for their society, and for the world; working in Migori County and focuses its interventions in all the 10 sub-Counties. Tunaweza Empowerment Organization CBO was established in the year 2015 with a group of young women who had been discriminated in their own society because they refused to undergo female genital mutilation and had wanted to end the vice among girls and young women in Kuria – Migori County, Kenya.

Anchored on our foundational human rights-based approach of service to humanity to achieve social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication. TEO's vision is pursued through seven (7) program pillars namely Women Voices & Gender Equality, Good Governance & Human Rights, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, Community Dialogues & Engagement, Media Advocacy, Environmental &Climate Justice, and our signature Leadership Development Program.

Tunaweza Empowerment believes in working with marginalized groups in the society; from poverty and exclusion homes. Tunaweza; a Swahili word meaning 'we can' was driven on the principle that together we can implement vibrant programs that would impact the greatest change in the lives of communities on relationships which capitalize on the use of community-led innovative strategies in order to build and realize a just, equitable and progressive society which women, girls and youthfully enjoy their social, economic and political rights

Core Values

Transparency
Team work
Accountability
Commitment
Voluntarism
Honesty

2024 at a Glance

300K+ people reached on Social and digital media





200+ youths capacity strengthened

1 AGYW summit held





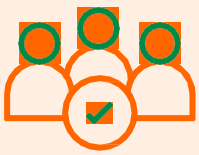
5000+ Adolescent girls and boys mentored

8 AGYW Cycles Registered





4+ new Collaborations



2,500+ Community members reached through community dialogues



1000+ youths Engaged

POWER TO YOUTH



In 2024, Tunaweza Empowerment Organization made significant strides in implementing the Power to Youth (PtY) project in Migori County, with the overarching goal of amplifying the voices of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and championing their rights in the face of persistent social, cultural, and systemic barriers. We focused our interventions on three key areas: prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, enhancing access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, and strengthening meaningful youth participation in decision-making spaces at community and county levels.

The project targeted young people, particularly girls and young women in Kuria West and Kuria East sub-counties with high prevalence of child marriage, teen pregnancies and FGM. Through community mobilization and sustained dialogue, we collaborated with local leaders, youth-led organizations, and county officials to influence social norms and policies. Safe spaces were established in all the sub-counties, offering girls and young women a secure environment for learning, mentorship, and peer-to-peer support. These spaces were instrumental in providing life skills training, SRHR education, and psychosocial support.

In 2024, the project recorded notable outcomes. Over 1,000 community members participated in structured dialogues and forums aimed at reshaping community attitudes toward harmful practices. We facilitated training sessions for male champions and community gatekeepers, including elders and religious leaders, who subsequently became vocal advocates for the abandonment of FGM and promotion of girls' and women's right. The project also strengthened the capacity of youth-led groups to advocate for SRHR and GBV prevention, equipping young advocates with skills in advocacy, communication and community organizing.

Additionally, we worked closely with health facilities in the sub-counties to improve access to adolescent- and youth-friendly services. This included capacity-building for healthcare providers, distribution of SRHR information materials, and organizing community health outreaches. The project also partnered with schools to deliver awareness on human rights, age-appropriate sexuality education and supported menstrual health management reaching schoolgirls with dignity kits and health education.

At the policy level, we facilitated youth-led engagement with the County assembly, Gender and Youth Departments, influencing the integration of Gender and youth priorities in key county planning documents. Youth representatives were supported to participate in county budget forums, resulting in increased attention to SRHR and youth development programs in the county's 2024/2025 development agenda.

We ramped up efforts to curb the surge in cross-border FGM cases, particularly in the Kuria region bordering Tanzania. In collaboration with border authorities, local administration, and grassroots networks, we conducted targeted awareness campaigns and community dialogues in hotspot border areas to discourage the practice and inform communities about the legal implications of cross-border FGM. Community surveillance teams were activated to monitor movement across known cutting zones, and joint border patrols with local duty-bearers were intensified to prevent girls from being taken across the border for circumcision.

During this same period, we coordinated the rescue and safe sheltering of over 300 girls who were at risk of undergoing FGM or had fled from imminent cutting. Working in partnership with the local Children's Department, police units, and civil society organizations, the girls were relocated to safe spaces where they received psychosocial support, legal aid, and reintegration planning. Some were successfully reunited with their families under strict protection guidelines while others were enrolled in vocational training and mentorship programs. These interventions underscored our rapid response capacity and deep-rooted community networks that have been vital in safeguarding the rights and futures of vulnerable girls in Migori County.

IMPACT STORY 1.0

From Naivety to Changemaker – By Schola Wegesa, AGYW, Girls and Beyond Gwikonge

Being part of Tunaweza programs has been transformative journey for me both personally and professionally. Through the leadership and capacity building trainings, I have gained skills in community mobilization, project management and advocacy. One of the most impactful programs I participated was the Power to youth project which has empowered me to become active in addressing harmful practices in my community. I have since initiated a local mentorship initiative with AGYW focusing on life skills and awareness creation on FGM and other forms of GBV. Through this grassroot empowerment we fostering dialogue between youth and government on inclusion in decision making spaces. I have also expanded my network and visibility as a grassroot leader which has helped me securing opportunities and collaboration which has been crucial for my growth.

IMPACT STORY 2.0

By Joseph Muchuma, Male champion

Tunaweza Empowerment has really played a key role in developing the community of Kuria and Migori County at large through implementing programmes and advocating for positive change in the community. Tunaweza has contributed to the enhancement of the capacity of local community champions through trainings and mentorship, and platforms to meaningfully engage. Being instrumental in community projects like Male United Ready for Action (MURA) forum which is among the innovative approaches initiated by Tunaweza Empowerment has brought a positive difference in our day-to-day activities hence ensuring that our voices as men are heard in shaping positive decision making in our communities. Improvement of livelihoods, field experience, advanced essential skills and our activism skills Have really been developed courtesy of Tunaweza Empowerment.

IMPACT STORY 3.0

By Lucia Boke Maranya, AGYW Leader

Being part of Youth Advocates and AGYW leader in Bukira East Girls and Beyond cycle that have been going on through Tunaweza Empowerment Organization has helped me in different life skills Professional skill of teaching Leadership skills Communication skills. The program has helped also to bring change to our community (village) by empowering young women and adolescent girls, which has helped girls to know their rights and also the pathways to prevent them from harmful practices. The program has also helped me to have more networks and enhanced my capacity as a grassroot leader. I have been able to get opportunities to engage with other organizations due to the capacity I have gained.

CWCR

In 2024, Tunaweza Empowerment Organization with support from Network for Adolescent and youth of Africa and UNICEF continued to make significant strides in addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Migori County through the implementation of the "Catalysing Whole Community Response for Abandonment of FGM" (CWCR) initiative. This project focused on a holistic and inclusive approach aimed at engaging all segments of the community, men, women, youth, religious and cultural leaders, as well as local administration and service providers to foster a collective commitment towards ending FGM. The intervention emphasized community-led dialogue, awareness creation, and capacity building to dismantle harmful social norms and promote alternative rites of passage.

Key activities included the facilitation of community forums, male champions trainings, school-based outreach, and the empowerment of local women and youth groups. We also collaborated with duty bearers such as chiefs, police officers and healthcare providers to strengthen referral pathways, improve reporting mechanisms, and ensure survivors of FGM received appropriate psychosocial and medical support. Engagement with elders and cultural custodians helped bridge generational divides and secure their endorsement of anti-FGM messages, which significantly increased the community's ownership of the campaign.

Through this multi-sectoral and participatory approach, the project recorded increased public commitments against FGM and witnessed a noticeable shift in attitudes, particularly among young people and parents. Our efforts in 2024 not only contributed to a reduction in FGM cases in targeted areas but also laid the groundwork for sustainable community-driven abandonment of the practice. The success of this model reinforces the importance of inclusive, culturally sensitive interventions in the fight against gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices.

IMPACT STORY 4.0

By Faith Boke, Youth Advocate

My journey as a youth advocate with the Tunaweza Empowerment Organization has been both inspiring and transformative. My involvement in the (CWCR) project has enabled me to directly engage with vulnerable youth, especially girls and young women. I have been able to lead targeted mentorship, life skills training, and economic empowerment activities, I have helped many young people unlock their potential and take charge of their futures. My passion for advocacy is evident in the way I mobilize and engage youth around issues of reproductive health, gender equality, and economic resilience, equipping them with the tools they need to thrive in challenging environments. One of my most notable contributions has been facilitating safe spaces for youth to share experiences, learn from one another, and access critical information. Under the CWCR project, I played a key role in organizing community forums and dialogues that challenged harmful social norms while promoting inclusive development. My efforts have not only increased awareness about gender-based violence and youth empowerment but have also inspired tangible changes in attitudes and behaviour among community members.

Accelerating Efforts to end FGM- Wallace Global Fund

In 2024, with support from the Wallace Global Fund, we intensified efforts to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Kuria region of Migori County, a hotspot for the practice in Kenya. The project, "Accelerating Efforts to End FGM in Kuria," was designed to respond to the deeply rooted cultural acceptance of FGM through a combination of grassroots mobilization, strategic partnerships, and evidence-based advocacy. With a focus on prevention, protection, and response to FGM. We engaged communities and duty bearers at all levels to drive social transformation and challenge the norms that perpetuate FGM.

Throughout the year, we conducted targeted outreach in high-prevalence sub-counties, including sensitization campaigns, mentorship programs for girls and the training of male champions and youth advocates. These activities were complemented by community dialogues and engagements with elders and cultural gatekeepers to foster consensus around the need to protect girls from harm. We enhanced collaborative efforts with local authorities, including chiefs, law enforcement officers and judicial actors to strengthen coordination and accountability in addressing FGM.

We also leveraged media platforms and community radio to amplify anti-FGM messages, elevate voices of survivors and change agents within Kuria. Notably, during the traditional circumcision season, we intensified surveillance and response mechanisms, resulting in timely interventions, rescues, and increased reporting of planned FGM cases. The project's impact was reflected in the growing number of families publicly denouncing the practice, the active role of men in advocating for change and the stronger institutional response to incidents of FGM.

The initiative significantly contributed to a shift in community attitudes and behaviours, setting a foundation for long-term eradication of FGM in Kuria. Our approach which is anchored in community ownership, cultural sensitivity and multi-stakeholder collaboration continues to be instrumental in building a future where girls can grow up safe, empowered and free from harmful traditional practices.

SHAMIRI PROGRAM



In partnership with the Shamiri Institute, we successfully implemented the **Shamiri Project** in Migori County. This initiative aimed at improving the mental health and overall well-being of adolescents and young people in the region, with a focus on promoting positive mindsets, resilience, and academic motivation. The project targeted secondary school students, equipping them with practical psychological tools rooted in growth mindset, gratitude and value affirmation approaches. Through peer-led group sessions facilitated by trained youth mentors, participants were guided to reflect on personal values, embrace challenges as growth opportunities and develop coping mechanisms for daily stressors.

The implementation in Migori County reached over 5000 adolescents across selected schools. Feedback from teachers, parents and the youth themselves indicated significant improvements in self-esteem, peer relationships and academic engagement among participants. The project also integrated awareness sessions on mental health

stigma reduction and the importance of early intervention, contributing to more open conversations around psychological well-being in schools and communities.

Furthermore, the Shamiri Project was instrumental in building local capacity by training a cohort of youth facilitators in evidence-based mental health techniques. These facilitators became champions of youth wellness, supporting their peers while fostering a culture of empathy and emotional support. The partnership between Tunaweza Empowerment Organization and the Shamiri Institute has proven essential in addressing the mental health needs of young people in Migori County, laying the foundation for long-term, youth-centered mental health interventions that are accessible, relatable, and community-driven.

TUNAWEZA PROJECT



With vital support from the Emerging Leaders Foundation (ELF), we continued implementing the **Tunaweza Project** in Migori County, aimed at promoting youth leadership, civic engagement, and community empowerment. The project focused on equipping young people, particularly marginalized and underrepresented groups with the knowledge, skills and platforms to actively participate in governance, decision-making processes and development initiatives at the grassroots level. Through structured capacity-building workshops, mentorship sessions and community dialogues, youth leaders drawn from various sub-counties in Migori were trained in leadership, policy advocacy, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), social accountability, gender responsive budgeting and climate justice

In collaboration with local government officials, community-based organizations and other stakeholders, the Tunaweza Project fostered meaningful youth engagement in county planning and budget forums. This resulted in increased visibility and recognition of youth-led advocacy in areas such as education, healthcare, climate action and gender equality. Notably, several Tunaweza-trained youth successfully spearheaded community projects and contributed to policy discussions, including the County and National policy and Development Plans and reviews. The project also prioritized inclusivity by ensuring young women and persons with disabilities were actively involved in all activities. By the end of the year, the Tunaweza Project had strengthened civic awareness, improved youth confidence in governance processes and fostered a generation of emerging leaders dedicated to transforming their communities in Migori County.

As part of its commitment to community service and environmental stewardship, the project marked the **Youth Day of Service** with an initiative that integrated climate action and environmental awareness. Youth leaders organized clean-up exercises, tree-planting drives and sensitization forums on sustainable environmental conservation practices across various wards in Migori. These activities not only promoted environmental responsibility but also showcased the power of youth-led climate action in addressing local ecological challenges. The integration of climate action into the Tunaweza Project further deepened the youth's role in shaping a more sustainable and resilient future for their communities.

By Hillary Adede, Tunaweza Migori Fellow, Rongo Subcounty

Tunaweza project and ELF opened my eyes as a leader in identifying and actively addressing pressing community challenges. This include the importance of peace education; something I hadn't actively engaged in before. Through continuous mentorship, support and training, I found the confidence to start small peace initiatives in my community, especially among youth and students. This experience has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I now see peace as the foundation for meaningful change and I believe it should be a key part of all Tunaweza programs. Thanks to Tunaweza, I've become more than a leader becoming a champion for peace at the grassroots level.

Our Approaches

1.Gender Transformative Approach (GTA)

In 2024, we enhanced mainstreaming **gender transformative approach (GTA)** across all programs, reinforcing our commitment to advancing gender equality and social inclusion. This approach goes beyond addressing the symptoms of gender inequality by actively challenging and seeking to transform harmful gender norms, power imbalances and structural barriers that limit the potential of women, girls and marginalized groups. Through community dialogues, mentorship, school-based interventions, and youth leadership forums, we facilitated critical conversations that encouraged reflection on gender roles and promoted equitable relationships at household, community and institutional levels.

Integrating GTA strategies in programs ensured that young people particularly girls and young women had equal access to opportunities, resources and decision-making spaces. Capacity-building sessions addressed topics like gender-based violence (GBV), positive masculinity and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) engaging both male and female youth as agents of change. In addition, we worked closely with other youth led community organizations, local leaders, parents and teachers to create supportive environments that uphold the rights and dignity of all genders. This approach has contributed to shifting attitudes and practices, fostering more inclusive communities and laying the groundwork for sustainable gender justice across Migori County.

2.Human Centered Design (HCD)

We deepened our understanding and use of the **Human-Centered Design (HCD)** approach across our programs to ensure that interventions were responsive, inclusive and grounded in the lived experiences of the communities it serves. This approach placed the voices, needs and aspirations of beneficiaries particularly youth, women and marginalized groups at the centre of program design, implementation, and evaluation. By engaging target communities through participatory methods such as empathy interviews, co-creation workshops and prototyping sessions, we were able to develop innovative and locally relevant solutions that addressed real challenges in areas such as gender equality, mental health and civic engagement.

The HCD process empowered participants not just as beneficiaries but as innovators and co-designers, resulting in increased ownership, sustainability and impact of the organization's initiatives. For instance, in projects like Tunaweza and Power to youth, youth actively contributed to shaping program content and delivery methods, ensuring cultural relevance and accessibility. This approach also allowed us to remain agile and responsive, continuously iterating our programs based on feedback and changing community dynamics. By embedding human-centered design into our organizational culture, we have reinforced our commitment to inclusive, context-driven and transformative development.

3. Art for social change

We have continued to leverage **Art for Social Change** as a powerful approach to raise awareness, spark dialogue and inspire action on critical social issues affecting youth and communities in Migori County. Recognizing the transformative power of creative expression, we integrated various art forms including film screening, music, theatre and visual storytelling into our programs to engage diverse audiences in conversations around FGM, SRHR, gender equality, mental health, civic responsibility and climate action. This approach provided a safe and inclusive platform for young people to express their experiences, challenge harmful norms and advocate for social justice in compelling and relatable ways. The use of participatory theatre and film screening during community forums helped

demystify sensitive topics, fostering empathy and collective reflection. By embedding art into our advocacy efforts, we not only amplified youth voices but also strengthened community engagement.

2024 key milestones:

Registration of Girls and Beyond AGYW cycles as self-help groups.



The **Girls & Beyond** is an initiative targeting cohorts of adolescent girls and young women (both in- and out-of-school) with a comprehensive program centered on adolescent girls and young women. This approach empowers AGYW through a structured series of peer-led sessions designed to enhance their advocacy skills, build life competencies and foster sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) awareness. Rooted in participatory learning, the model encourages AGYW to champion causes like ending female genital mutilation (FGM) and promoting gender justice within their communities.

Peer mentors, often young women themselves facilitate group dialogues, teach advocacy techniques, and support the development of grassroot campaigns. The model emphasizes building confidence, community connection, and self-advocacy. Participants engage in role-plays; community sensitization activities and outreach initiatives aimed at challenging harmful norms and fostering resilience.

While specific implementations vary by context, key outcomes include increased SRHR knowledge, strengthened peer networks and enhanced community voice. AGYW participants emerge better equipped to challenge gender-based violence, navigate adolescent health risks and advocate for their rights in school and community settings. Programs inspired by Girls & Beyond AGYW cycles signal a shift toward youth-centered, peer-driven and norm-transformative interventions especially vital in contexts where early marriage, FGM, and limited sexual health education remain critical issues.

Over time the scope of activities in these cycles has evolved to include different economic empowerment initiatives as a way of increasing self reliance and reduced vulnerability. These include; table banking and small-scale business among the cycle members. As a key sustainability measure, the Girls & Beyond AGYW Cycles formally began the process of registration as self-help groups. This registration will enable the groups to operate with legal recognition and access opportunities for funding, training and partnership through county and National government structures and development partners. This will also empower the AGYW cycles to take greater ownership of their initiatives, manage resources collectively and implement more income-generating activities that support both their advocacy and personal development goals. This step not only enhances the long-term viability of the cycles but also strengthens their capacity to function independently beyond donor support, fostering leadership, economic empowerment and sustained community engagement among adolescent girls and young women.

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Recognition and award of Tunaweza Team members

In 2024, We celebrated a remarkable milestone as several of our team members received prestigious National recognition for their outstanding leadership, impact and commitment to social transformation. These accolades not only highlighted the individual excellence of our team but also reflected the broader success and credibility of our organization's mission in empowering youth, promoting gender equality and driving community change.



One of the most notable achievements was the recognition of **Dr. Aruna Varsani**, a dedicated Tunaweza board member and founder of Together for better foundation, who was honoured as a **National Hero of Kenya** for her tireless efforts in advancing the rights of women and girls, and for her longstanding service in community development. Her recognition placed us on a national platform and underscored the organization's influence in shaping inclusive and transformative leadership in Kenya.



Additionally, **Emmanuel Mwita HSC**, our Monitoring and Evaluation Lead, received the **Trailblazer Award** for his exemplary role in civic engagement and advocacy towards ending FGM. His award affirmed the impact of grassroots youth leadership and the importance of investing in locally driven solutions to end harmful practices.

Completing this trio of excellence, **Kerry Mwita**, a youth advocate, was named among the **Top 40 Under 40** leaders in Kenya, a recognition reserved for individuals who are shaping the future of the country through innovation, leadership and social impact. Kerry's commitment to youth inclusion and relentless advocacy for gender-transformative development have been outstanding.

In addition to these prestigious recognitions, **Sophie Mwita Tibaya**, a project officer at TEO, was appointed to the **Girls Effect Advisory Panel**. Her appointment to this influential global platform reflected her strong voice in championing girls' rights, advancing sexual and reproductive health, and driving youth-led solutions for gender equality. Sophie's role on the advisory panel has amplified the perspectives of rural Kenyan girls on international stages and deepened Tunaweza's strategic engagement in global advocacy spaces.

Furthermore, **Samwel Mwita John**, a committed youth leader and Tunaweza-trained male champion, was appointed as the **Focal Person for the Youth Anti-FGM Network, Migori Chapter (YANK)**. In this leadership role, Samwel has mobilized youth across the county to raise awareness, challenge harmful cultural practices and drive policy engagement aimed at ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

These recognitions mark a significant milestone in the organization's journey and serve as a powerful inspiration to the broader Tunaweza community. They reflect the strength of leadership within the organization and affirm the value of purpose-driven work in advancing social justice and empowering the next generation of changemakers. These have also positioned Tunaweza as key contributors to National and Global movements for social change.

Rescue of over 300 girls from FGM in December 2024

In December 2024, together with other stakeholders, we led a large-scale intervention in Kuria West, Migori County, successfully rescuing over 300 girls from imminent female genital mutilation (FGM). This coordinated rescue effort unfolded during the 'cutting season', when the risk of FGM spikes sharply. Operating alongside community monitors, local authorities and child protection services, we planned and coordinated a swift and

discreet evacuations of the girls to safe houses, ensuring they were shielded from the practice and provided with immediate care and psychosocial support.

Throughout the operation, we engaged with local leaders, parents and community members to halt pending FGM ceremonies, utilizing advanced early-warning mechanisms and community-based reporting to identify at-risk girls. Some of the rescues were then captured through on-the-ground media coverage to amplify calls for urgent action against FGM in the region.

After the cutting season, we coordinated with other stakeholders to facilitate reintegration of the girls with supportive family members under protective assurances and committed to long-term support including access to education, counselling and community advocacy.

Men United Ready for Action (MURA) Forums – Engaging Men to End Harmful Practices

In 2024, we accelerated our efforts to involve men and boys as critical allies in the fight against harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and gender-based violence through its flagship **Men United Ready for Action (MURA) Forums**. Recognizing that sustainable change requires active male participation, we have continued to strengthen MURA forums as inclusive community platforms where men and boys can openly discuss cultural norms, unpack the social costs of these practices and commit to preventive actions within their spheres of influence.

Facilitated by respected male champions and community mentors, MURA forums brought together fathers, brothers, customary and religious leaders, as well as adolescent boys, in participatory dialogue. Sessions addressed topics like positive masculinity, fatherhood, gender equality and the personal and societal impacts of FGM and early marriage. By presenting facts, lived experiences and alternative rites, the forums challenged entrenched beliefs while offering clear roles for men as protectors and advocates.

Over the year, MURA forums reached more than 1000 boys and men, leading to tangible outcomes: declarations from participating leaders to publicly denounce harmful rites, peer-led community groups and routine follow-up with early-warning reports that enabled timely interventions. Notably, in villages where MURA forums had been active, local leaders credit a marked decline in FGM attempts and heightened male involvement in rescue and prevention efforts. Through Men United Ready for Action, we have not only shifted narrative, inviting men to become guardians of girls' rights, but has also harnessed their influence to drive sustainable social transformation.

School-Based Interventions: Anti-FGM & Child Rights Clubs and Elimu Talks/Debates

In 2024, we strengthened our school-based programming by expanding **Anti-FGM and Child Rights Clubs** across primary and secondary schools in Migori County. These clubs served as safe spaces where students especially adolescent girls and boy learn about their rights, build confidence, and become peer advocates against harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriage and child abuse. With trained patrons and youth mentors guiding the sessions, the clubs facilitated ongoing conversations on child protection, gender equality, life skills and leadership, equipping students with knowledge and tools to make informed decisions and speak out against violations in their communities.

Complementing the clubs, we also implemented **Elimu Talks and Debates**, a dynamic school-based platform for open dialogue and critical thinking on issues affecting young people. These sessions were held regularly in

partnership with school administrations, teachers, community role models and local leaders. The sessions encouraged students to express their views on education, mental health, gender norms, harmful traditional practices, and civic responsibility. Through moderated debates, interactive Q&A sessions and storytelling, students developed their public speaking skills, confidence and a deeper understanding of their role in driving social change.

These initiatives have helped foster a culture of awareness, accountability, and youth-led advocacy within schools. They have created ripple effects beyond the classroom, with many club members engaging in community outreach, reporting cases of abuse and influencing positive behaviour change in their families and neighbourhoods. The school-based programs continue to play a critical role in building informed, empowered and resilient generations committed to protecting children's rights and ending harmful practices.

IMPACT STORY 6.0

By Frank Gesabo, Male champion Masaba Ward

As a youth advocate, working with Tunaweza Empowerment organization has been great in enhancing my personal growth and in bringing positive sustainable change to the community. From the capacity building I have been able to report FGM cases in 2024 and this helped in the rescue of 2 ladies from the heinous act in Kurutiange village, Masaba ward. Through the **MURA forum,** as a male champion, I have been able to learn on leadership skills and in helping men and youths to realize their potential in fighting against social vices and in advocating for responsible leadership. In this, we were able to conduct forums on discussing the county Budget and realizing the need to always attend public participation when called upon. Through the **TUKISONGA project**, I was able to share information to the adolescent youths on Sexual Reproductive health and rights where we have witnessed a rise of the youths in accessing SRH services from the local health facilities. Professionally, I have been able to learn effective communication skills through writing of memoranda and their respective submission offices/persons. Through leading in various capacities in groups such as the TUKISONGA groups, **Shamiri groups** and the MURA forum, I have been able to develop effective Leadership skills including, courage, problem solving and conflict resolution skills and the essence of a safe space to enhance openness in regards to information sharing. Through the SHAMIRI program, in 2024 as a fellow, I have been able to learn skills and to also dispense skills on mental health to the youths in High schools through the shamiri intervention where through T.E.O we have been able to reach many schools in Migori county. Since change is gradual, Tunaweza Empowerment organization has worked tirelessly to ensure positive sustainable change by rooting out the social vices that hinder sustainable development. The community has always been in the heart of TEO since a lot of changes have been testified and witnessed in the community.

IMPACT STORY 7.0

By Rachael Wankuru, AGYW Kurutiange

I am a community mobilizer at Tunaweza Empowerment Organization. I have been dedicated to empowering adolescent girls and young women with knowledge on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as well as key life and leadership skills. Through community outreaches and safe space dialogues, I have helped create environments where young women are heard, informed, and confident to make decisions about their health and future. Apart from SRHR, I've also supported initiatives on entrepreneurship, and mentorship, ensuring that girls are not just informed, but truly empowered. This journey has taught me the power of youth voices in bringing change

and I remain committed to building a generation that is bold, aware, and unstoppable. At Tunaweza, we believe in the power of youth. And I am proud to be part of a movement that is not just changing lives, but transforming communities.

IMPACT STORY 8.0

By Baraka Samson, Male champion (Journalist), Kendege

Tunaweza has mentored me since I have become a champion at the grassroot level. TEO has given me the capacity to talk to young men and adult on Matters of GBV and sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. As a youth Champion, our activities at the grass root levels have reduced the cases of early child dropouts especially in Nyabasi West ward, increased empowerment and rescue of FGM victims as well as empowerment of girls through provision of sanitary towels. This has reduced the cases of early pregnancies among school going girls, especially those from less fortunate families who can barely buy sanitary towels for their daughter. Tunaweza has also enhanced my skills as a journalist and improved my reporting on GBV and amplifying awareness creation through positive story telling.

IMPACT STORY 9.0

From Survivor to changemaker, Pauline Boke, AGYW Leader Sakuri



I am a passionate young woman who lives in Kuria East Sub County, Migori County. Initially, I did not understand myself as a person who can change the lives of young people. I used to see things as normal, in my area whereby harmful practices and negative cultural were being done. I am a survivor of FGM. Despite that, I could not be able stand before people to share life. However, I thank Tunaweza Empowerment. Since they engaged me as one of their champions, life changed not only foy myself but also other young people. I have changed the picture of our community and other young women. I am in the frontline of bringing change through campaigns to ending both SGBV and FGM. I know my role in protecting my rights and those of others. I have been able to report cases and follow up. Through the mentorship, I have managed to form four adolescent girls and young women cycles whereby they are empowering themselves on issues like economic empowerment. Moreover, the situation has improved. Dealing with AGYW (Adolescent Girls and Young Women), which had made me be more active and role model in our community.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS

In 2024, We strengthened our commitment to meaningful stakeholder engagement as a cornerstone of our mission. We actively collaborated with community members, local leaders, government agencies, civil society organizations, donors, and other key partners to ensure our programs remained responsive, inclusive, and impactful. Through community forums, stakeholder engagements, feedback sessions, strategic partnerships and participatory planning processes, we deepened trust, promoted transparency, and co-created solutions that address the needs of the most vulnerable populations, especially women and girls. These engagements not only enhanced our program delivery but also reinforced our shared vision for a more equitable and empowered society. We are grateful to all our stakeholders for their continued support, insights and collaboration throughout the year. Here are some of the key insights from some of our stakeholders

Inspector Jane Agatha Wekesa



I had the privilege of working closely with Tunaweza Empowerment Organization on several critical initiatives aimed at addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Our collaboration focused on the timely follow-up of reported cases, community sensitization, and strengthening referral pathways for survivors. I also served a co-coordinator for the cross boarder FGM task force. Through joint efforts, we were able to enhance coordination between law enforcement and community structures, ensuring that survivors received the protection and justice they deserve. Tunaweza's commitment to capacity building, awareness campaigns, and grassroots engagement has significantly contributed to improving reporting mechanisms and building community trust in the fight against FGM and GBV.

Senior Chief William Motatiro

Together with Tunaweza we conducted community dialogues, barazas, and sensitization campaigns that empowered residents with knowledge on human rights and the legal consequences of harmful cultural practices. Tunaweza's support in building the capacity of societal actors, community gatekeepers and enhancing coordination with law enforcement and social services greatly improved case reporting and response. I also actively participated in facilitating male dialogues in the MURA forums I commend the organization's unwavering dedication to protecting the rights and dignity of women and

Madam Jackline Muriithi, Teacher St. Agnes Gentongoroma Sec School.

I was honored to partner with Tunaweza Empowerment Organization in promoting the rights and well-being of students through education, advocacy against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Through school-based forums, mentorship programs, and life skills training, we empowered learners especially girls to speak out, seek help, and understand their rights. We established child rights clubs whose members have been consistently trained on several issues. We used innovative methods like film screening, positive masculinity and debate sessions. Tunaweza's consistent support in organizing awareness sessions and building the capacity of teachers has created a safer and more informed school environment. This collaboration has had a lasting impact on both students and teachers, strengthening our collective efforts to end harmful practices and promote gender equality.

Valerian Mgani, ATFGM Masanga Tarime

Working with Tunaweza Empowerment has been key towards sustaining the ending cross boarder initiatives. Collaboration with Tunaweza has enabled mapping of key stakeholders from Kenya and Tanzania to form the cross boarder FGM task force. This collaboration has enhanced joint advocacy initiatives and goodwill meetings between Kenya and Tanzania to enhance joint coordination and response to cross boarder FGM. This lee to the rescue of over 50 girls from Kenya at our safe space in Masanga Tarime. We look forward of enhancing these cross-boarder initiatives to accelerate abandonment of FGM in Kenya and Tanzania.

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Challenges

1. Deeply Entrenched cultural and social Norms

Despite multi-sectoral efforts, deeply rooted cultural and social norms continue to sustain the practice of FGM, hindering progress toward the 2030 goal of zero cases. These beliefs override legal and policy interventions, making change slow and complex. This witnessed a rise of FGM cases in some parts of Kuria.

2.Sustaining meaningful youth engagement and participation despite efforts to advocate for the voices of young people to be heard and included in decision making processes, sustaining this has proved to be a challenge contributed to by shifting political situations and alignments affecting realization.

3.Profiling and targeting of youth demanding accountability from duty bearer.

Following the Gen Z uprising in Kenya in 2024 there was heightened targeting, harassing and abductions of young people vocal in demanding accountability. Unfortunately, young people working us were also targeted with some getting hurt which is taking back gains made in creating an enabling environment for young people and duty bearers to engage meaningfully.

4. **Limited Funding for Youth Action and community building.** Ending FGM and addressing other behavior change aspects in the community requires consistent and sustainable interventions to achieve lasting change. However which the changing funding mechanisms this has not been fully realized due to limited resources available.

Recommendations

1. Institutionalize/ strengthen Youth grassroot Structures and involvement in decision making

Advocate for the formal recognition and capacity strengthening of youth grassroot structures like the Girls and Beyond cycles and the youth anti FGM Network Migori to ensure intergenerational leadership and sustainability

2. Secure Flexible, Long-Term Funding for the Organization

Most youth-led organizations operate under short-term, project-based grants that limit innovation and sustainability. We therefore call on donors and government partners to allocate flexible core funding and multi-year grants tailored to the unique needs, scale, and creativity of youth-led initiatives working to end FGM and promote SRHR.

Acknowledgments

Word from the Programmes Desk

BY Vincent Ogallo Mwita HSC, Programs coordinator



Over the last year, Tunaweza Empowerment Organization continued to deepen its commitment and enhance engagements advancing gender equality, ending harmful practices, youth mental health and empowerment and community resilience in Migori county. Through collaborative partnerships, capacity-building initiatives and grassroots engagement, we were able to reach thousands of young people and community members with programs that promote sexual and reproductive health rights, combat gender-based violence, harmful practices and amplify youth voices in leadership and decision-making spaces. These efforts reflect our unwavering belief that empowered communities are at the heart of change and sustainable development.

We at Tunaweza are proud of our team members, partners, stakeholders and community members at large who have time and again showed great collaboration, trust and urge to work together towards creating change in the community

Looking ahead, we remain focused on building inclusive platforms where marginalized voices, especially those of young women and girls can thrive and lead change. As we reflect on the milestones achieved the ended year, we are inspired by the resilience of the communities we serve and the dedication of our team and partners. Together, we will continue working towards a free, just, equitable and inclusive society where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential

Partners

- AMREF Health Africa in Kenya.
- Network for Adolescents and youth of Africa (NAYA Kenya)
- UNICEF
- Emerging Leaders Foundation (ELF)
- Shamiri Institute
- Wallace Global Fund
- Choice For youth Sexuality
- AT FGM Masanga- Tarime
- Plan International Tanzania
- C SEMA, Tanzania
- Migori County Gender Sector Working Group
- County Government of Migori
- National Government



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