

TUNAWEZA EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION

FREE JUST AND TRANSFORMED SOCIETY

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

A Free,Just, Equitable, Progressive and Transformed Society in which Girls, Women and Youth Fully Enjoy Their Rights.

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TUNAWEZA EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION

1. Organizational Overview



Tunaweza Empowerment Organization is a youth-led, women's rights and community development organization working in Migori County, Kenya. The organization exists to catalyze the power of girls, young women and youth to create the future they envision for themselves and their communities. Since its establishment, Tunaweza has remained committed to addressing structural inequalities, harmful cultural practices and socio-economic barriers that affect girls and young people.

In 2025, Tunaweza strengthened its footprint across Migori County through integrated programming addressing youth leadership, mental health, sexual and reproductive health rights, gender equality and community resilience. Tunaweza Empowerment remain dedicated to empowering youth, women and marginalized groups through innovative, participatory and sustainable interventions. Tunaweza implemented multiple transformative programs focusing on youth empowerment, mental wellbeing, gender equality, leadership development and community mobilization towards sustainable change

2. Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision: A just, free, equitable and transformed society where girls, women and youth fully enjoy their rights.

Mission: To advocate for full realization of social, economic and political rights of women, girls and youth through sustained and structured empowerment interventions.

Core Values: Transparency, Accountability, Teamwork, Commitment, Voluntarism and Integrity.

3. Message from Leadership

The year 2025 marked a defining chapter in the journey of Tunaweza Empowerment Organization. Operating within complex and evolving social, economic and political environments, the organization remained steadfast in its commitment to empowering communities and

advancing human rights. Through adaptability, innovation and strong community partnerships, Tunaweza continued to respond meaningfully to emerging challenges affecting children, youth and women, particularly in relation to gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices and governance.

Our progress throughout the year was driven by the unwavering dedication of our staff, volunteers, youth champions and community mobilizers who worked tirelessly to translate our vision into action. Their courage, professionalism and passion enabled the successful implementation of key initiatives, including the Power to Youth Project, Tukisonga by Girl Effect, Shamiri Intervention, Soma Binti Forum Theatre and the Tunaweza Project supported by the Emerging Leaders Foundation. These interventions strengthened community ownership, amplified youth voices and contributed to positive shifts in attitudes, behaviours and social norms.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, donors, government institutions, civil society allies and community leaders whose collaboration and trust made our work possible. Their support reinforced our belief that sustainable change is achieved through collective action. Equally, we acknowledge the resilience of survivors, champions and stakeholders who shared their stories and stood at the forefront of change, inspiring others to challenge injustice and protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

As we reflect on the lessons learned in 2025, we remain optimistic and forward-looking. Tunaweza is committed to deepening its impact through evidence-based programming, strengthened partnerships and continuous learning. Guided by our values and informed by community voices, we move into the future with renewed determination to build safer, more inclusive and empowered communities where every individual can thrive.

4. Executive Summary

This Annual Report presents an overview of Tunaweza Empowerment Organization's key achievements, challenges and lessons learned during the year 2025. Throughout the year, the organization implemented five flagship programs that reached thousands of adolescents, youth and community members across its areas of operation. Guided by its mission to empower communities and promote social justice, Tunaweza addressed critical issues including gender-

based violence, harmful cultural practices, mental health, youth leadership, governance and social norm change.

Through youth-led advocacy, mental health and psychosocial interventions, creative arts approaches such as forum theatre, film screening and inclusive community dialogues, Tunaweza contributed to positive shifts in attitudes, behaviours, and community engagement. Despite operating within constrained resources and complex socio-economic contexts, the organization strengthened partnerships, enhanced community ownership and generated valuable learning to inform future programming. This report reflects Tunaweza's continued commitment to impactful, evidence-based and people-centred interventions that advance the well-being and rights of adolescents, youth and vulnerable communities.

Programmatic Interventions

5.1 Power to Youth Project





The Power to Youth Project was designed to build urgency and strengthen youth leadership, civic engagement and social accountability by equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and platforms needed to influence change within their communities. Throughout the project period, Tunaweza trained young people on advocacy, governance, gender equality and community mobilization, enabling them to engage constructively with duty bearers and community structures. The project emphasized youth-led solutions and positioned young people as active agents in shaping social norms change and accountability processes.

As a result of these interventions, youth participation in decision-making spaces significantly increased at both community and county levels. Young people actively contributed to community forums, policy dialogues and accountability platforms, where they raised concerns related to gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices such as FGM and the inclusion of youth priorities in local development agendas. The project strengthened the confidence and credibility of young

people to engage meaningfully with government officials, traditional leaders and community members.



A major success of the Power to Youth Project was its tangible contribution to the protection and empowerment of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). Youth champions supported the rescue of girls at risk of FGM, facilitated referrals to protection services and established Girls and Beyond AGYW cycles that provided safe spaces for mentorship, peer learning and collective action. These cycles enhanced girls' awareness of their rights, access to psychosocial support, economic empowerment and ability to participate in community advocacy efforts.

The Power to Youth Project came to a successful close in 2025, culminating in a Global Learning Festival held in Mombasa. The festival brought together youth leaders, partners, and stakeholders to share lessons, celebrate achievements and reflect on the project's impact across different contexts. Key outcomes included documented best practices, youth-led policy influence at county level and contributions to county budget discussions that prioritized youth and gender-responsive programming. The project leaves behind a strong legacy of empowered youth leadership and sustainable community engagement.

5.2 Tukisonga by Girl Effect






The Tukisonga intervention supported by Girl Effect project focused on empowering adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and young men through the creation of safe spaces, peer mentorship and life skills education. The project aimed to strengthen girls' confidence, agency and decision-making abilities by providing accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and fostering supportive peer networks. Through these safe spaces, participants were

able to share experiences, build solidarity and develop skills essential for navigating personal and social challenges.

A core approach of the project was the use of film screenings from the *TUKI* series, followed by guided dialogue sessions. The films served as powerful conversation starters, enabling girls, boys and community members to openly discuss sensitive but critical topics in a relatable and culturally appropriate manner. Facilitated discussions explored themes of healthy relationships, consent, communication and self-esteem, helping participants reflect on real-life situations and challenge harmful social norms.

Through these interactive dialogues, the project contributed to increased awareness and prevention of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and gender-based violence. Participants demonstrated improved knowledge of SRHR, greater confidence to seek support and services and a stronger ability to make informed choices affecting their lives. By combining creative media with participatory dialogue, Tukisonga created a safe and engaging platform that amplified girls' voices and promoted positive behavioural and social change within their communities.

5.3 Shamiri Intervention





The Shamiri Intervention focused on promoting adolescent mental health and psychosocial well-being through evidence-based, culturally relevant approaches implemented in secondary schools. The project integrated structured sessions on gratitude, growth mindset and value affirmation to equip students with practical tools for managing stress, building self-worth and strengthening positive thinking. By embedding mental health awareness within the school environment, the intervention helped normalize conversations around emotional well-being and reduce stigma associated with seeking support.

During the year, the Shamiri Intervention reached over 5,000 students across participating secondary schools. Through interactive sessions facilitated by trained fellows and clinical supervisors, students were encouraged to reflect on their strengths, set personal goals and develop healthier coping mechanisms. The intervention complemented

academic learning by fostering emotional regulation, optimism and a sense of purpose among learners.

As a result of the program, students demonstrated improved emotional resilience, increased self-esteem and enhanced engagement in both academic and co-curricular activities. Teachers and school administrators reported positive shifts in student behaviour, classroom participation and peer relationships. The Shamiri Intervention contributed to improved school climates and highlighted the importance of integrating mental health and psychosocial support into adolescent education systems for sustained well-being and academic success.

5.4 Tunaweza Project – Emerging Leaders Foundation



With support from the Emerging Leaders Foundation, the Tunaweza Project focused on strengthening youth leadership, gender responsive budgeting, and civic participation by empowering young people to actively engage in community development and governance processes. The project targeted youth fellows and emerging leaders, equipping them with leadership, advocacy and community transformation skills to enable constructive engagement with peers, community member and local authorities.

Tunaweza fellows played a central role in leading inclusive community dialogues and town hall meetings that addressed governance, accountability and gender equality at the local level. These forums provided safe and open spaces for young people to interact with duty bearers, voice community concerns and propose youth-driven solutions to development challenges. The dialogues strengthened trust, encouraged civic responsibility and increased youth participation in decision-making processes.

The project also engaged learners through school-based debate sessions focused on leadership, governance, gender equality and civic responsibility. These debates enhanced critical thinking, public speaking and awareness of democratic values among students, while promoting positive attitudes toward inclusive leadership and gender equity. Schools emerged as important platforms for nurturing informed and socially responsible future leaders.

In addition, the project advanced climate action and community service through the Youth Day of Service, where young people mobilized to implement practical environmental and social initiatives. Activities included community clean-ups, tree planting and awareness campaigns on climate resilience and sustainable practices. By combining civic engagement, gender equality and climate action, the Tunaweza Project fostered a generation of youth leaders committed to positive change, community cohesion, and sustainable development.

5.5 Soma Binti Forum Theatre



The Soma Binti Forum Theatre project employed participatory theatre, commonly known as the ***sharp shooter*** *play*, as a creative and community-centred approach to address barriers affecting girls' education, child marriage and harmful social norms. By using relatable storytelling and live performances rooted in real community experiences, the project created safe and engaging spaces for dialogue among community members, leaders, parents and young people.

A defining feature of the approach was its interactive nature, where audiences were invited to pause the performance, reflect on the issues presented and propose alternative actions and solutions. This participatory process encouraged critical thinking, challenged deeply held beliefs and enabled communities to collectively examine the consequences of child marriage, school dropout and gender inequality. Through facilitated discussions, participants identified practical steps to support girls' education and protect their rights.

As a result, Soma Binti Forum Theatre enhanced community ownership of change and strengthened collective problem-solving around harmful social norms. Community members reported increased awareness, improved attitudes toward girls' education and greater willingness to intervene and support girls at risk. The project demonstrated the power of creative arts as an effective tool for social norm change and community mobilization, contributing to more supportive environments for girls to learn, thrive and reach their full potential.

6. Approaches Used

Tunaweza's programs are enhanced by evidence base and community led programming approaches which are key to sustainability, more impact and community ownership of programs.

6.1. Gender Transformative Approaches, Human-Centered Design.



Tunaweza Empowerment Organization applies Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) across its programs to address the root causes of gender inequality and harmful social norms. Rather than only responding to the effects of gender-based discrimination, this approach actively challenges unequal power relations, restrictive gender roles and practices that perpetuate violence and exclusion. Through inclusive dialogue, reflection and community-led action, Tunaweza engages women, men, boys, girls and community leaders to promote positive masculinities, shared responsibility and gender-equitable decision-making.

Complementing this, Tunaweza utilizes Human-Centered Design (HCD) to ensure that programs are responsive, relevant and grounded in the lived realities of the communities served. HCD places community members, particularly adolescents, youth and marginalized groups at the centre of program design, implementation and learning. By listening deeply through co-creation workshops, feedback sessions and iterative learning, Tunaweza develops solutions that reflect local priorities, cultural contexts and practical needs.

Together, Gender Transformative Approaches and Human-Centered Design strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of Tunaweza's interventions. These approaches enhance community ownership, increase participation and support lasting behaviour and social norm change. By combining gender equity principles with community-driven innovation, Tunaweza delivers people-centred programs that empower individuals, foster inclusion and contribute to more just and resilient communities.

6.2 participatory learning and peer mentorship.



Participatory learning is a core approach used across Tunaweza programs to ensure that communities, adolescents and youth are active contributors rather than passive recipients of interventions. Through interactive methods such as group discussions, role plays, creative arts, reflection exercises and community dialogues, participants are encouraged to share experiences, question social norms and collectively generate solutions to challenges affecting their lives. This approach values local knowledge, promotes critical thinking, and creates safe spaces where diverse voices especially those of young people and marginalized groups are heard and respected.

Peer mentorship complements participatory learning by leveraging the influence of trusted peers to inspire positive behaviour change and leadership development. Trained peer mentors provide guidance, psychosocial support and relatable role modelling, making it easier for participants to engage openly on sensitive issues such as SRHR, mental health, gender equality and civic participation. Through peer-to-peer learning, Tunaweza strengthens confidence, builds supportive networks and nurtures sustainable leadership that continues beyond the lifespan of individual project

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6.3 Art for social change.



Art for social change is a key approach used by Tunaweza Empowerment Organization to engage communities in dialogue, reflection and action around deeply rooted social issues. By leveraging creative and culturally relevant art forms, Tunaweza created safe and accessible spaces for communities to explore sensitive topics such as gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices, girls' education and healthy relationships. Art serves as a powerful entry point that transcends literacy barriers, evokes emotion and encourages collective participation.

Through community film screenings, including the use of locally relevant films and series, Tunaweza sparked meaningful conversations that connect storytelling to real-life experiences. Facilitated post-screening dialogues allow participants to reflect on characters, scenarios and choices portrayed in the films, enabling them to question harmful norms, share perspectives and identify positive alternatives. This approach makes complex social issues relatable and fosters empathy, understanding, and critical thinking among diverse audiences.

Forum theatre further strengthens this approach by transforming audiences into active participants in the change process. Through interactive performances, community members were invited to interrupt scenes, suggest alternative actions and rehearse solutions to social challenges. This collective problem-solving process enhances community ownership, builds confidence to intervene in harmful situations and supports behaviour and social norm change. Together, film and forum theatre demonstrated the transformative power of art in mobilizing communities and advancing sustainable social change.

7. Key Achievements

Strengthened leadership capacity of youth and adolescent girls

Through targeted training, mentorship and participation in community initiatives, Tunaweza significantly strengthened the leadership capacity of youth and adolescent girls. Programs like the Power to Youth Project and Tukisonga by Girl Effect equipped young people with advocacy, governance and life skills, enabling them to engage confidently in decision-making spaces, influence community agendas and lead peer

networks. This investment in youth leadership cultivated a generation of informed, resilient and proactive young changemakers poised to drive positive social transformation in their communities.

Improved access to mental health support

Tunaweza enhanced access to mental health and psychosocial support for adolescents and youth, particularly through the Shamiri Intervention. By integrating evidence-based approaches such as growth mindset, value affirmation and gratitude exercises into schools and community programs, young people developed improved emotional resilience, self-esteem and coping mechanisms. These initiatives not only addressed mental health challenges but also fostered supportive environments where students could seek help, engage openly and thrive academically and socially

Rescue of girls at risk of FGM

A major achievement in 2025 was the rescue and protection of over 200 girls at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM), a direct outcome of youth-led advocacy, community dialogues and targeted intervention strategies. Through collaborative efforts with community leaders, police, families, and children protection services, Tunaweza created safe spaces for girls, facilitated timely referrals and empowered communities to challenge harmful traditions. These interventions contributed to safeguarding the rights, health and future opportunities of vulnerable adolescent girls.

Expanded partnerships and stakeholder collaboration

Tunaweza strengthened its networks and partnerships with government agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders and international foundations. By fostering collaboration, information-sharing and joint initiatives, the organization enhanced program reach, sustainability and collective impact. These partnerships were critical in promoting youth empowerment, influencing policy, improving service delivery and amplifying advocacy efforts to address gender-based violence, education and community development priorities.

Winning the Faith Changemakers Award 2025





In recognition of our impactful work in youth empowerment, gender equality and community transformation, Tunaweza was honored with the Faith Changemakers Award 2025. This award highlights the organization's innovative approaches, measurable results and dedication to fostering social change, particularly in challenging contexts. The recognition serves not only as an acknowledgment of Tunaweza's achievements but also as a motivation to continue scaling successful interventions and inspiring other actors to champion social justice and youth-led development.

8 . Best Practices

Youth-led programming.

Tunaweza's youth-led programming placed young people at the center of planning, decision-making and implementation of interventions. By empowering youth as champions, mentors and facilitators, the organization ensures that programs respond directly to the priorities, perspectives and realities of adolescents and young adults. This approach fosters leadership, accountability and ownership among youth, while amplifying their voices in community dialogues, advocacy initiatives and governance processes, ultimately enhancing the relevance and sustainability of program outcomes.

Integration of mental health into empowerment work.

Recognizing the critical link between psychosocial well-being and overall empowerment, Tunaweza integrated mental health and psychosocial support into its programs. Initiatives such as the Shamiri Intervention provide adolescents with evidence-based tools to build emotional resilience, self-esteem, and coping skills. Embedding mental health awareness within broader empowerment and life skills activities ensures that young people are better equipped to navigate personal, social and educational challenges, enhancing both their individual growth and community engagement

Use of creative arts emerged as effective practices.

Creative arts emerged as a highly effective practice in Tunaweza programs for stimulating reflection, dialogue and social norm change. Approaches such as forum theatre and community film screenings make complex or sensitive issues accessible, engaging and emotionally impactful. By combining storytelling, performance and interactive participation, creative arts provide communities with opportunities to critically examine harmful practices, explore alternative behaviors and collectively identify solutions, fostering ownership and sustainable social change

9. Challenges Experienced

Limited funding

One of the key challenges faced by Tunaweza in 2025 was limited funding, which constrained the organization's ability to expand programs, reach more beneficiaries and sustain ongoing interventions. This included the close out of the power to youth project and changing global funding dynamics. Financial limitations affected the scale of activities, staffing retention and implementation of innovative approaches, particularly in resource-intensive projects such as youth-led advocacy, mental health programming and creative arts interventions. Despite these constraints, the organization leveraged partnerships and strategic planning to maximize impact within available resources, highlighting the need for increased and flexible funding moving forward.

Cultural resistance in FGM hotspot areas.

Cultural resistance in FGM hotspot areas posed a significant challenge to Tunaweza's efforts to protect girls and promote social norm change. Deeply entrenched traditional beliefs and practices sometimes limited community acceptance of interventions and delayed behavioral shifts. Engaging families, traditional leaders and local influencers required persistent dialogue, trust-building and culturally sensitive strategies. Overcoming this resistance remains critical for sustaining progress in ending FGM and advancing gender equality in these communities.

10. Success Stories

Winning the Faith Changemakers Award 2025

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11. Key Recommendations

Scale up mental health programming.

There is need for expanding mental health programming to reach a larger population of adolescents and youth, particularly in schools and community settings. Scaling up would build on the successes of the Shamiri Intervention by providing more evidence-based mental health and psychosocial support, equipping young people with emotional resilience, coping skills and self-confidence. Broader implementation will strengthen overall well-being, academic engagement and youth participation, while promoting a culture of mental health awareness and support within communities.

Strengthen grassroots youth structures.

To enhance sustainability and impact, it is key to strengthen grassroots youth structures, including peer networks, community youth groups and local leadership platforms. By reinforcing these structures, young people gain organized spaces to engage in advocacy, community development and peer mentorship. Stronger grassroots structures enable consistent youth participation in decision-making, foster local leadership and create durable support systems that empower adolescents and young people to actively shape positive social change.

Resource mobilization for increased flexible funding

Tunaweza intend to prioritize resource mobilization strategies to secure increased and flexible funding for programs. Flexible funding allows the

organization to respond rapidly to emerging community needs, innovate program design and sustain high-impact interventions without compromising program quality. Strengthened financial resources will enhance organizational resilience, enable scaling of successful initiatives and support strategic partnerships to maximize long-term social and community impact.

12. Conclusion

2025 marked a year of growth, learning and impact for Tunaweza Empowerment Organization. Through innovative programs, youth-led initiatives and community-centred approaches, the organization reached thousands of adolescents, youth and community members, fostering leadership, resilience and social change. Key achievements, including strengthened youth leadership, improved access to mental health support, the rescue of girls at risk of FGM, expanded partnerships and recognition through the Faith Changemakers Award 2025, reflect Tunaweza's commitment to creating inclusive, empowered and safe communities. The organization's use of evidence-based practices, creative arts and participatory approaches demonstrates its ability to address complex social challenges while amplifying the voices of those most affected.

Looking forward, Tunaweza remains dedicated to deepening its impact, scaling successful interventions and strengthening youth structures and partnerships. The organization will prioritize expanded mental health programming, enhanced resource mobilization and sustained engagement with communities to overcome cultural barriers and ensure lasting change. Guided by its mission, values and lessons learned Moving to 2026, Tunaweza is well-positioned to continue empowering communities, influencing policy and championing social justice, leaving a legacy of resilience, leadership and transformation for future generations.

TUNAWEZA EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION


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ngiyabonga
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merci
obrigado
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bedankt
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