

2024 BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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Issue #2



About Us

SIMUN embodies the spirit of positive change and stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment for adolescent girls, women and youth by advancing their rights and becoming a driving force for positive change. SIMUN adopts a holistic approach in its work by addressing the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality, transforming social norms and championing initiatives that break down the barriers to adolescent girls, women and youth inclusion and participation fostering a world where they can thrive.



VISION

A society where young women and youth live in dignity to enjoy equal rights and influence decisions on the change they desire in their lives and community.

To amplify women and youth voices to promote social justice and challenge inequalities in our community.

MISSION

CORE VALUES

- Equity and Justice
- Transparency and accountability
- Diversity and inclusion
- Professionalism
- Team work
- Innovativeness

What We've Been Up To

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Strengthening Accountability and Inclusion in Siaya

Gaps in service delivery, transparency, and inclusive planning remain key challenges in Siaya County. During our “Kagua Huduma” accountability forum, county representatives, CSOs, and youth leaders engaged in critical discussions on these issues. Concerns raised included limited access to transparent information, delays in inclusive decision-making, and a disconnect between leaders and communities—barriers that hinder equitable resource distribution for youth, women, and PWDs. Through this forum, we reinforced our commitment to championing inclusive governance and amplifying youth voices for policies that drive meaningful change.



Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women Through Digital Literacy Training



Forty-two out-of-school Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs) are now equipped with essential digital skills, opening doors to education, income generation, and digital advocacy. Through the She Deserves Her Rights and Skills project, we partnered with Stawisha Africa Initiative and AWEAPON Organization to deliver a tailored Digital Literacy Training. This initiative empowered AGYWs to navigate the modern world with confidence and purpose. Their successful graduation marks a significant step toward personal and professional growth, reinforcing our commitment to bridging the digital divide for young women.

Tracking Climate Action in Siaya: Collaborative CSO and WROs Meetings

Through two high-level meetings with the Siaya County Assembly's Committee on Water and Environment and the Department of Water, Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources, we reinforced commitments to climate justice. In collaboration with Action Aid and PACJA, we assessed climate change governance, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Key discussions focused on gender-responsive climate actions and the role of affirmative action funds under the FLLoCA program. With 77 participants—46 males and 31 females—these engagements underscored the collective effort needed for sustainable and inclusive climate solutions.

Empowering Youth for National Youth Bill Public Participation

In preparation for the upcoming public participation on the National Youth Bill 2024, we convened a pre-meeting with youth-led grassroots Civil Society Organizations in Siaya. The session focused on reviewing the bill and developing a memorandum to present during the public participation event on 19th December 2024 in Kisumu. This initiative aimed to ensure that youth voices are heard in shaping the future of youth policies, empowering them to advocate for their rights and actively contribute to national policy discussions.



Empowering Women's Voices in Climate Action

Sixty-seven community members (41 females and 26 males) enhanced their understanding of local climate governance through two participatory meetings focused on the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPC). These sessions built women's capacity by educating them on the committees' composition and functions, fostering their active involvement in decision-making. Meaningful discussions on gender-responsive climate actions empowered participants to advocate for inclusive and sustainable solutions. By equipping women with knowledge and a voice in climate governance, we are strengthening community-led responses to climate challenges.

Siaya Women and Youth Shape County Development Priorities



Through our public engagement sessions, 56 women from Alego Usonga, Ugunja, and Gem, alongside youth representatives from all six sub-counties, actively shaped Siaya County's Annual Development Plan (ADP) 2025/2026. Their priorities in health, agriculture, trade, climate action, and youth affairs were consolidated into a memorandum submitted to the County Secretariat. This initiative ensures gender-responsive and youth-inclusive policies, amplifying their voices in Siaya's development agenda. By fostering inclusive participation, we move closer to a county where policies reflect the real needs and aspirations of its people.

She Deserves Her Rights & Skills Project Reflections on Progress and Future Plans

The reflection meeting for the She Deserves Her Rights & Skills project marked a key milestone in advancing skills training and advocacy for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs). It provided a platform to celebrate best practices, highlight success stories, and address challenges encountered. Discussions reinforced the transformative impact of equipping AGYWs with essential skills, inspiring hope and resilience. By identifying gaps and refining strategies, the meeting laid a strong foundation for future initiatives, ensuring sustained empowerment and greater opportunities for young women.





Psychosocial Support for in-school Young Mothers

At Umala VTC, we facilitated a psychosocial support session tailored for VTC students, particularly young mothers. The session focused on childhood perceptions of GBV, exploring how early experiences shape attitudes and behaviors. Practical parenting tips were shared to help young parents address GBV within their families and communities. The forum provided a safe space for open dialogue, empowering young mothers with the tools to foster positive change and break cycles of violence.

Media Engagement to Amplify Discussions on Local Markets and the Finance Bill in Siaya



We leveraged community radio stations to engage various stakeholders and citizens in meaningful discussions about the state of local markets in Siaya and the role of women in understanding and participating in the finance bill. These conversations provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the markets while emphasizing

the importance of women's involvement in key decision-making processes. Through these discussions, we are raising awareness and encouraging active participation from both the community and women, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping local economic policies.

Amplifying Voices of Women Small-Scale Traders in Siaya County

A survey with women small-scale traders in Siaya County revealed that 98% have never participated in public forums, limiting their representation in decision-making. This exclusion hinders their ability to influence policies that impact their livelihoods and rights. We shared these findings with local leaders and stakeholders, stressing the need for inclusive public participation. Empowering women to engage in governance and development processes is crucial for ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are realized, fostering a more equitable and representative society.



Awareness Creation on GBV, Mental Health, and Menstrual Hygiene for AGYWs

A Ward-Based Dialogue Forum with Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs) in Rangala underscored the urgent need for stronger GBV response systems. A participant's emotional testimony of surviving defilement by a relative highlighted the fear that keeps many silent. This reinforced the importance of continuous community sensitization on speaking out and seeking justice. The forum also addressed mental health awareness and menstrual hygiene management, equipping AGYWs with knowledge to manage stress and uphold their dignity. By fostering resilience and open dialogue, we are building a safer, more supportive community for young women.



Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women Through entrepreneurship Training



We trained out-of-school AGYWs in entrepreneurship, equipping them with the skills to grow their businesses and create sustainable income sources. The training focused on practical business strategies, financial management, and entrepreneurial mindset, aiming to boost their confidence and independence. By empowering AGYWs with the knowledge to succeed, we are helping them take charge of their financial future and build resilient businesses. This initiative is a step forward in creating more opportunities for young women to thrive economically and socially.

Strengthening Women's Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Learning Forum

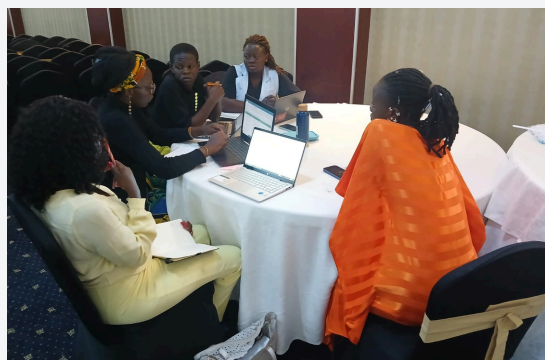


Our team members participated in the Peer-to-Peer Learning and Capacity Building for Women's Rights Organizations (WROs). This enriching experience focused on amplifying women's voices and enhancing their leadership for a more gender-equal Kenya. Through shared insights and knowledge exchange, the training underscored the vital role of WROs in driving transformative change. We appreciate Uraia Trust for facilitating this empowering platform, which strengthens our resolve to advocate for women's rights and leadership at every level.

Civic Engagement for Climate Justice: Empowering Women at the Grassroots Level

At Siaya Muungano Network, we facilitated a series of engaging discussions among women, especially young women, at the grassroots level to enhance their agency in advocating for intersectionality and feminism in climate justice. Through participatory projects like fruit tree planting and kitchen gardening, we empowered women to build resilience against

climate change. Additionally, we utilized storytelling and drama performances as creative tools to raise awareness about climate change's impact on gender equality. 140 women were reached through these initiatives, fostering a strong voice for gender-responsive climate actions.

VCA Annual Reflection and Planning Meeting: A Collaborative Review of Climate Action

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Officer represented us at the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) Annual Planning Meeting, a platform to reflect on the progress of the VCA program in Kenya. The event provided an opportunity to share our progress under We Are VCA showcasing the milestones achieved in promoting inclusive climate action. Engaging with partners, we

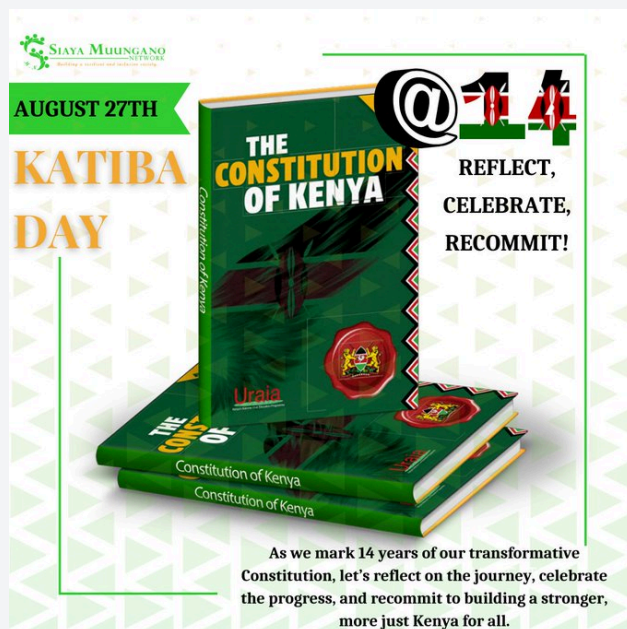
gained valuable insights from their impactful work, reinforcing our commitment to building resilient and climate-conscious communities.

Feminist Transformative Climate Justice Learning Space: A Step Toward Inclusive Solutions

In collaboration with Women Empowerment Link, Lamu Women Alliance, and CRAWN Trust, we hosted a dynamic three-day Feminist Transformational Climate Justice Learning Space. This platform brought together diverse voices to explore gender-responsive climate solutions and strengthen advocacy for inclusive environmental policies. Through interactive sessions, participants explored the intersection of gender and climate justice, sharing strategies to amplify women's leadership in addressing climate challenges. The forum underscored the power of collective action in creating equitable and sustainable futures for all.

Honoring of Katiba Day 2024

We joined Uraia Trust in marking Katiba Day, emphasizing the importance of upholding constitutionalism as a cornerstone for national transformation. Represented by our Programs Coordinator, we engaged in dynamic discussions on how to strengthen governance, justice, and civic responsibility. The event reinforced our commitment to fostering a culture where constitutional principles guide decision-making and inspire equitable progress. By championing constitutionalism, we aim to build a society where rights are protected, and every citizen has a voice in shaping a just and inclusive future.



PWDs exchange and learning visit



We organized an exchange and learning visit to Kitale, Trans Nzoia, where persons with disabilities (PWDs) from our community connected with inspiring youth with disabilities. The experience underscored the power of determination and emphasized the need for empathy over sympathy in promoting inclusion. We shared stories of resilience and innovation, motivating each other to overcome challenges. This visit was a testament to the strength of shared experiences and the value of creating spaces for learning and growth. It was both enriching and inspiring.



Commemoration of World Contraception Day



Our team, alongside SRHR champions, actively participated in World Contraception Day at Nyilima Grounds, Rarieda. Centered around the theme “Contraception Choices, The Power is in My Hands,” the event highlighted the importance of informed decision-making in reproductive health. Through interactive sessions and discussions, we showcased our efforts in empowering AGYW with the knowledge and confidence to make choices that suit their needs. The day highlighted the critical role of education in fostering autonomy and promoting healthier futures for AGYW.

Enhancing household food security and nutrition for young women

To enhance household food security, nutrition, and income for young mothers, we have supported the establishment of kitchen gardens. These spaces allow young mothers to grow vegetables for both consumption and sale, promoting better health and economic stability. With 42 cone gardens already established, this initiative empowers participants to take charge of their families' well-being while creating sustainable income opportunities. The project not only fosters self-reliance but also builds a foundation for healthier communities through improved access to nutritious food.

Launching Siaya Girls Voices and Visions Assembly

We proudly held the first-ever Siaya Girls Voices and Visions Assembly to celebrate the Day of the Girl. This inaugural event brought together Adolescent Girls and Young Women from safe spaces to share their dreams and ideas while addressing the challenges they face. Male champions were also engaged, highlighting the importance of partnership in creating lasting change. This assembly marks a significant step in amplifying girls' voices, and we aim to make it our signature annual activity, empowering young women to shape a brighter future for all.



Strengthening Advocacy for Human Rights and Accountability

SIMUN was represented in the Capacity Strengthening Training for human rights groups and networks, focusing on Human Rights Advocacy. The training, organized by Uraia Trust under the Empowering Kenya: Rights, Inclusion and Transparency for Accountable Institutions Project, provided valuable insights into advancing human rights advocacy. It equipped participants with essential skills to promote accountability and transparency within institutions, strengthening their ability to advocate for human rights, inclusion, and justice in Kenya.



Collaborative efforts towards Combating Gender-Based Violence



A Multistakeholder Reflection Meeting brought together community representatives and duty bearers to assess progress, challenges, and solutions in GBV prevention and response. Discussions highlighted successful approaches, shared lived experiences, and identified critical gaps needing attention. The forum reinforced the urgency of breaking the silence on GBV and the need for collaborative efforts to strengthen reporting and support systems. By fostering dialogue and collective action, we are driving meaningful change toward a safer and more just society for all.

Advocacy Campaign to Stop Gender-Based Violence Against Widows

We joined the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) Widows Project in Ukwala for an advocacy campaign focused on ending Gender-Based Violence against widows. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about the rights of widows and promote a culture of dignity and respect for them within the community.



Enhancing Water Access for Healthier, Resilient Communities

Access to clean and reliable water is fundamental to health, education, and community well-being. Through strategic partnerships, we are addressing water challenges in Siaya to create lasting change. At Nina Special School for the Deaf, our collaboration with Villanova University's Center for Humanitarian Engineering is enhancing water access through the installation of a solar-powered pump and a water tank. This ensures a sustainable and uninterrupted water supply, creating a better learning environment for the students.



Beyond schools, we are improving household water security. In partnership with Villanova University and Start With One Kenya (Uzima Water Filter), we have distributed water filters to over 200 households, significantly reducing cases of waterborne diseases. By providing safe drinking water, families can lead healthier lives, and children can grow without the constant threat of preventable illnesses. These initiatives reaffirm our commitment to sustainable solutions that transform lives, promote public health, and build resilient communities in Siaya County.

The Launch of For Young Mothers, For Their Wellbeing Project.



We launched the next phase of our Adolescent Girl Power Program, now rebranded as "For Young Mothers, For Their Wellbeing Project." This new phase focuses on empowering young mothers with essential skills and resources to improve their health, livelihoods, and overall wellbeing. By providing them with the tools they need, we aim to help them create a

brighter future for themselves and their families. We are excited to see the positive impact this initiative will have as we continue supporting these young mothers on their journey.

Supporting Feeding Program at Umala VTC

Students at Umala VTC, including young mothers, can now focus on their education without worrying about basic needs, thanks to our continued partnership with We One Action Network. Through this collaboration, we have supplied essential food items and academic materials to support the institution's feeding program. By ensuring access to nutritious meals and necessary learning resources, we are helping keep students in school and empowering them to reach their full potential. We remain committed to supporting their academic journey and contributing to their long-term success.



Community Conversations on Widow Protection, Climate Resilience, and Reducing GBV



In October, during a chief's baraza in Pap Oriang, South East Alego, we led discussions on widow protection, climate resilience, and the community's role in tackling GBV and teenage pregnancy. These conversations encouraged local leaders and residents to reflect on how they can actively reduce gender-based violence and support vulnerable groups. The

session aimed at equipping the community with practical steps to protect widows, strengthen climate resilience, and reduce teenage pregnancies, creating lasting, community-driven solutions to these pressing issues.

Advancing SRHR Awareness and Skills for Girls

We conducted a successful Girls' Fun Day, which went beyond just fun and games. It served as a platform for showcasing the progress of the "She Deserves Her Rights and Skills" project. The event highlighted significant strides in SRHR awareness, GBV prevention, skills development, and the creation of safe spaces for girls. Inspiring stories shared during the day reflected the positive impact of these efforts, reinforcing our dedication to empowering young girls with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions and lead fulfilling lives.



Walking Together to Beat Breast Cancer



We joined Tembea Youth Center for a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk, held in Siaya Town. This campaign aimed to demystify myths and misconceptions around cancer and sensitize the community on early detection, treatment procedures and collective action in the fight against breast cancer.

Through such initiatives, we continue to foster hope and encourage the community to view cancer as a challenge that can be overcome with resilience and support.

We One Action Network in Siaya

We had a Meet & Greet with We One Action Network, where our organization was honored for its dedication to community service, especially in our partnership to support young mothers at Umala Vocational Training Center (VTC). Through this collaboration, we've provided a modest feeding program and psychosocial support, helping students—particularly young mothers—stay in school. These initiatives play a crucial role in improving retention and ensuring they can successfully balance their studies and caregiving responsibilities.



Empowering Women in Climate Action: “Duond Mine” Forum Highlights



We conducted a “Duond Mine” Forum under #WeAreVCA, where grassroots women showcased their efforts in climate adaptation and resilience. The forum provided a platform for these women to engage directly with Siaya County leaders, highlighting their essential role in climate action. These discussions are crucial in amplifying women's voices and driving inclusive, community-led solutions to combat climate change. Such platforms empower women at the grassroots level, enabling them to lead and advocate for sustainable environmental practices in their communities.

Celebrating Milestones and Building Stronger Partnerships

As we closed the year, we reflected on our achievements and reinforced our commitment to greater impact in 2025. In partnership with We One Action Network and Umala Vocational Training Center, we hosted a memorable end-of-year luncheon to celebrate the milestones reached in 2024. The event provided an opportunity to appreciate our teams’ dedication, strengthen our bonds, and align our vision for the future. It was a heartwarming moment to acknowledge progress, foster collaboration, and look forward to new opportunities for growth and impact.



Nature-Based Training: Exploring Solutions for Climate Adaptation

Our representative participated in a nature-based training organized by the VCA Alliance in Naivasha. The training focused on understanding nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation, analyzing their effectiveness in addressing climate change challenges. Participants discussed how social equity and community needs intersect with environmental sustainability, ensuring that nature-based solutions are accessible to all. By exploring these approaches, we aim to integrate nature-based solutions into our climate action strategies, empowering local communities to effectively combat the impacts of climate change.

Validation Meetings for Gender Assessments: Enhancing Climate Action Strategies

In partnership with other AMwA partners in Kenya we organized a two online validation meetings to gather insights on the gender assessment of Financing Locally Led Climate Actions (FLLoCA) and gender analysis of climate change legal frameworks in Kenya. These discussions involved policymakers, gender experts, and community representatives, ensuring that the findings of these assessments are relevant and actionable. The insights shared will inform the development of gender-responsive climate strategies in Siaya County and Kenya, helping to align legal frameworks with the needs of marginalized communities, particularly women and girls, in climate resilience planning.

Engaging Key Stakeholders for the Well-being of Young Mothers

In November, we conducted community dialogue fora in collaboration with Stawisha Africa Initiative and Siaya Young Women Alliance. The forums brought together the parents, husbands, guardians, and boyfriends of young mothers to mobilize their support and enhance the well-being of young mothers. By involving these key stakeholders, we aimed to create a more supportive environment that empowers young mothers, addresses their needs, and strengthens their overall health and empowerment in the community

Advancing Gender-Responsive Climate Action and Finance

As part of our Strengthening Women's Voices in Climate Action & Governance project, we conducted a two-day session focused on gender integration in climate action and finance. The session also explored the outcomes of the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29). Engaging key stakeholders, including women climate action champions, the initiative aimed to deepen understanding of the vital role of gender in shaping climate policies and financial solutions. This effort empowers women to lead in advocating for inclusive and sustainable climate action.

Launching the 16 Days of Activism against GBV in Siaya



In November, we joined forces with fellow Civil Society Organizations in Siaya, the County Government of Siaya, and local citizens to launch the 16 Days of Activism campaign for 2024. This year's theme, "Towards 30 Years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: UNITE to End Violence Against Women," underscores the need for collective action in the fight against gender-based violence. Together, we reaffirmed our commitment to creating a society free from violence, supporting women's rights, and advancing gender equality in Siaya County.

Commemorating World AIDS Day 2024 in Siaya



In partnership with other Civil Society Organizations, the County Government of Siaya, and local residents, we commemorated World AIDS Day 2024 with a focus on the theme: "A Race to End AIDS-Related Deaths Among Boys and Men." The event emphasized the urgent need to address stigma and provide access to support and treatment, ensuring that no life is lost to

AIDS-related causes. Together, we reinforced our collective commitment to fighting the AIDS epidemic and improving health outcomes for all, especially boys and men in Siaya County.



A Race to End AIDS Related Deaths Among Men and Boys

#EndTheTripleThreat #EndAIDSby2030



#SIMUNcares!