

Known, Loved, Protected

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

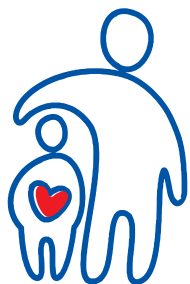
Matthew 18:10

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“ *Neglect is the failure of a person with parental responsibility or care of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, education, immunization, shelter, medical care, and emotional support to nurture the child's healthy development.* ”

All children have the right to be protected from harm. Childhood experiences play a vital role in a child's development and determine whether they achieve their full cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and physical potential. In Kenya, neglect and abandonment are some of the root causes of all other forms of child abuse.

The Child Protection Report (2016-2019) by the Department of Children Services notes violence against children cases represented **63.4%** of all reported cases, with neglect as the highest proportion of violence against children. Neglect is the failure of a person with parental responsibility or care of a child to provide adequate food,

clothing, education, immunization, shelter, medical care, and emotional support to nurture the child's healthy development. Emotional support includes caring relationships and appropriate attention and supervision.

Children who experience significantly limited caregiver responsiveness may sustain a range of adverse physical, emotional, and mental health consequences that produce more widespread developmental impairments.



Child Neglect Campaign in Homa Bay County:

An initiative of Compassion International Kenya, partnering churches and the Department of Child Services

by Richard Sijenji, Partnership Facilitator, Compassion International Kenya

Introduction



Compassion International exists to release children from poverty in Jesus' Name. Children are at the centre of what we do. The responsibility to know, love, and protect children is a God-given mandate and we at Compassion love children and understand the place of children in present and future generations; to preserve our humanity and nationhood.

“There is an urgent need to create awareness and trigger sustainable action across all the government departments and stakeholders to address the causes of child neglect..”

Kenya is bound by international (Rome Statute, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC), and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC); and domestic (The Constitution of Kenya 2010, the Children's Act 2001, Basic Education Act 2013, Legitimacy Act CAP 145, the Framework for the National Child Protection System in Kenya, Kenya Care and aftercare guidelines, Kenya Child Participation Guidelines) instruments to look after the livelihood of our children.

Kenya as a nation and Homa Bay County, in particular, is reporting increasing rates of violence against children. Hence the need for more child protection measures in Homa Bay County and the rest of Kenya.

Background

Data from the Department of Child Services, Child Helpline 116, Demographic Health Surveys, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the Children Protection Information Management (CPIM) System, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), shows child neglect is the highest form of child violence in Homa Bay County. With regressive cultural practices, high school dropout rates, defilement, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and malnutrition are the outcome.

A closer look at the data begs the question: With free primary education, why would we have 13% of school-going age children out of school and another 7% drop out of school? Why would 32% of KCPE children fail to transition to secondary school? Why are cases of defilement and emotional and physical abuse rampant in our community? Why do we have teenage pregnancy and child marriages? The government has provisions for malnutritional supplements in our health centres, but why do we have malnourished children, yet some of these supplements expire in hospitals? The answers are closely related to child neglect.

There is an urgent need to create awareness and trigger sustainable action across all the government departments and stakeholders. In Homa Bay County, Compassion International Kenya and its church partner churches are conducting a vigorous child neglect campaign to create awareness and trigger sustainable action to address the causes of child neglect.

1. The first phase has been about mobilizing key stakeholders and making them aware of the current situation, exploring ways of working together and agreeing on sustainable actions to mitigate child neglect. We engaged all our registered beneficiaries and their caregivers, local church pastors, Sunday school/youth leaders, Department of Child Services, County Commissioner and his leadership team, the County Government Representatives, National Police Service, the judiciary, Probation Department, local civil society organizations (CSOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), the Ministry of Health (MOH), Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union (KMPDU), headteachers, Teachers Service Commission (TSC), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and community-based systems - Beach Management Unit (BMUs), Boda Boda groups, schools, churches, chiefs, and assistant barazas, caregiver common interest groups, and locational area advisory councils (AACs).
2. The second phase includes the official launch on March 30, 2022. The campaign objective is to get key decision-makers and the media to advocate for children and mainstream child protection plans and actions in their day-to-day work across all their departments and among all the stakeholders to mitigate cases of child neglect. It should result in village-based systems at the sub-county and county level getting more involved in awareness creation and immediately taking action on neglect cases in the community.
3. The final phase will focus on follow-up, monitoring and evaluation, and sharing the learnings for better impact.

Observations, concerns, and recommendations made during stakeholder engagements

1. Many cases of neglect and abuse go unreported. There is a critical need to enhance, synchronize and share case reporting.
2. Both data from children's services and experiences in the villages suggest increasing child neglect cases in Homa Bay County. There is an urgent need to rally all stakeholders to create awareness and take action to save our children.
3. Alcohol drives child neglect, yet legal mechanisms to fight illicit brew are weak and need to be reviewed and enforced.
4. National Government Administration Officer (NGAO) monthly reports from the assistant chief to the county commissioner should include child protection issues, which will help in tracking, case follow-up, and deterrence actions.
5. Incest is rampant in Homa Bay County and contributes to child defilement and teenage pregnancies. There is a need to engage traditional strategies to tame it.
6. The government, NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, and other stakeholders are already providing most of the services and materials to alleviate neglect and other child protection challenges. However, proper and effective coordination, networking, and referral systems are either ineffective or non-existent. Some actors are also said to be lazy and non-responsive. There is a need to work together, create accountability systems, and link children and caregivers to care and services.

Conclusion

Children are a treasure and the hope for current and future generations. Child neglect is the main cause of child violence. We must work together and act in the best interest of the child. A winning strategy must focus 80% or more of its efforts on minimizing child neglect.

A message on the Homa Bay Child Neglect Awareness Campaign from Moses K Lilan, Homa Bay County Commissioner



I look back with great pleasure when I hosted your officers from Compassion International Kenya, together with officers from the Directorate of Children's Services, Homa Bay County on December 17, 2021, at my office. I was particularly delighted to discuss the upcoming Homa Bay County child neglect campaign. The child neglect concerns raised by your organization resonate deeply with me as the County Commissioner.

There has been an increasing trend of child neglect in Homa Bay County caused by several factors, including negative cultural practices, poverty, and general parental irresponsibility. Child neglect is any form of child abuse that affects either or both the physical and psychological development of a child that eventually causes high-risk behaviour like substance abuse and inflicts social, emotional, and health problems. Therefore interventions to address the root causes are welcome.

The campaign preparation meetings at the county and sub-county level included all the national government administration officers (NGAO) officers from my office, teachers, education officers, Teacher Service Commission (TSC) officials, police officers, Ministry of Health officials, and all the partners working with children.

To achieve the safety and well-being of children of Homa Bay County, I call upon all officers from the National and County Government and our partners to integrate and mainstream all we have learned into our day-to-day activities. I desire that we harness the impact created through the informative sensitization process to achieve a safe space for our children at home, in school, and community.

“ There has been an increasing trend of child neglect in Homa Bay County caused by several factors, including negative cultural practices, poverty, and general parental irresponsibility.

Message from Hon. Maurice Okwany, County Executive Committee (CEC) Member, Tourism, Gender, Sports, Culture & Social Services, Homa Bay County



Article 21 (3) of Kenya's Constitution gives all state organs and public state offices responsibility to address the needs of vulnerable groups within our society. The "Children's Act 2012, Section 14 defines **a child as a human being under the age of 18**. The section also protects the child from harmful cultural rites and prohibits subjecting children to early marriage.

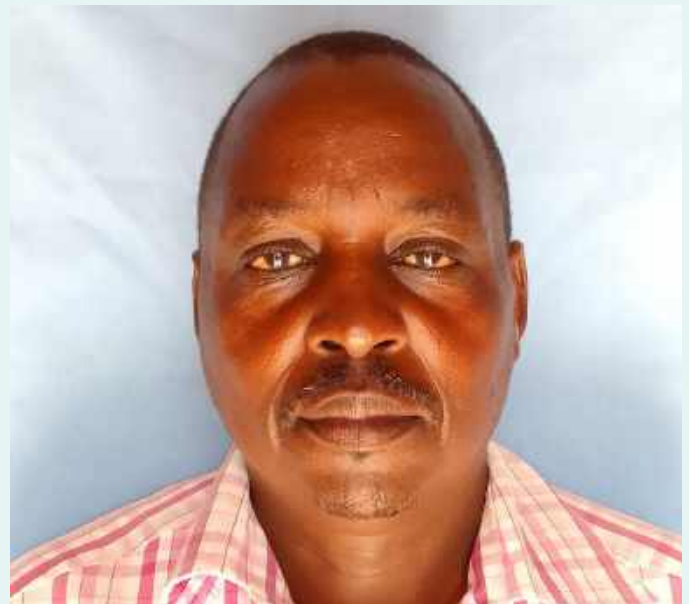
My department has established a collaborative working partnership bringing together the Homa Bay County Sector Working Group to address the underlying drivers of child neglect in Homa Bay County and came up with action points to address:-

1. Poverty
2. High child mortality rates
3. Lack of access to basic amenities like cleaning drinking water, sanitation, and electricity.

Strategies to address the underlying causes

1. We are considering how to implement livelihood programs that will enhance the economic livelihoods of the population to reduce the high level of poverty prevalence in the County.
2. We support parents and young adults with HIV/AIDs, which will reduce deaths and enable them to take care of their children and younger siblings, respectively.
3. Responsible parenting sensitization campaigns will build awareness on what it entails to be responsible parents and facilitate child protection right up to the household level.

4. The department with partners/stakeholders has established a safe space to host minors whose rights have been violated while they await court judgement and reintegration into their communities. The department is also developing a child welfare protection policy to address cases of child neglect.



A perspective by Peter Kutere, County Director of Children Services, Homa Bay County

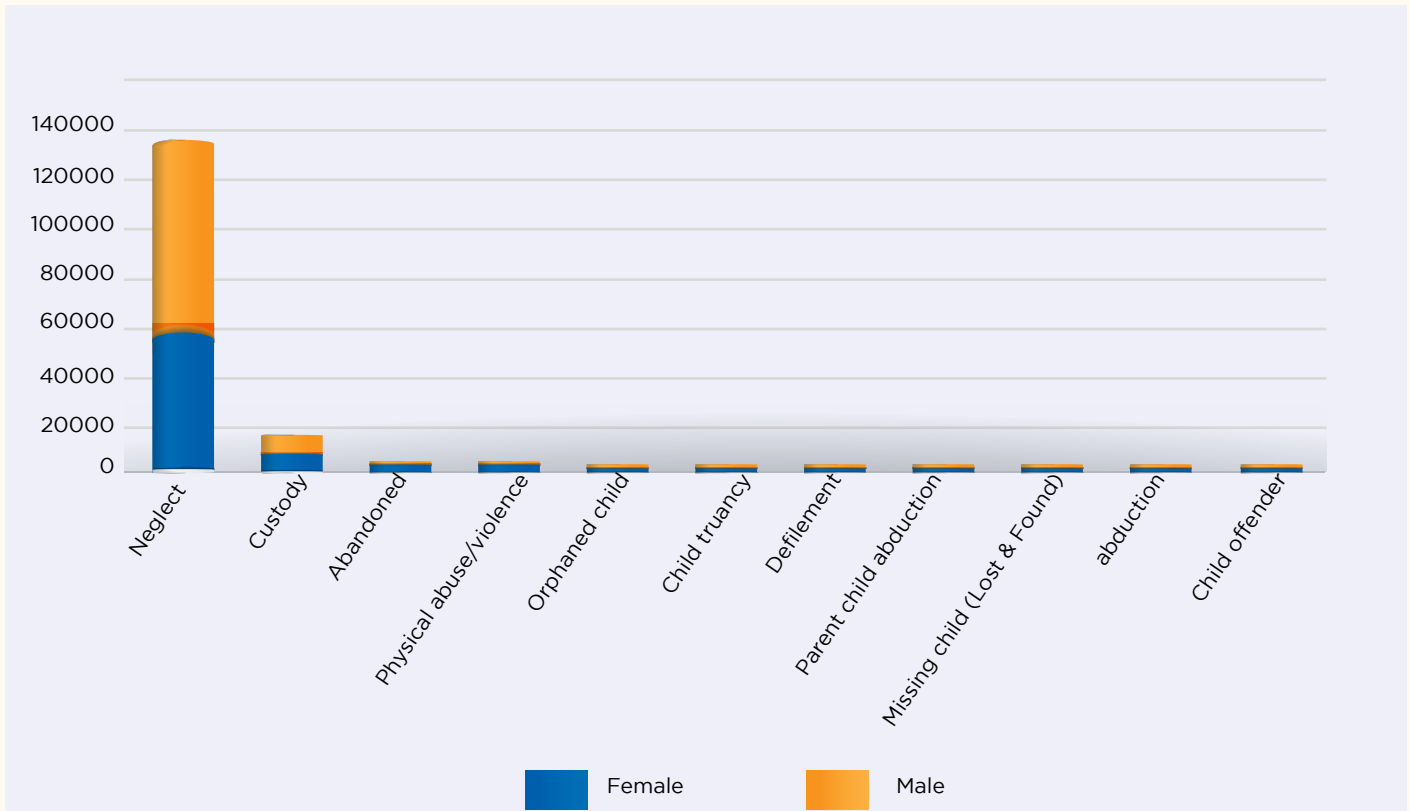
To reduce incidents of child neglect in Homa Bay County, the Department of Child Services has identified the need to create awareness of parents' responsibility to their children and the skills they need to fulfill these responsibilities so that their children grow to their full potential. To assist families to remain cohesive units and enable children to receive the care they require for their holistic development, the Department of Child Services is involved in the following interventions:

1. Reconciliation of parents
2. Guidance counseling to parents and children
3. Case referrals to other Government Departments such as the chiefs and the police
4. Discussions with the parents that lead them to sign parental responsibility agreements
5. Court referrals for child maintenance orders.

Homa Bay County Caseload Data Jan - Dec 2021



National Caseload Data by gender Jan - Dec 2021



The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Nuru ya Mtoto Project:

A case study on collaboration between the Homa Bay County, National Government and the Government of the United States

The USAID Nuru Ya Mtoto project is a USAID-funded five-year program from March 18, 2021, to March 17, 2026. The project objectives are to increase access to targeted HIV-prevention services among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 9-24 years and increase access to high-quality health and social services for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their families.

HIV prevention for AGYW is through the Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) initiative. An integrated case management approach delivers quality health and social services to OVC. Led by PATH Kenya as the prime partner, USAID NYM is in the following OVC+DREAMS counties - **Kisii** (OVC only), **Homa Bay** (OVC+DREAMS), and **Migori** (OVC+DREAMS).

The USAID Nuru ya Mtoto program uses the concepts of co-creation, co-location, co-implementation, co-monitoring, and co-evaluation with the County and National Governments with PATH Kenya taking overall responsibility and technical leadership. The Department of Children Services (DCS) and the County Departments of Health (DoH) provide overall county-level policy leadership and partner coordination, annual work plan guidance, resources complementarity, and quality assurance. Other key government partners include the State Departments of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Education, Innovations, ICT and Youth Affairs, and Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs & Special Programs. To ensure beneficiaries get services, the project nurtures linkages with stakeholders - local communities, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), United States Government partners, Private Sector Players (PSPs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).



USAID NYM project supports adolescents' school enrolment, continuation and completion. Photo: PATH/ Madiang'.

Turudi Shule, empowering girls against Jaboya



Victoria Institute for Research on Environment and Development (VIRED) International was formed in 1998 and officially registered with the National Council of NGOs in 2000. The mandate of VIRED International is to conduct community research and analysis to inform the development agenda. The organization is located seven kilometres from Kisumu City along the Kisumu - Nairobi route. The organization began working in Homa Bay County in 2015 when the project dubbed “No sex for fish” was launched as an intervention to counter the high levels of HIV/AIDS in the county, whose HIV/AIDS prevalence rates were second only to Nairobi. In 2019, with funding from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the organization partnered with Sustainable Energy and rolled out “Turudi Shule, empowering girls against Jaboya”, a two-year pilot project in West Kochia and Karabondi, Homa Bay County.

The basis of the Turudi Shule project was:-

1. High prevalence of HIV/AIDS across Homa Bay County.
2. High teenage pregnancies rates.
3. High rates of school dropouts, especially amongst girls.
4. High numbers of orphans due to HIV/AIDS.
5. Poor parenting.
6. The high prevalence of boy and girl child participation in activities such as fishing, sand harvesting, boda-boda riding, firewood collection, stone breaking, and tending rice farms to scare off birds.
7. Drugs and substance abuse amongst parents and youths.
8. Domestic violence resulting in separation and divorce.

Interventions

1. Baseline survey
2. Recruitment of change agents in each focus location
3. Identification of the dropout girls and boys and readmitting back to primary, secondary and tertiary learning institutions
4. Formation and inclusion of Multi-stakeholders forum members to oversee the return and retain the dropouts in schools.
5. Awareness creation through the media (Radio nam lolwe and posters)
6. Linkages and networking with government and Non-Governmental organizations to promote girl child education.
7. Formation of peer groups in 11 schools in the two sub-locations (6 karabondi, 5 west Kochia)
8. Street theater and boat rides for awareness creation and sensitization on returning girls back to school.



9. Public barazas with community, chiefs and stakeholders.
10. Life skills training of returnees on poultry keeping, horticulture, afforestation and handicrafts
11. Provision of monthly sanitary towels to all the returnees in schools
12. Introducing mentorship skills to all returnees in schools

Impact of the interventions

1. Conducting a baseline survey.
2. Recruitment of change agents in each focus location.
3. Identification of the dropout girls and boys and readmitting them back to primary, secondary, and tertiary learning institutions.
4. Formation and inclusion of multi-stakeholder forum members to oversee the return and retention of school dropouts in these learning institutions.
5. Life skills training of returnees on poultry keeping, horticulture, afforestation, and handicrafts.
6. Provision of monthly sanitary towels to all the school returnees.

7. Introducing mentorship skills to all school returnees.
8. Awareness creation through the media (Radio Nam lolwe and posters).
9. Linkages and networking with government and non-governmental organizations to promote girl child education.
10. Formation of peer groups in 11 schools in the two sub-locations (6 in Karabondi, and 5 in West Kochia)
11. Organizing street theatre and boat rides to create awareness and sensitization on returning girls to school.
12. Public barazas with community, chiefs, and stakeholders.

Learning experience

School returnees who are mentored and embrace new life skills have more resilient and dynamic lifestyles. They have the potential to lead more productive lives and move Homa Bay County to the next level. Children, especially girls, should not be subjected to drudgery.

Parental obligations should hanker on all their children completing basic education and life skills training.





Planning Committee meeting to map out all Beach Management Units (BMUs), boda boda groups and schools across Homa Bay County.



Sensitization of various stakeholders on the Child Neglect Awareness Campaign and the requisite interventions.

Homa Bay Cluster Child Neglect Launch Program

Time	Activity
8.30 am - 9.00am	Arrival of guests and participants
9.00 am - 9.20 am	Praise and worship Evans Odongo
9.20 am-9.35 am	Opening prayers and sermon Reverend Vitalis
9.35 am - 9.40 am	Welcome and opening remarks County Commissioner
9.40 am - 9.50 am	Background information on the Child Neglect Campaign DCS Peter Kutere
9.50 am - 11.00 am	Presentations by beneficiaries and caregivers
11.00 am - 11.30 am	Speeches Children Officers - DCS County Commander County Pastors Fellowship - Rep Civil Society Organizations - Rep Education Officers - Rep Health Department - Rep
11.30 am -12 noon	Speeches by Compassion International Kenya Team Manager of Partnerships - Introduce all Child Protection Specialist/Manager Program Support Richard Sijenyi, Partnership Facilitator Linnet Ochieng, Senior Manager Business Services Newton Midamba, Senior Manager of Partnerships
12.00 noon - 12.30 pm	Invited Political leaders Introductions by Cyprian Awiti, Governor, Homa Bay County
12.30 pm-12.45pm	Cake cutting Senior Manager of Partnerships Senior Manager Business Support Moses K Lilan, Homa Bay County Commissioner Cyprian Awiti, Governor,Homa Bay County
12.45 pm -1.00 pm	Vote of thanks Rev Oddy Oomo
12.50 pm - 1.00 pm	Final prayer Rev Jackson Ayieko
1.00 pm	End of formal program. Guest leave at their own pleasure

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.
(Proverbs 31:8-9)



**FOR ANY
FEEDBACK OR
COMMENTS PLEASE
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COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL KENYA

208 Kerarapon Road Off Ngong Road - Karen
P.O Box 1945 - 00502, Karen, Nairobi Kenya

Email: CIKenya@ke.ci.org

Phone: +254 709 961 000

+254 724 255 679

+254 733 686 885

Website: www.Compassionkenya.org
www.forchildren.com



Compassion Kenya



@CompassionKE



@Compassion International Kenya



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compassioninternational_kenya