

Rachuonyo Women and Girls Project, Kendu Bay, Kenya

Since the year 2000 SACOMA has been one of significant growth and change for women. We're helping more people than ever and are working on an exciting new project to really highlight our social impact within the communities that our microfinance projects serve. A massive thanks to all our partners who have helped us this far to support, train and create new loans for a number of groups.

Our women's groups are in the forefront of a battle against poverty and deprivation and HIV/AIDS. SACOMA helps train women in business and other skills which allow them to build bigger more sustainable businesses.

Rachuonyo Women and Girls Empowerment Project is implemented by Community Involvement Trust Initiative (CITI) supported by Comic Relief. The first phase of the project aimed at improving the life chances of women and girls in rural communities of **Kenya**, by increasing their involvement in community decision-making processes and providing them with practical livelihoods opportunities to gain greater economic freedom.



The project address core issues such as poverty, vulnerability of women and girls, unemployment and inequitable distribution of resources in East Rachuonyo District through community-based skills training, facilitation of business start-ups, advocacy and local institutional capacity building. This led to heightened demand for skills training and in all the areas within Rachuonyo.

It has received unanimous support from the government, development partners and the beneficiaries.



The project has been received enthusiastically and widely wide acceptance by the stakeholders in Rachuonyo East district, since it sought to address issues of common interest and felt needs.

30 Community Based Organizations targeted by the project benefited through various trainings in business literacy, organizational development, governance, gender and development, records keeping, human rights, gender and development, HIV/AIDS sensitization and policy and advocacy.

I am a mentor in women empowerment. Through CITI's training in TOTs, I have excellent people skills. I can train in IGAs, Human rights, advocacy and development, HIV/AIDS. I can well speak to men without fear. I will ensure that I pass the same skills to my fellow women in Rachuonyo. Sara Achieng, a mentor with CITI for 18 months.



The Rachuonyo Women and Girls (RWG) is was implemented by Community Involvement Trust Initiative (CITI) www.citiproject.net, a development organization based in Rachuonyo North district with a mission of empowering vulnerable members of the community to mitigate the impact of HIV&AIDS and Poverty. CITI was formed in 2000 as a response to a myriad of challenges faced by women and girls due to adverse impacts of poverty, HIV&AIDS and constant violation their rights. In pursuit of its mission, CITI is engaged with the community in Rachuonyo North District in six thematic areas, namely: Governance and Organizational Development; Gender and development; HIV&AIDS Prevention and Management; Economic Strengthening of Women and Girls; Vocational Training; and Networking and Collaboration.

Successful implementation of the project is translating to economically **empowered** women and girls, **peer educators** for resource provision at the community level, **increased** savings and access to credit facilities, **skills** transfer, **gender equity** in distribution of resources, **increased ownership** of property for women, **reduction** of gender imbalances, and **economically** stable households for women and girls. **Enabling young girls out of school to access vocational training opportunities and start up enterprises after the training and link them to established women groups for mentorship**

“We do not need to be trained in hotels, we love our environment. Having the trainings at the community level is cheaper and we do not need to leave our homes for days” – Grace Ouma, a women beneficiary.



Supported by CITI to start this cereals business. I earn my own income (at least 1500 per month/\$20). They now respect me and I am now part of the family. I am proud.” Millicent Awino - CITI Project beneficiary.

When I was trained by CITI on being assertive, speaking my mind, and what my rights were, I felt as if I had woken up. I saw the many opportunities I had lost. But I did not give up. I am now able to talk and demand for my rights as well as protecting them. Evelyn Achieng Olang, Beneficiary

Reduced HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination

I was bed ridden until I heard about the women project. I was referred for VCT in Kendu-bay where I knew that I was HIV+. CITI embraced me and referred me to hospital where I was enrolled for ARVs. I am now well. I have the energy to buy and sell fish (which initially people could not buy from someone like me). I am able to feed my children and have transport to the hospital to replenish my dose. I am now empowered and I feel part of the community that at one time had left me to die. A CITI CBOs beneficiary aged 24 years.

Community sensitization, leaders involvement in trainings on gender and role of women in the community and human rights contributed to the prevailing appreciation of women’s role in community affairs. Through expressions from the Luo council of elders, it was evident that women were being involved in decision making at the community level especially at the chief’s barazas, which are local gatherings with the community and the local leadership.

Addressed Harmful Cultural Practices by providing better alternatives

“The Nyaas (women/girls) are part of us. We appreciate them and what they do. We count them as pillars of our community. We do not understand why some members of our community can chase them away after their loved ones die”. A community leader said.

Improved income generation (and potential) among the women and girls

360 women from thirty CBOs trained by CITI in the project in business start-ups, book keeping, entrepreneurship and savings and loan (table banking) approach had started experiencing increased income from their businesses. By the time of this assessment, 66 women had started their own businesses ranging from cereals, tailoring, salons, horticultural farming, fish retailing among others, while two groups comprising of 54 members were running profitable horticultural farming. Others had started investing in land, domestic animals, seed capital and income generating equipments.

The increased income by women has boosted their self-confidence.

Enhanced partnerships and collaborations



A young mother draws water from a dam in Oriang village near Kendu Bay – note the colour of the water – with a lot of silt

“CITI involved us in the research to identify our needs. CITI has come back to help us meet the needs that we told them we had. We are happy and we love this project. We look forward to continued support from you, even as we run our businesses” - A 23 year old young women.

The urgency of addressing the vulnerability of women and young girls of all backgrounds, and particularly the poor, cannot be over stated. Innovative, far-reaching and rapid responses are needed to impact whole generations so that the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty can be within reach.

Women's empowerment is a process, which embodies "self" and cannot be attained through the direct interventions of outside agents. It is self-selected and self-driven and is not susceptible to interventions of those wishing to "empower". What can aid this process is the provision of an enabling environment such as encouragement, self-enhancing tools and other support systems that impact on their lives through their ability to make decisions and exert control.

Much has been achieved, but more can still be done.

To partner with us in this project, please contact us to help us achieve contribute to the goal of women and girl empowerment.

Mentorship is a key strategy in empowering community groups. The trained community groups' representatives live with the community and are the "light of the community". They become reference points for many issues affecting a particular community. It is one of the proven ways of sustaining a programme.

SACOMA is now looking to:

- Set up Community groups' mentorship programme
- Establish and Sustain a Regional Women empowerment Network
- Strengthen linkages with Microfinance Institutions
- Expand Vocational Training for Young women



www.citiproject.net