



# Annual Report

Protecting the rights and well being of EVERY girl child

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## Vision

To mobilize, consolidate and amplify the voices of women and girls through collaborative activities that influence positive change/policy on issues that affect their lives.

## Mission

A society of empowered women and girls that are contributing effectively to the development of their communities.

## Who we are

We are a Pan-African feminist women-led organization based in Kenya that was established in 2004, in response to the sexual violence and exploitation faced by young girls in Kibera's informal settlement in Nairobi. We have for more than a decade worked closely with schools, local education authorities and communities to improve the lives of adolescent girls and women in their diversity. Over time, Polycom has built trusting relationships with the community, enabling us to integrate complex issues such as social injustices, child protection, GBV and SRHR into our work as well as programming. Our work is summarized under one word "G-PENDE" (which means to love yourself) thus promoting self-worth and appreciation among women and girls. We are keen to bridge the gap and connect the local realities of women and girls in their diversity to regional/global processes and decisions.

Over the last 19 years, we have worked with women's rights organizations, civil societies, governments, and the private sector, developing strategies, partnerships, programs, community and policy dialogues for the promotion and protection of gender equality and inclusivity across Nairobi County and Kenya at large.



# Directors Desk

Over The past two years, Kenya has grappled with the effects of COVID-19. Various sectors in the developing world struggled to ensure key populations adhered to Covid 19 WHO protocols. There was a steady rise in the loss of jobs and income with many women-owned businesses collapsing. Most of the women in major towns and across the informal settlements watched as the pandemic increased Gender-Based Violence and teen pregnancies. 2022 was the year of recovery, building up after the pandemic that ravaged our world as we knew it.

Polycom Development has been keen on tackling some of the emerging issues such as teen pregnancies and the rising cases of Gender Based Violence. It is worth noting that 2022 was also our year of strategizing with an aim to reach our key target population amidst all defies. This was an electioneering period with all sectors centering their focus on the possibilities of conflict and possible mitigation.

According to the Ministry of Health, between January and February 2022, 45,724 cases of pregnant adolescent girls aged 10-19 years were handled. The then health permanent secretary, Susan Mochache, reported that 2196 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were registered among those aged 12-17 years. To ease the burden brought upon our community by such statistics, Polycom Development was at the forefront in ensuring that schools, which provide safe havens for our teenagers, had detergent to enhance washroom and hand sanitation. Kibera, the largest slum in Africa, has no access to clean water due to the nature of the housing structures and poor planning. Water is sold within water points, staining the already dire situation further. Polycom was at the forefront in ensuring women and girls were able to access sanitary towels as we also engaged them in economic ventures such as mask making. Through UN Women's support, more than 20,000 masks were produced and distributed.



Polycom Development Project also attended the most important summit in Africa, The Africities, which mobilizes communities and local authorities in African Countries, as well as financial institutions, civil society groups and development partners at continental and international level. This was the 9th edition, held between May 17th and 21st May 2022. This summit was important to us as an organization in leveraging key discussions on the theme 'The Role of Intermediary Cities of Africa in the Implementation of Agenda 2030 of the United Nations and the African Union Agenda 2063'. During our side event we ensured that we tackled pertinent issues such as sexual harassment that is largely affecting women and girls in our community within Kibera.

After the concluded elections, we held a workshop around the World Urban Forum to tackle issues of safe-cities for women to undertake meaningful businesses. Key in this workshop was the Urban Thinker's Campus in which Polycom has been hosting for the last 6 years. The organization is at the forefront in leading the implementation of SDG 11 across the county and the country at large. Pertinent issues on urbanization, security, sexual harassment in the transport sector and at various service delivery points were raised.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the support of our development partners; UNFPA, WomanKind Worldwide, Vital Voices, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, our Government partners, particularly the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action. Most importantly, the women and girls who made this work possible through their sheer resilience and deep conviction that we as a country can achieve gender equality. You are our heroines who continue to inspire the work that we do every day at Polycom.

In 2022, according to the UNESCO resource center, the policy states that teen pregnancy stood at 18% in 2022. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2014), further indicates that teen pregnancy and motherhood rates have remained unchanged since 2008, implying that many girls continue to drop out of school. The net effect of this is that the prospects of girls securing decent economic opportunities are greatly compromised. Teenage pregnancy is driven by a number of factors including but not limited to; lack of education including education on sexual and reproductive health, poverty, and early sexual initiation, harmful cultural practices such as child marriages, sexual abuse and violence.

Reports from various sources including the Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centers indicate an increase in the reported cases of GBV over the last year. According to reliable data, one in every three women have experienced an episode of violence in her lifetime. It is clear that GBV cases increase during times of crisis, emergencies and elections. Data from 1195 based on actual reporting shows that between June and September 2020 there were high reports of GBV.



Our time is now!  
Our Rights, Our Future




International Day of the Girl 2022



#IDG2022

We know that Kenya, and  
the world, would be a  
better place with more  
empowered women



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# Our Projects

## Adolescent Girls Engagement

The Adolescent Program, dubbed Boresha Binti (Boresha Binti means improving the Adolescent girls) is an ongoing project that focuses on the intersecting needs of adolescent girls. The project is currently being undertaken in 50 partner schools. The project has been undertaken since the organization began its activities in 2004. Over the years we have had mentorship sessions surpassing our annual target of 5000 adolescent girls.

The program supports adolescent girls with mentorship, sanitary packages and they are also able to express themselves and share their most intimate stories through the talking boxes. The aim is to free girls from harmful social norms and ensure girls reach their full potential.

We also engage in sports activities with adolescent girls and young women as a part of “sports for development and social change.” We provide 5 liters of detergent every month to all our partner schools to help maintain clean toilets to protect them from Urinary Tract Infections. We also refer the adolescent girls to friendly clinics for treatment of UTI and fungal infections.

The project is funded by various partners; Womankind Worldwide and UNFPA. In this project, we also focus on Sexual Reproductive Health of young women and girls within the community.



## Women Economic Empowerment

The WEE (Women Economic Empowerment) project is an advocacy project focusing on ensuring women and young women from urban informal settlements are empowered economically through access to credit facilities and challenging policies that are retrogressive towards empowerment of women. The project which started in 2022, has reached over 100 women with information on financial management, supported one women-group to access credit facilities from Kenya Women Finance Trust. We have also written a memo to the county asking for an increase in budget allocation towards ensuring that women have markets in the slums

This project has given women economic power that helps them contribute effectively to their communities and lowers their risk to gender based violence. Several women have also been equipped with business skills that help them manage their businesses effectively. They have also been trained on how to use digital platforms to market their products which has helped them target more customers and grow their businesses.

Lack of capital has been a major challenge for women to start and grow their businesses; Polycom has ensured that they link up women to microfinance banks to enable access to seed funds for their businesses.



## SHE Leads Project; Young Women Empowerment

SHE Leads project has reached over 300 girls in 2022 both in HomaBay and Nairobi County. The project endeavors to ensure young women are in a position to tackle social norms affecting them, which prevent them from making informed choices through advocacy. In 2022, the project successfully held local conversations with elderly women and girls vulnerable to FGM. As an achievement, a group of 20 girls who were scheduled for the cut were rescued. In March 2022, the project supported inclusion of GYW from Homabay and Kibera in co-developing the Africa CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) Nairobi declaration post Africa's First Commission on Status on Women; the sixty-sixth session (Africa CSW66). In July 2022, Girls and Young women, who are constituents of the She Leads Project in Homabay and Nairobi participated in co-developing the first ever policy on Girls and Young women activism in collaboration with the United Nations Body; UNHCR aiming to end discrimination against girls and women. The project also linked GYW to the State Department of Gender, engaging the girls and young women in the launch of the first ever SGBV Tumaini Clinic at the Mbagathi Hospital thus integrating GBV Services in health facilities, aligning to the GEF commitments.

## Gender Equality

According to USAID Kenya, Women and adolescent girls are the most vulnerable groups currently in Kenya. They are particularly vulnerable to poverty especially at the household and community level, a state that is exacerbated by gender-based violence, harmful cultural attitudes and beliefs around gender roles, norms and female empowerment. Limited control over benefits from land and other resources constrains women's successful participation in the economy, particularly as producers and market actors.

Women's unpaid care work limits women's contribution in society, further limiting their likelihood to benefit from productive activities, constraining their mobility, and limiting their access to market resources and information to participate effectively in the economy.

Gender equality can only be achieved if we work in collaboration and strive towards one objective. Various strategies have been used towards the realization of gender equality. According to WHO, 1 in 3 women worldwide has experienced violence in their lifetime, this project aims to give women economic power that lowers their risk towards Gender based violence. Our projective is to enhance the involvement of grass root women in society and promote active participation in social or political processes ensuring no one is left behind.

## Sustainable Development Goals Urban Thinkers Campus

Polycom is at the forefront of implementation of SDG 11 within Nairobi County. In partnership with various actors, the organization has teamed up with stakeholders to ensure that our cities are safe for women to conduct their businesses. Under the sexual harassment target, in partnership with 20 teachers, the organization has developed a safeguarding policy that will protect young girls from sexual harassment within their schools. The policy details steps involved in ensuring the adolescent girls are protected. Target 11.7 states that by 2030, there should be a provision for universal access to safety, inclusion, and accessibility to green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

In 2022, we successfully developed a communique to the current Nairobi County governor after the 7th urban thinker's campus. For the last seven years we have endeavored to hold conversations around ensuring we have safe cities to thrive in as women and girls.





## Ensuring that the SDGs are implemented within informal settlements

Polycom Development in partnership with SDG Kenya Forum, brought together various actors, drawn from the Community Constituent Groups; The Media, Academia, Women Rights Organization, the Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations, both the County and the National Government, Marginalized groups such as PWD and women from the informal settlements in Nairobi.

The theme for the day was Better City, Better Life; Act Local to go Global. We focused on bringing different partners and diverse stakeholders together to share their experiences and approaches to local action, what local action worked and what is needed to empower local and regional governments to create a city that is Inclusive and promotes gender equality as well as how policy makers and planners should give a gender perspective in the planning and execution of their policies.

Polycom has been active in championing SDG 11 as well as implementing SDG 5,4,1 and all the other goals through strategic partnerships. During the Multi-stakeholder forum held in early December, Polycom was awarded the first runners up in SDG 5 that champions for gender equality. Through its immense work around Gender Based Violence, Polycom has made strides in ensuring girls and women from urban informal settlements are protected.



## POLYCOM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

## Women and Elections

2022 was the year of general elections in Kenya. Among the most important principles in the governance of public affairs that have been a subject of debate over the years in Kenya is the quest to promote participatory democracy and make the participation of women in critical aspects of the system of governance and decision-making possible. When women assume more public roles, they become influential and visible, and this is likely to increase their participation in a public processes. In 2022, we brought together women from diverse backgrounds to have a conversation around women's engagement in decision spaces and political interference.

# LEAVE NO

## Women, Peace and Security

Women's participation in peace processes is about more than gender equality. It is about revolutionizing peacebuilding: creating solutions that reflect the needs of all people in conflict-affected settings and address the underlying conditions that drive conflict in the first place. We endeavor at dismantling systems that permit and promote violence so that we can move towards a new era of lasting global peace and security. We are also implementing our projects in HomaBay County and the number of women in leadership continues to rise as some of them got elected into political positions and engage through formulation of policies and pushing them to make progressive laws passed in their respective assemblies. The rise of women in the political spaces has led to the increase of meaningfully engaging women on matters of politics. The power in numbers is key to note as the women have used it to influence important policies that directly affect the girls and young women in the county. For instance, after a back and forth attempt to pass the GBV policy, it was easily passed this year due to their strength in numbers.

# Gpende

# ONE BEHIND



## The Voice of Boys and Young Men (BYM) on Girl's Empowerment

Gender equality cannot be achieved without the involvement of men and boys. Change is slowly taking place, and men are increasingly working alongside women to support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. We are engaging boys and young men in programmes that encourage them abandon harmful stereotypes, embrace respectful, healthy relationships, and support the human rights of all people, everywhere. We have enrolled two young men who are assisting in the Boresha Binti Project. Their key mandate is to ensure the boys within the project schools are not left behind and they understand the importance of Gender Equality. By becoming the voice of girls' empowerment, boys and young men can help create a more just and equal world for all. It's essential to involve them in the conversation and empower them to take action towards gender equality.

## Maternal Health

According to the most recent data, approximately 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. This is about one woman every two minutes. For every woman who is likely to die, between 20 and 30 others will experience injuries, infections or disabilities. Most of these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable. Polycom is keen on its advocacy efforts in ensuring maternal deaths occurring within the area of focus are reduced. In partnership with MNH Association, in which Polycom is a member, various advocacy efforts have been put across towards reducing preventable maternal deaths within Kibera Sub-county.

The Organization in 2022, actively engaged in budget advocacy as well as ensuring service delivery within public health facilities is realized. We contributed to the reduction of the very high teen pregnancy records in 2020 by up to 5% in 2022. Polycom is part of the MamaYe program collective that brings together several countries in Africa all towards ensuring reduced maternal deaths SDG Goal 3 is achieved. In our advocacy efforts, SDG target 3.1 on Maternal mortality states that; by 2030, there will be reduced global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births. We have, in 2022, extensively engaged our advocacy efforts targeting County Health Management teams, the Health ministry as well as key focal persons in the Nairobi County Technical working Group on ending teen pregnancy.

Maternal health (unfpa.org)

Strengthening the Democratic Participation of Women Candidates in Kenya's Elections – KIPPRA

In focus: Women, peace and security | UN Women – Headquarters

Engaging men & boys (unfpa.org)

## Change in status

Polycom started as a self-help group of women in Kibera who came together in response to the sexual violence and exploitation faced by young girls in Kibera's informal settlement in Nairobi. Working closely with schools, local education authorities and communities to improve the lives of adolescent girls and women in their diversity. The Organization slowly grew into a Community-Based Organization with a small office within Kibera. It continued with women's activities and engaged young girls and women to continue its mandate. With continued support from Partners and various stakeholders, the organization is now proudly an NGO that allows its wings to spread and speak about women's empowerment across the board. This is a great step and a valid achievement for the Organization.

## International and local Engagements

To grow as an Organization, Polycom Development has had various local and international engagements. In all these engagements adolescent girls and young women have had spaces in which they can learn more about SRH and issues pertaining to girls and young women. Some of the international engagements include; Trade Conference in Malawi and International Conference on Family Planning held in Thailand. We had several online engagements especially towards the better half of the year. On the local policy front we have engaged with the Government from various aspects. We were part of the Kilifi Sub-County training on the SDG's and how to enshrine them in the day to day work of the Government. In partnership with Strathmore University we engaged various stakeholders in discussing innovative ideas to enhance sustainable urban communities. The engagements have strengthened the work of the Organization as well as given us strategic mileage in enhancing our work nationally and globally.



**#ForUsByUs**  
**#GPende**

## Lessons learned

2022 was the year of building back better after the pandemic. After two years of working remotely, Polycom activities resumed with many community engagements highlighting the gaps perceived during COVID-19. However, there are several lessons that can be learned from the experiences; focusing on strategic aspects, such as engagement in policy making and safeguarding policies, as well as strengthening organizational learning processes and developing strategic partnerships. By building resilience and adapting to new challenges, we can continue to make meaningful impact on people's lives.

In partnership, Polycom will continue to provide gender-specific technical assistance in emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In relation to working with the Government, Polycom will strive to support the Gender Technical Working Group of Nairobi to achieve its mandate towards the achievement of gender equality streamlined in its departments.



## Achievement Highlights under the Boresha Binti

DESCRIPTION	QUARTER 1 (JAN - MAR)	QUARTER 2 (APR - JUN)	QUARTER 3 (JUL - SEP)	QUARTER 4 (OCT - DEC)	TOTAL	2022 TARGET
Talking Box Contents	1091	853	782	936	3662	5000
Medical Referrals	6	10	5	2	23	20
Soap Distribution (Lts)	380	400	470	240	1490	2000
Panties Distribution	418	24	322	58	822	1500
Sanitary Towel Distribution	1804	711	2069	2555	7139	5000
International Engagements	6	10	5	2	23	25
Local engagements	69	45	18	15	147	150
No Of Girls Reached < 18	2024	1357	829	2552	6780	5000
No Of Girls Reached + 18	70	133	206	167	576	500
No Of Boys Reached < 18	47	937	51	342	1377	700
No Of Boys Reached + 18		34	33	15	82	1000
No Of Women Reached 25 +	64	300	281	149	794	1000
No Of Men Reached 25 +	40	46	46	61	193	500
No Of PWD's Reached			15	169	184	No Target Set





# POLYCOM

## DEVELOPMENT PROJECT







“ We believe that for a girl to succeed in life she must first appreciate herself. ”



“Girls and women are our heroines who inspire us every day at Polycom, motivating us to do the work that we do.”



**POLYCOM  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT**

"We are a Pan-African feminist women-led organization located in Kenya that works to better the lives of adolescent girls and women in their various forms".

Kibera Drive, Nairobi Kenya.

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