

terre des hommes



stops child exploitation

Stories of Impact

2022

KENYA





About Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international non-governmental organisation with a mission to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation, and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation.

Our vision and mission are inspired and guided by international human rights instruments and standards, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention, the International Labour Organisation Conventions and aligned with achievement of the SDGs, in particular Goals 5, 8 and 16.

Terre des Hommes Netherlands fights against the exploitation of children in four regions: Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In Africa, Terre des Hommes Netherlands works in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. Our work is focused on preventing child exploitation in all its forms. As such we work with communities, government,

private sector, civil society organisations and children themselves, at the centre, to address systemic and structural drivers that expose children to exploitation. We build the capacity of communities and local structures to effectively prevent, detect, report and respond to child exploitation; we purpose to address systemic and structural drivers of child exploitation. We also collaborate with other actors to influence strengthening of the legal and policy environment for better promotion and protection of children rights.

Over the years, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has been able to document various impactful stories of the support we have provided children through the projects and programmes that have positively impacted their lives. A few selected stories are detailed in this storybook.



We strive to do no harm and act in the best interests of children. To protect their privacy all identifying personal information (including names, locations and images of children) in this storybook have been changed.

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1 Mary in Strong Pursuit of her Education

Mary, her three siblings and mother live in a one-room rental house made of stone walls and iron roofing in Mtwapa, Kilifi County. The room is shared by Mary's family and also serves as the kitchen. When she was only two years old, her parents separated and her father disappeared. Life became unbearable for Mary's family as her mother did not have a stable source of income. Her only option was to engage in casual labour, which included washing clothes for the neighbours. In a day, she would earn 3.4 Euros which was barely enough to cater for their basic needs.

Irregular school attendance

As days went by, the situation worsened for Mary's family. In most instances, the family could only manage to get two meals in a day. Mary's health deteriorated due to inadequate nutrition and her school attendance became irregular as she was constantly sent home for school fees. In 2020, when in Grade 4, she dropped out of school.



Negative peer pressure

Being out of school, Mary would hang out with her friends until late in the evening. She started accepting free rides from bodaboda riders aged between 18-20 years old who would carry her back home. The men complimented her looks and gave her money (1.7- 4.2 Euros) to buy what she was lacking at home. “We were going through so much hardship to ensure we had food on the table,” Mary recounted. On the other hand, her mother was struggling to make ends meet for the family and did not have time for her children. Eventually, the men started making sexual advances towards Mary. Without her mother’s knowledge, she started meeting up with these men in hotels and isolated buildings and ended up being sexually exploited.

Saved from exploitation

For almost a year, Mary was sexually exploited and there was no way out for her. One day, one of her neighbours informed the area pastor of what was happening. The pastor reported the issue to Mary’s mother as well as the area Child Protection Volunteer (CPV). In February 2021, Mary was identified by the CPV as she fit in line with the criteria for the *Building a Future project* target group.

Back to school

After the assessment, the project’s social workers and the Child Protection Volunteer offered biweekly guidance and counselling sessions to Mary through home and school visits. Additionally, the project supported Mary with scholarly materials, dignity packs, and all school levies to help her continue with her education. Speaking of the support she has received, Mary happily said, “The support I have received has enabled me to attend school consistently without fail. This support is important because I can now focus on my studies.” Her dream is to become a successful business woman and support her family.



2 A Fresh Start for Asha

Asha completed her primary school education in 2020 and joined a high school in Mombasa County the following year. Unfortunately, she could not cope with the new high school life. She had always preferred pursuing a beauty and fashion course, which she was passionate about. In October 2021 when schools reopened for the second term, she disappeared to an unknown location. Her father reported the case to a nearby police station. One week later, she returned home and her father escorted her to the aforementioned police station.

Exploited at a young age

Upon their arrival at the police station, Asha was taken into a separate room for questioning. While interviewing her, the police discovered that she had a smartphone. After going through it, the police officer realised that she had been in communication with several men aged between 25 - 40 years. Thereafter, the police officer in charge contacted the project officer for further intervention. During a separate counselling session, Asha informed the project officer that she had met five of the men physically and slept with them. She met some of the men via online platforms like Facebook. Consequently, she also met other men offline, exchanged contacts and continued with the conversations via WhatsApp before meeting them in public places and private residences. The men would give her money, around 62 Euros, in exchange for sex. "I feel bad about myself. I also feel that I am responsible for all these things because it's me who agreed to meet them all," she said regrettably.



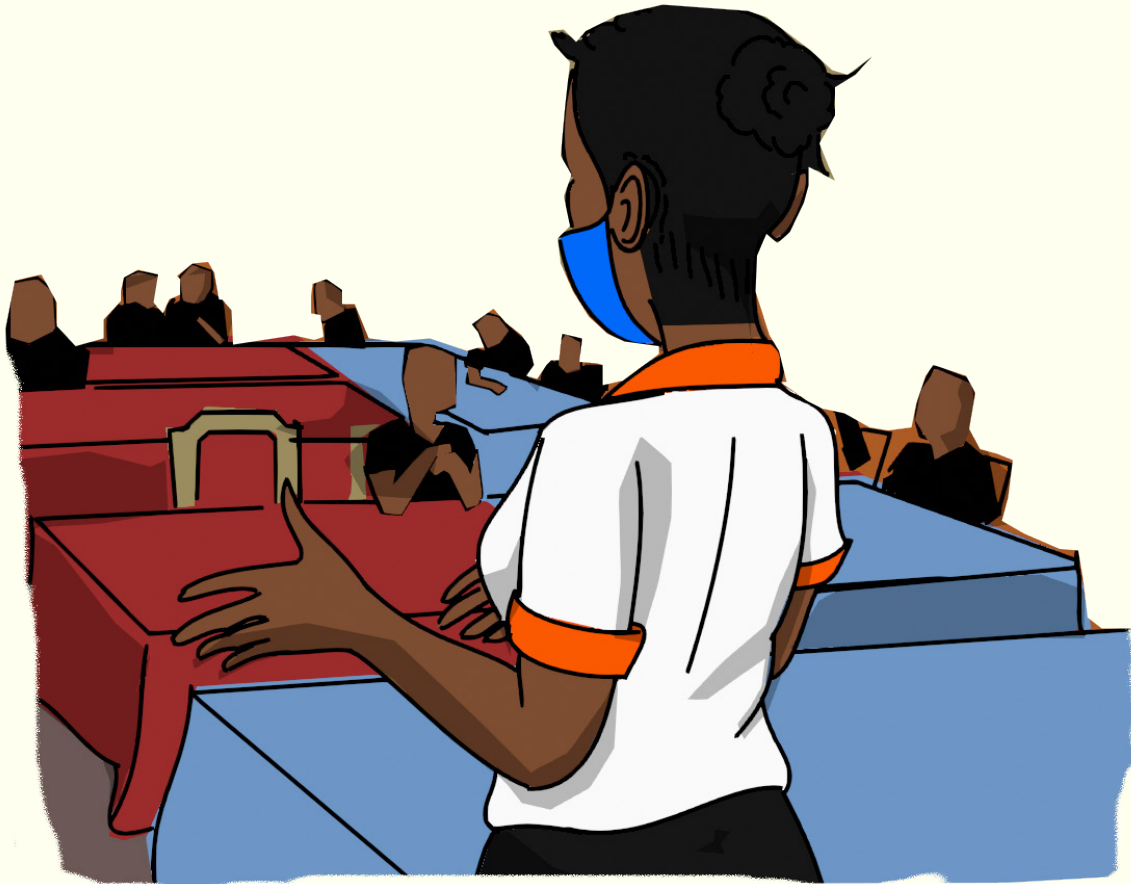
Support

The *Watch 24/7* project team met Asha and taught her how to avoid online sexual exploitation and how to be SMART while online to avoid such incidents from happening. She was also encouraged to report any cases of online harassment.

Asha's case was reported to the Children's Office and police post in Nyali, Mombasa County in October 2021. The case files and the smartphone were forwarded to the *Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI)* — Child Protection Unit for further investigations, to identify the perpetrators and arrest them. A follow-up is being made by the children's office in Nyali and the child's psychological well-being and progress is being monitored every two weeks. This is expected to continue until the case is concluded. From the Counsellor's assessment the child's behaviour has really improved. She now understands herself better. She however wishes to engage herself in activities that will help her use her time productively like learning the fashion and beauty course that she's passionate about. Asha wants to be a beautician in future.



3 Zain, a Peer Educator Aspiring to Empower other girls



Life for Zain has been challenging. In 2002 when she was six years old, her mother died after a short illness. Following her mother's death, she went to live with her grandmother—a casual labourer who depended on washing clothes as a source of income. In a day, she could make an average of 1.6 Euros, which was insufficient to cater for the family needs. Occasionally, Zain and the family would only have one meal per day. Around 2001, Zain managed to join a local orphanage primary school for her nursery education. She was later transferred to another school in 2007 where she sat for her national exams in 2010. Despite the challenges, her school performance was very impressive.

In 2011, she joined a nearby day secondary school through the support of a good Samaritan who offered to pay her school fees. In her final year, her grandmother was diagnosed with stage four cervical cancer. Day by day, the illness worsened. As a result, her relatives shifted their focus to the ailing grandmother and Zain was left alone with no one to care for her. "I felt that the world was so unfair to me. First, my parents died, then the only person whom I knew as my parent also passed away, this was almost my breaking point, my world had collapsed." Zain explains.

Hardship

Having been abandoned by her family, Zain became helpless and sought help from men (between 18- 50 years). Soon, the men began making sexual advances towards her. At 17 years with no source of livelihood, Zain was sexually exploited. A few months after completing her national exams, she discovered she was pregnant. When her aunt heard of the news, she took her in immediately. Upon her delivery, Zain started looking for jobs to support her child. Sadly, she would wake up, walk for many kilometres in search of jobs and would come home empty-handed. As her quest to make ends meet continued, she fell again into the hands of men who took advantage of her. Occasionally, she used to visit these men in their houses and others she would meet them in the lodges within Naivasha town. "I didn't know this is sexual exploitation I thought they were helping me out, I felt they were good to me as I did not have any source of income to support my child," she said.

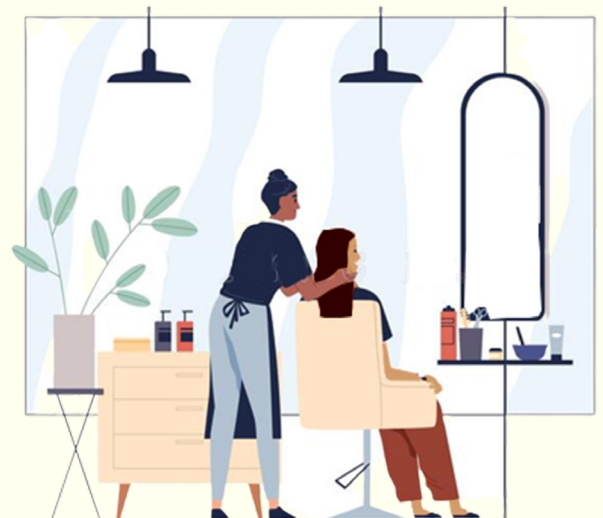
Receiving support

A social worker based where Zain lives identified her and referred her to our partner *KNOTE*. In 2019, she was trained as a peer educator to reach out to other younger female sex workers. Zain was then integrated into the programme in October 2020 and she selected a hairdressing course.

In January 2021, she received a three-day life skills training, reproductive health sessions and job skills training. She also enrolled for a six-month hairdressing course in March 2021 and sat for the *National Industrial Training Agency (NITA)* grade three exams in December 2021. Additionally, she has been supported with a starter kit to open a small salon within Naivasha town.

Future aspirations

Zain aspires to train other girls who have been victims of sexual exploitation and empower them to overcome life's most pressing challenges. "I hope and aspire to be a leading hairdresser in Naivasha and use my skills to reach out to girls at risk of sexual exploitation and help them pick themselves up and move on with life."



4 Bright Dreams, Bright Future for Agnes



16-year-old Agnes and her family (seven siblings and parents) live in Kwale County, Kenya. Her father is the breadwinner and relies on casual labour like weeding and harvesting coconuts. On a good day, he makes approximately 59.82 Euros and 25.64 Euros during the unfavourable coconut season. Her mother, on the other hand, farms vegetables mostly during the rainy season to supplement her husband's earnings. With the little earnings, Agnes and her siblings cannot access even the most basic needs.

Out of school

After her primary education in 2018, Agnes lost hope of joining high school.

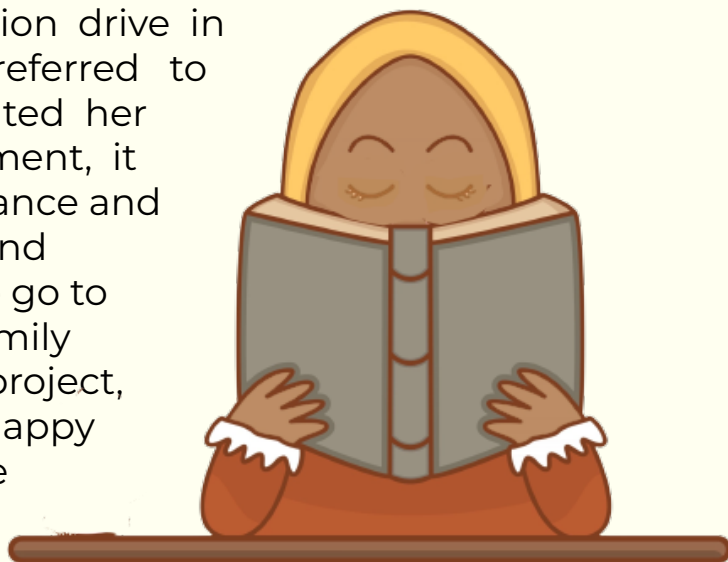
She stayed home to help her mother take care of her younger siblings. Her mother, however, could not let her daughter idle at home. In 2019, she enrolled Agnes to a nearby secondary school without paying school fees. With the family's dire economic situation, she couldn't continue with her studies as she was sent away for a large amount of school fees that had accumulated. "I lost hope of returning to school and continuing with my studies as my parents could not afford to pay for my fees," Agnes recounted painfully. Her dream of continuing with her studies further reached a dead end after the government gave a directive of school closure due to Covid-19. As a result, she stayed out of school for almost a year and a half.

Peer pressure

Life became tough for Agnes and her family. At 14 years old, she was out of school and everything was crumbling. With no constructive activity to engage in, Agnes joined a bad group of friends who were engaging in sexual activities. Due to the tough situation at home, she devised alternative ways to access basic needs, including clothes, perfumes and sanitary towels. As a result, she was sexually exploited majorly by boda boda operators, without her mother's knowledge.

Receiving Support

A Child Protection Volunteer from *Kesho Kenya* was conducting a beneficiary identification drive in January 2021. Agnes was identified and referred to the project by social workers who visited her home for assessments. After the assessment, it was concluded that Agnes needed guidance and counselling to help mould her behaviour and provide academic support to enable her to go to school. "I had lost hope in life due to the family financial struggles and were it not for the project, I would not have returned to school. I am happy I can now continue with my studies and be resourceful through the attainment of education and guidance in my behaviour," she said happily.



Empowered

In April 2021, Agnes was supported to return to school through the provision of school fees, dignity items, uniforms and scholarly materials. Additionally, frequent follow-ups in school and home visits are done by the social workers to identify any emerging issues. During the school visits, her teachers noted that she is now well-disciplined and hardworking. "I have a future after accomplishing my secondary school studies since I am now in Form 4. I hope to progress to the university, study and have a good job which will enable me to live in a well-furnished house, have a car and build my family a better house," Agnes said.

Her parents on the other hand have also been sensitised on child protection approaches to better protect their children from exploitation. Currently, Agnes is very happy and her school attendance is regular. She can now spend her time wisely in school and at home. She not only hopes for a better future but dreams of becoming a role model to other children. "I would like to be an Agricultural officer or a teacher to empower the farmers on productive farming or teach the children and guide them on right morals," she said.

5 A reason to smile again: Vicky's story

Vicky and her siblings were brought up in an extended family. Her other siblings have different mothers and are not living with her father. Vicky's father, the sole provider for the family, is a proprietor and a businessman. On a normal day, Vicky and her siblings would wake up at 6:30 am, take breakfast, go to school, and come back home at 1:00 pm to have lunch. In the evening, they would go to the playgrounds to mingle with other children.

Tough times



When Vicky was 3 years old, the situation at home changed for the worst. Her mother fell ill and she was taken to a nearby hospital. She was treated and later discharged. Days later, the illness persisted forcing her to be readmitted to Matayos Sub-County hospital. Unfortunately for Vicky, her mother's condition did not improve and due to financial constraints, she could not seek further medication attention. As a result, Vicky's mother left her matrimonial home to go and stay with her mother as she recovered from the illness. In 2015, the condition exacerbated and her husband presumed she had been 'bewitched.' A year later, Vicky's mother divorced her husband and tried to get custody of her children through the *Directorate of Children Services (DCS)*. Sadly, her request was not granted as she was found unfit to live with them.

Punishment

With their parents separated, Vicky and her elder sibling (who is deaf) had to walk for more than 15 kilometres from their father's home to where their mother lived. They would sneak out to go see their mother without their

father's knowledge. One day, he noticed their disappearance, became enraged and decided to punish them. Physical abuse coupled with canes and slaps became a norm to them for six years. They missed school, lived in fear and had no one to report the incidences to. "Sometimes they would come to school with bruises on their bodies," said Madam Jude (not her real name), a teacher at Vicky's school. "They tell stories about how they are denied food," she added.

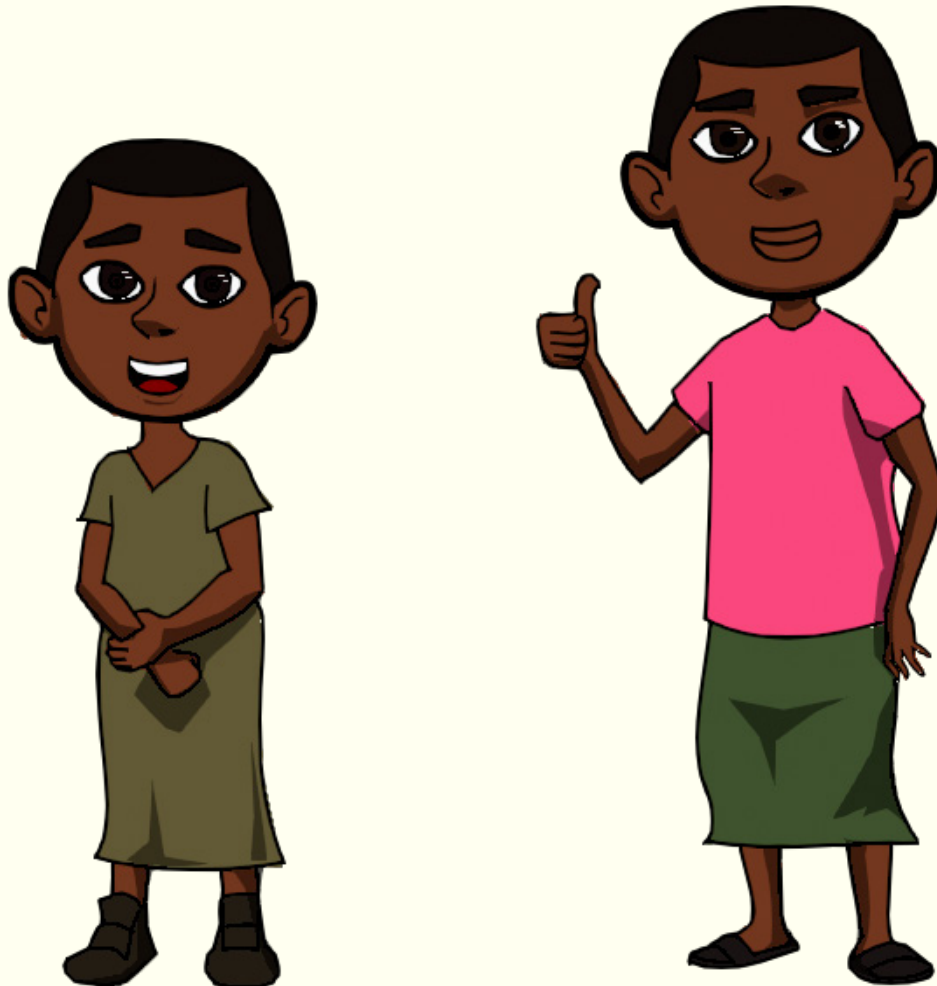


Even with these challenges, Vicky and her sister's quest did not stop. Their growing desire for motherly love pushed them to move from one place to another looking for her. Unfortunately, her mother's mental state made it impossible for them to locate her. On several occasions, the two young girls could be found in markets, during late hours, looking for their mother. Their father never bothered to know their whereabouts. In January 2021, Vicky's mother made a second attempt to have custody of the children. Her wishes were, however, denied again with the *Directorate of Children Services (DCS)* citing her previous medical report. Their father, on the other hand, stopped providing basic needs and also stopped paying school fees when the schools reopened in August 2021.

Receiving support

In December 2021, a Locational Area Advisory Council (LAAC) member met Vicky and her sister stranded at a nearby market late in the evening. After listening to their story, he escorted them home. The following day, guided by the knowledge acquired during the Case Management and Referral training organised by *JOFA*, the Locational Area Advisory Council approached Vicky's father to find out more about the situation. Unfortunately, he was physically assaulted and had no choice but to report the case to the assistant chief for further action.

Vicky's father was arrested and held for 24 hours in police custody and was later transferred to Busia police station. He was charged with neglect and omission of his duties and pleaded guilty to the charges. The magistrate released him on cash bail amounting to 384 Euros or a surety of equal amount and compelled him to discharge his duties to fully support his children.



Back to school

In January 2022, Vicky was placed back to her former school in grade two. Her elder sister was re-admitted to a special school. The court also ordered that the children should have access to their mother, when schools close, an agreement that was actualised by their father. A home visit is also conducted monthly by the assistant chief, chief and the local administrators to monitor their father and ensure he is on his best behaviour at all times. The *DCS* office continuously monitors the progress of the children and their relationship with the father. A report of progress shall be made available to Busia law courts on a monthly basis for the next six months.



Happy and smiling again

Vicky and her sister now have a sense of relief since they can visit their mother freely at their grandparents' home. Currently, Vicky's health has improved, she has adopted her daily routines and is staying together with her father and stepmother. Additionally, both children were linked with guidance and counselling teachers in their respective schools. Speaking after the intervention, Vicky said, "I want to work hard so that one day, I am able to help those who are in need and those with special needs, like my mother."

6 “I had lost hope, but *She Leads* helped me to be confident” Maimuna’s Story

After being enrolled in high school, Maimuna developed a health condition that made her ooze blood from her ears and nose. As a result, life in school became difficult, including making friends. She dropped out of school in her second year, when she was 15 years old. By then, she had a boyfriend (30 years old) whom she met at a wedding ceremony. The two got married, with a Kadhi (magistrate) officiating the ceremony and her parents supporting the union. Barely two months after getting married, Maimuna started facing challenges.

Troubled marriage

Maimuna’s husband got a job in Saudi Arabia, leaving his new wife -who was pregnant at that time- with her in-laws. Soon, her husband stopped communicating and providing for her. It was not long before Maimuna began having issues with her sisters-in-law. Later on, Maimuna’s husband filed for a divorce and asked her to have an abortion, which she did. Her family, friends and the community ostracised her for being divorced. As a result, she ended up being sexually exploited for about six months in order to meet her needs. Fortunately, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, through *Kesho Kenya* and the *She Leads* team, came to her rescue.



Nowhere to turn to

In 2018, Maimuna was enrolled back in high school. Unfortunately, with the programme's closure, all the support offered to beneficiaries stopped which pushed Maimuna back to sexual exploitation. In 2020, at the age of 19, she got married again. The husband, a 31-year-old man, stopped providing for Maimuna and was physically abusive. When she sought intervention from her parents, they requested her to go back to her marriage, stating that they would disown her if she got divorced again. In 2021, Maimuna separated from her husband. Her parents' hostility pushed her to live with her grandmother, where she resides to date.

She Leads

With the launch of the *She Leads* Programme, beneficiaries of its preceding programme (*Girls Advocacy Alliance*) were adopted to be part of the new programme — including Maimuna. She has learnt of her role in taking action towards changing the retrogressive norms. She learnt that preference for boys' education is not right as everyone has a right to education. Learning this contributed to her resolve to go back to school. The programme officer further linked her to an adult learning centre where Maimuna is enrolled and registered to finish secondary school.


The media engagements that she has been part of have encouraged her to speak out about the issues Girls and Young Women face in Kwale County. Through the *She Leads* Programme, Maimuna has been linked to ward administrators for the application of education loans and also with the *Kenya Youth Empowerment Program (KYEOP)* for life skills training. She was selected as the Kwale GYW representative under the *She Leads* programme, a position she says has helped improve her self-esteem and build her confidence.



Empowered


“I had lost hope, but *She Leads* helped me to be confident and make decisions on my own. I'm now confident enough to share my story and right now I have the courage to tell my parents what is right and wrong,” she said. “I feel empowered, safe from domestic violence and I am more focused in life. I am positive towards my life and not allowing anything to interfere with my dreams despite my background and the present circumstances,” Maimuna proudly added.

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