



## MPANZI—OBOGIMA Preventing Violence Against Women

A REPORT

April 2012



### **A shared problem that affects all**

Mpanzi's Obogima initiative was launched in September 2011, to mobilize the rural villages of Kegochi, Rianyachuba and Nyamagwa in Kisii, Southwestern Kenya to prevent violence against women and girls. Obogima was carried out as a pilot project with a focus on three primary forms of violence against women; rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence in homes and the community. Both men and women were mobilized for action, because violence against women and girls is a community problem that affects all people – men, women and children. All people must engage together to prevent and end it.



*Mpanzi Women Lead for future*

### **Mpanzi**

Mpanzi is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting development and peace in rural communities. The term Mpanzi is derived from Kiswahili language and is used to mean planting seeds of hope, nurturing empowerment and sustaining human flourishing

## Storytelling; Women's wounds to share & heal

Mpanzi convened 32 women-to-women storytelling sessions. These sessions provided a safe space for sensitization and awareness among women of the prevalence of violence against women that they face in the village, community and family. 60 women have joined the story telling. The forms of violence they have told about included rape (including marital rape), alcoholism, sexual assault, men engaging in extra-marital affairs, domestic violence including battering and economic violence and exploitation primarily in subsistence farming. Horrific effects resulting from such violence as reported by the women include infection with HIV & AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, physical injuries including miscarriages, poor mental health and other health effects, economic deprivation, extreme poverty, displacement of women and children from homes, stigma and discrimination and general trauma for individual women and their children in the community.



### I felt lighter sharing pain

Through these story-telling sessions, it was apparent that the problem of violence against women in the villages was intractable. More women were joining the story-telling session, and they wanted to keep it safe enough to discuss the strategies and way forward. The women appreciated the safe space for sharing. The women noted that there had never been such a space to share about the different forms of violence and break the silence, and collectively give their testimonies. "Although it is all very sad and we cry a lot, we are finding strength in knowing that we share these pains and sorrows", Ebisiba reflected.



**I am an Agent of change, with faith**

## Self-awareness

Mpanzi conducted self-awareness training with 26 women on the 23 of December 2011. The training, which was facilitated by Pam Ogega, helped deepen the experiences of the women who had shared their stories. Each one of them drew a life map with the most significant memory of pain. "Inagusua", meaning *I feel much lighter*, is the way a participant expressed the joy of getting to her wound, touching it, and sharing it. They also learned about tips for personal health from Nurse Hellen, a community nurse who is also a member of the group. The Mpanzi women began to share hope & strategies for healing, going forward.



## Public Awareness

A *Baraza*—public awareness meeting—was convened at Igare market on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2012 bringing together 200 villagers; religious groups, chiefs, survivors of violence, elders, youth, women and men. Key messages on awareness, education and community building were delivered.

1. Folklore songs and poems were performed on forms of violence against women, its effects and how/why it should be prevented.
2. Chiefs, religious leaders, and government representatives spoke on the urgency to prevent violence and empower women.
3. Mpanzi's overall goals were presented, and received support and endorsement from the chiefs and the community.

The District Livestock Production Officer, Mr. Okumu, committed to work together with Mpanzi to launch a program for women's economic development focused on livestock and rural livelihoods.

### **As chief, I will enforce the law**

In his speech, the chief of Igare village confirmed his commitment to work with Mpanzi to ensure that the law was enforced and that violence against women and girls was prevented. Sub-chief Aiko was concerned at the prevalence of violence against women and girls in the community and called upon Mpanzi to continue mobilizing the community to prevent all its forms. Young people as well as the elderly performed songs and poems on the urgency to prevent violence against women and girls, and the need to promote the education for girls. These provided the space to break the silence on violence against women and begin to heal.





## What Next? Nurturing peace villages

The 60 women already mobilized have planned to have follow-up trainings based on the needs they have identified which include: Ensuring confidentiality of their stories and security for women living in violent relationships; healing the wounds; engaging in income generating activities – microenterprise for economic empowerment; and working with the government of Kenya ministry of gender, and with law enforcement such as chiefs and police for protection.

Mpanzi will work towards the launch of the livestock and rural livelihoods initiative for survivors of violence, in collaboration with the government of Kenya ministry of livestock.

Mpanzi will engage women, men, boys & girls to change attitudes and reject harmful practices.

Mpanzi women have initiated a savings scheme where they contribute their own funds every week. These efforts are to be supported and expanded.

Mpanzi has been requested to expand its work to other villages. New members are joining to tell their story and take action.

Mpanzi will launch a parenting initiative to promote rural-based child protection and positive parenting values, partnering with Lead4Tomorrow of Hawaii, USA.

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