



The Kenya-Finland Bilateral Programme was designed to support duty bearers to better prevent and comprehensively respond to the needs of gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, their families, and communities. Implemented through the leadership of the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action (SDGAA) with the County Governments of Bungoma, Kilifi, and Samburu, this programme has tested new approaches to strengthening capacity, coordination, and community engagement. It has had a “profound impact on the functioning of the whole multi-sectoral system for GBV prevention and response in those counties”. (Nordenmark, A., Muhingi, W. et al., 2025)

Key outcomes include:

- Increased capacity and confidence among GBV service providers to lead and coordinate prevention and response efforts, including but not limited to Health, Police, Children’s Services, Education, Justice, and Civil Society.
- Greater access to responsive high-quality support for GBV survivors and those with increased risk and vulnerability to GBV. This included professional counselling, alcohol, drug & substance abuse intervention, and mediation to diffuse family/community conflict.
- Improved governance, coordination, and policy implementation in the three focus Counties.
- Significant shifts in community/cultural norms, particularly towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation, and adoption of positive parenting practices.

*A Study: Transformative Change Among Duty Bearers Supporting Prevention and Response to GBV in Bungoma, Kilifi, and Samburu Counties, Kenya* was commissioned to evaluate the systemic and behavioural change(s) achieved as a result of capacity building initiatives targeting legal and moral duty bearers. The findings reveal that the programme served as a catalyst for a change process that is still ongoing – including changes in values, beliefs, culture, and behaviour at an individual, professional, and group/team level. Notably, at a systems level, transformational change was found in two of the three counties.

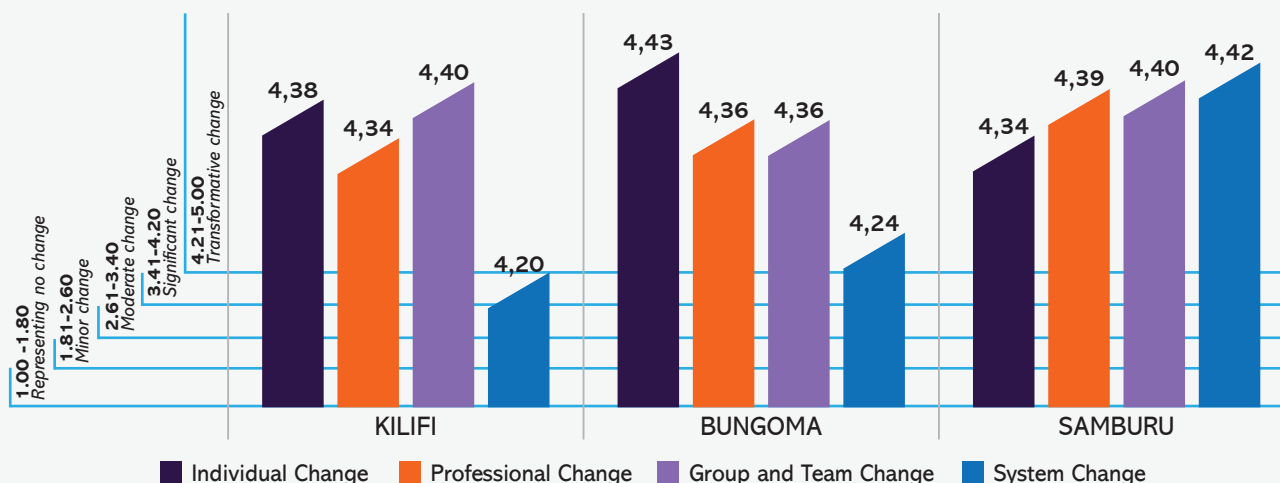
**To meet this objective, the study assessed, analysed, and identified:**

- **Behavioural change** through the personal and professional behavioural change experienced by participants in the programme.
- **Systemic change** as manifested in changes in collaboration and dynamics within groups and teams in individual sectors involved to support GBV prevention and response, and also the inter-sectoral collaborations.
- **Cultural shifts** as manifested in transformed attitudes and behaviours of communities towards harmful cultural norms.
- **Success factors and challenges** serving as mechanisms that facilitate or hinder transformative change.
- **Lessons learned** to inform future investments into GBV programming that aim to scale and/or sustain GBV prevention initiatives.



Data from this 2024/25 study categorised the degree of change to assess and compare the impact of the programme interventions, with a scale of 1.00–1.80 representing no change; 1.81–2.60 minor change; 2.61–3.40 moderate change; 3.41–4.20 significant change; and 4.21–5.00 representing transformative change. The composite mean of the degree of change is presented below.

### REPORTED CHANGE ACROSS THREE COUNTIES (N=351)



Legal and moral duty bearers, in their own words, qualify these changes in terms of deep impacts at a personal, professional, and group/team level:

“It is transformative because to me, personally, people are looking for me, seeking counselling services. So I can say it’s transformative because they have seen a change.”

*Respondent, Police Focus Group Discussion, Bungoma*

“Through the programme’s counselling sessions, we’ve helped parents reconcile and work together for their childrens’ well-being.”

*Respondent in the Mixed Sector Focus Group, Kilifi*

“If a girl has to undergo a cut [FGM], it is a very interesting ceremony.... As Morans, we liked it so much that if someone tells us about this ceremony we start preparing for this ceremony. So, when they told us it needs to be stopped, we were worried. But then they explained to us, and slowly we are now grasping it, and we are now becoming teachers. Now we finally came to accept it after a lot of teaching, now we have decided ourselves to be the teachers.”

*Respondent, Focus Group with Community, Samburu*



More than  
**30,000+**  
copies of guidelines/policies  
were distributed



## ADOPTING A SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING APPROACH TO ADVANCE TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

In partnership with the County Gender Sector Working Groups (GSWGs)<sup>1</sup> in Bungoma, Kilifi, and Samburu Counties, and engaging both rights holders and duty bearers, the programme tested new approaches to strengthening capacity and coordination. These Counties were selected due to their unique context, high prevalence of GBV, and the goodwill demonstrated by their respective leadership.

Adopting a system-strengthening approach within the context of GBV programming represents an important evolution in Kenya. Within the scope of the Kenya-Finland Bilateral Programme, this included three interconnected workstreams:



 **5,906**  
individuals trained or  
supported

### Developing Tools for Strengthening Coordination

High Priority Wards  
Seasonal Calendars  
Socio-Ecological Model

### A New Approach to Building Capacity, Confidence & Commitment

Certified Professional Trainings  
Evidence-Based Interventions

### Strengthening Policy Implementation

Community-Driven Roadmaps  
Standard Operating Procedures

**1. Developing Tools for Strengthening Coordination, Collaboration and Collective Leadership:** Simple analytical tools were created for each of the three focus Counties. This has led to a common understanding of the risk factors by all stakeholders and more efficient planning and distribution of services to the locations with the greatest need. Tools included the development of seasonal risk calendars, assessment of high-risk wards, and the development of the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) to improve coordination and collaboration. A practical toolkit has been developed by the programme: *Adopting a Systems-Strengthening Approach to Improve Prevention and Response to GBV: Lessons from the Kenya-Finland Bilateral Programme (2025)* to highlight the rationale, steps, and key learning from each of these innovations. It is available on the SDGAA website.<sup>2</sup>

**2. Embracing A New Approach to Building Capacity, Confidence, and Commitment:** A critical mass of legal and moral Duty Bearers, 5,905 individuals

(1771 male/4135 female) were trained or supported by the programme. Trainings included completed certified professional trainings in Level 5 Counselling and Alcohol & Substance Abuse (ADSA), Mediation, and Community Policing. This established consistent core competencies across the workforce, and raised professional standards and ethics. In addition, two evidence-based interventions (EBIs) contributed to profound improvements in the delivery of services in each of the high priority wards: Male Engagement and a Positive Parenting Programme.

**3. Strengthening Policy Implementation:** Through meaningful engagement across all sectors and segments of society and partnering in new ways with Duty Bearers and Rights Holders, the programme achieved remarkable milestones in the journey to end FGM and reduce GBV – including community driven roadmaps and reflective sessions on the respective guidance and Codes of Conduct for each sector.

<sup>1</sup> These working groups include both national and county focal points from all relevant sectors including, but not limited to, police, health, education, peace & security, children's services, gender, and civil society – including community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and survivor networks/support groups.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gender.go.ke/sites/default/files/publications/Toolkit%20-%20Innovations%20in%20Systems%20Strengthening.pdf>



Adopting a Systems-Strengthening Approach to Improve Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence: Lessons from the Kenya-Finland Bilateral Programme



 **89%**

of 2024 survey respondents reported improved quality of services



**10,994**  
participants attending  
learning activities



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### 1. Developing Tools for Strengthening Coordination, Collaboration and Collective Leadership

- Established County-specific calendars to pinpoint changes in GBV risk/vulnerability, along with prevention opportunities unique to each context.
- Analyzed GBV risk/vulnerability from sub-county to ward-level, with charts widely adopted and deployed by the County GSWGs to intensify service-delivery and outreaches to the wards with the highest risk.
- Created Service Directories (at Ward-levels) to facilitate information sharing and referrals across sectors for both prevention and response.

### 2. Embracing A New Approach to Building Capacity, Confidence, and Commitment

- 5,905 individuals (1771 male/4135 female) were trained or supported by the programme. Trainings included completed certified trainings – Level 5 Counselling; Alcohol, Drug & Substance Abuse Interventions & Counselling; Mediation; and Community Policing.
- 10,994 participants attended learning activities
- 348 people benefitted from exchange programmes organised to support cross-county/sector learning.
- 450 marginalised groups (i.e. GBV survivors, PWDs, support groups, Morans etc) participated in programme trainings, events, dialogues.
- 80% of sampled duty bearers reported significant or transformational change which positively impacted their personal and professional conduct – enabling them to help GBV survivors and at-risk cases restore their dignity. 94% of sampled duty bearers supported by the programme self-reported increased capacity and confidence to support GBV prevention and response.
- 4,060 individuals accessed GBV prevention and response services (HMIS data). The most profound changes are evident in the availability of counselling services. This has been attributed directly to the certified trainings offered by the Kenya-Finland Programme.
- 89% of respondents reported improved quality of services (Feb 2024 survey).
- 259 certified facilitators received training and support to deliver the positive parenting, or male engagement sessions.
- 1,310 champions identified, trained, and supported.

### 3. Strengthening Policy Implementation

- More than 30,000+ copies of guidelines / policies were distributed.
- Development of 13 draft policies supported in the Counties.
- 1,662 individuals participated in the GSWG and GBV TWG meetings which took place during the lifetime of the programme.
- Partnering with Elders/Cultural Leaders in two counties, resulted in a *Declaration against FGM and Child Marriage* by the Sabao Council of Elders; and a *Post-Kisima Declaration Roadmap against FGM and Child Marriage* led by the Samburu Elders. These Declarations resulted in greater community awareness and commitment to end these harmful cultural practices.



# 4,060

individuals accessed GBV prevention and response services

## KEY LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kenya-Finland Bilateral Programme has yielded profound insights into the innovations and investments needed to strengthen systems, and structures for prevention and response. These are highlighted in the Study on Transformative Change (2025), and the Systems Strengthening Toolkit (2025) – including:

- The use of Ward Rankings to assign categorised locations according to high-, medium-, and low-GBV risk enables stakeholders to direct attention to the locations with the greatest need.
- The development of County-specific calendars highlighting key periods of risk/vulnerability and prevention opportunities can help to align partner interventions and messaging according to seasonal factors.
- Using the socio-ecological approach to guide social and behaviour change initiatives enables stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the groups to engage and prioritise. This includes identifying and organising a comprehensive set of interventions tailored to the needs of key groups who are vulnerable to GBV and those who have the power and influence to mitigate the situation.

- Investing in professional certified training, particularly in the Level 5 Counselling Programme, and the Alcohol, Drug & Substance Abuse Community Counselling Programme has been transformational at a personal, professional levels with spillover effects into the system level. The protracted nature of the training, delivered with mixed cohorts (i.e. duty bearers from multiple sectors), from the high-risk Wards, has had a profound positive impact on the functioning of the whole multi-sectoral GBV system. Across all three counties, there were reported improvements in ethical conduct, survivor-centred care, and case resolution rates, along with increased trust, information-sharing, and referrals across sectors. Scaling these types of certified trainings helps to support consistent service delivery.
- Prioritising meaningful engagement with diverse groups. There is a need to go beyond functional participation by fostering a sense of shared purpose, empathy and resilience across all levels of society. This includes genuine dialogue, commitment and renewed effort to building awareness of harmful cultural practices and engage in a co-creation process (i.e. community-level roadmaps by and for the community) to support social and behaviour change.
- Exchange visits between groups, communities, and counties is an effective strategy to influence harmful cultural practices and support the emergence of new leaders. This requires careful attention to the design of the programme agenda, the style of facilitation, and the space for interactions to build trust, foster connection and increase self-efficacy.
- Evidence-based interventions, including male engagement and positive parenting, are yielding positive changes in attitude, behaviour, and relationships at the community-level. By training facilitators within CBOs to scale these interventions, they are more impactful in their family and community-level outreaches, are gaining increased recognition for programme effectiveness, and can position themselves for future funding.

Building on these positive lessons learned, there is tremendous potential to scale these initiatives to other counties, while also sustaining the gains achieved.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

National level: Kenya

County level: Bungoma, Kilifi and Samburu

#### GOAL

To reduce gender-based violence (GBV) and other harmful cultural practices.

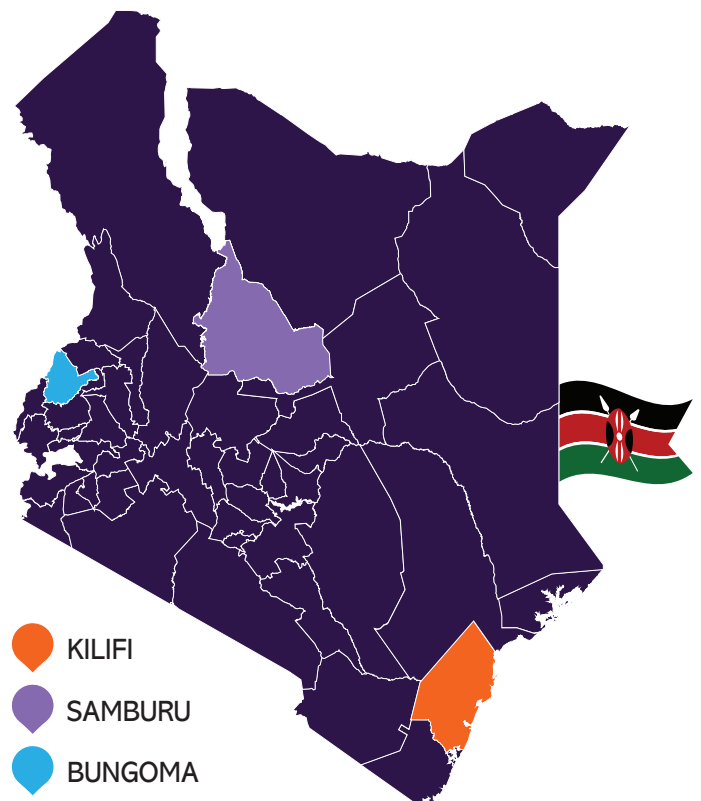
#### DURATION

09/2021 to 02/2025, inclusive of a ten-month inception phase

#### PROGRAMME BUDGET

€6 million (793,3M KES)<sup>3</sup>

- Up to €1 million contribution from the Government of Kenya (132,9 M KES)
- Up to €5 million from the Government of Finland (664,5M KES)



**94%** of sampled duty bearers reported increased capacity and confidence to support GBV prevention and response

<sup>3</sup> Exchange rate as at 21 January 2025, [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)



**SUOMI  
FINLAND**

