



**KENYA**  
Sexual Reproductive  
Health and Rights Alliance

# Elerwa Stories

A NARRATIVE OF  
CHANGE



# Introduction

This collection brings together stories of change from Comprehensive Sexuality Education facilitators working in Nairobi, Makueni and Nakuru. The stories capture how sex positive sexual health education is being delivered within communities and why it matters. Through their work with parents and their children, facilitators share lived experiences of engaging families in open, honest and age appropriate conversations about sexuality and wellbeing.

The stories reflect how facilitators address key issues such as safe sex including STIs and HIV, menstrual health, relationships and consent, puberty, self awareness and assertiveness, and gender based violence. Told from the ground, these experiences show how CSE responds to real challenges faced by young people and families.

Together, these stories demonstrate that Comprehensive Sexuality Education saves lives by reducing misinformation, strengthening communication between parents and children, and supporting young people to make informed and healthy decisions. They also challenge and dispel common myths about CSE, showing it as a vital and empowering approach that protects the wellbeing, dignity and rights of children and young people.



# TABLE

## Of Contents



### Page 3-4

**Thriving not just surviving**  
*By Emmaculate Mutunga*



### Page 5-6

**Bridging Generations,  
Building Understanding**  
*By Wycliffe Mutisya*



### Page 7

**Where Boldness Replaced  
Shame**  
*By Valerie Kulola*



### Page 8-9

**When She Asked the  
Question.**  
*By Berta Kihonjo*



### Page 10-11

**The map and the broken  
compass, through a parent's  
eyes**  
*By Oliver Charo*



### Page 12

**Learning With Sharon**  
*By Joy Kamau*

Knowledge is power



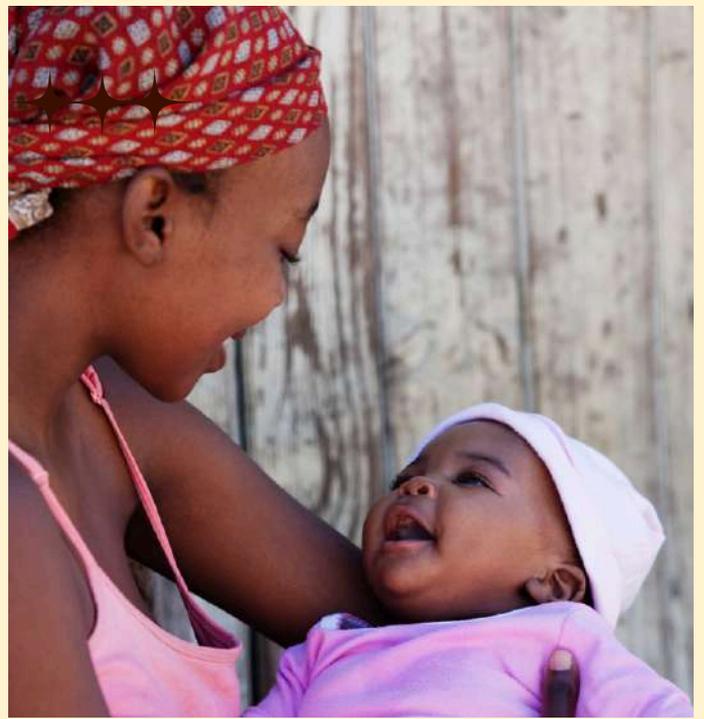
# Thriving *Not Just* Surviving

**Young Mothers Embracing Change -  
By Emmaculate Mutunga**

In the heart of Makueni, the Youth for Sustainable Development- Makueni chapter buzzed with purpose as we gathered a group of young mothers for a comprehensive sexual education (CSE) session. The room was a safe haven where consent was sought, and open hearts were ready to share. Among them was Sharon, a young mother whose story would soon ripple through the group, sparking transformation.

Sharon stood hesitantly, her voice soft but resolute as she shared her journey. Born into a family strained by poverty, she had turned to the nightlife to meet her basic needs, a path that led to early pregnancy. She would often get the comment (***umanye kila tuuya umunthi***) from the people who were supposed to protect and provide for her. With this, it was an obligation for her as she didn't get a chance to get provisions and protection as a child. Now a mother, she faced new struggles, unaware of the availability of sexual reproductive health services, she felt lost, burdened by self-hate and a sense of unworthiness. Her story echoed the silent struggles of many in the room, young mothers grappling with stigma, lack of information and a lack of guidance.

During the session, we explored the barriers to accessing reproductive health services, addressing myths and awareness gaps within the community while examining the realities of these services at local facilities. This opened a safe space for participants to share ideas on improving service delivery for all users and also room for learning, as the idea that these services should fit their lives and not be out of being coerced, and that pleasure is a fundamental right, not a privilege, thus shifting their perspectives altogether.



We highlighted how self-love can empower young mothers to confidently seek pleasure-positive sexual reproductive health care, learning and understanding the different services in the facility and how each affects individuals differently and also the right that they have to access these services, which would help them navigate their roles as mothers with informed choices impacting both personal and family growth.

The room's energy changed as the young mothers began to see them differently. Their eyes, once clouded with doubt, brightened as they learned about the health services available at local facilities that they didn't know existed. The group explored how these services, coupled with emotional resilience and communication skills, could improve their well-being and family dynamics. They were no longer just surviving but were learning to thrive.

By the session's end, a wave of empowerment swept through the group. The group that once was weighed down by shame and uncertainty shared their commitment to seeking out health services and practising self-love and supporting one another as they learned on their new journey. They left the session not just as mothers, but as advocates for their own health and happiness, ready to break cycles of misinformation and build nurturing homes for their children.

This engagement marked a turning point as these young mothers discovered their worth, their rights, and the strength to shape a brighter future for themselves and their families.



**“For a long time, people spoke about me instead of with me. Now I tell my own story, and I’m teaching my child that our voices deserve space.”**

*Young Mother*

# BRIDGING GENERATIONS, BUILDING UNDERSTANDING

*By Wycliffe Mutisya*

In Makueni, a bold intergenerational dialogue turned a once-forbidden topic into an honest conversation that moved men from quiet observers to outspoken champions of sexual rights.

The first time I stood before a crowd to facilitate an intergenerational dialogue on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), I carried both excitement and caution. Our CSE training had challenged me to see sexuality not as a taboo, but as an essential part of well-being—something to be discussed with openness and respect. Supported by the SRHR Alliance, we gathered grandparents, parents, youth, people with disabilities, and community leaders under one roof.

When I walked into the Kilimani Breeze conference room, I carried more than a notebook; I carried the lessons of our recent CSE training and a quiet hope that generations could truly listen to one another. Older men sat beside younger ones, each holding stories shaped by different times but tied together by the same unspoken questions. I heard the shuffle of chairs and the low hum of greetings as I arranged my notes. My heart raced, but beneath the nervousness was a deep sense of purpose. This was the moment to bring our training to life.

From the outset, I introduced key Pleasure Principles. We spoke of sexuality as a natural part of life, of pleasure as a source of health and connection, and of the rights every person holds to safety, consent, and dignity. Slowly, voices that had long been silent began to rise. Elders shared wisdom shaped by years of tradition; teenagers voiced questions they had never dared to ask. We discovered common ground in our shared desire for safe, fulfilling relationships, and the room shifted from polite listening to genuine exchange.

Yet one insight lingered after our debrief as CSE facilitators: many men still hesitated to speak. They listened but rarely revealed their own fears or misconceptions. We realized that while an inclusive space was crucial, men also needed a forum of their own to unpack the weight of masculinity and sexual expectations.

That realization birthed the next step: a male-only intergenerational dialogue. Fathers, sons, uncles, and grandfathers gathered in a room free of outside judgment.

Guided again by Rights First and reinforced by the principle of Inclusive & Equitable, recognizing that men too need safe, affirming spaces, we invited honest reflection. At first, the silence felt heavy. Then a young father spoke:

“I grew up believing men should not talk about sex. But if we stay silent, how will our sons learn?”

His courage broke the dam. Older men confessed to harmful norms they had once enforced. Younger men questioned myths about power, pleasure, and consent. Together, we confronted the pressures of masculinity and began to imagine a healthier, more respectful way forward.

As the dialogue closed, a teenage boy approached me quietly and said,

“Today I learned men can talk and still be respected. I can be different.”

Those words captured the transformation we sought. The inclusive dialogue planted the seed of mutual understanding; the men’s dialogue gave it room to grow. Both drew directly on our CSE training and the Pleasure Principles, proving that when rights guide the conversation and pleasure is spoken of openly, silence gives way to learning, and learning sparks lasting change.





*“CSE teaches young people how to understand their bodies, set boundaries, and ask questions safely. That is protection.”*

# Where Boldness Replaced Shame

By Valerie Kulola



Time has always been a tricky companion in my life. I am either embarrassingly early or fashionably late, rarely landing in the sweet spot of “just on time.” On this particular day, however, I surprised myself — I arrived early for my first commitment, a youth discussion on peace in the country. I stood there, the early bird, waiting for the rest of the flock. The program began late, as often happens, and by the time it wrapped up, lunch was served. The conversations around the lunch table pulled me in — stories of politics, questions of what next after maandamano, the state of the country, even lighthearted chatter about a possible male contraceptive pill. It was lively and engaging, but by the time I left, I was even later for my second engagement of the day: a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) session with learners in Njoro, Nakuru.

When I finally arrived, I slipped in to find the students already gathered. To my surprise, they screamed with excitement when they saw me. The yawns of boredom that had clouded their faces moments earlier melted into wide smiles. The teacher present looked visibly relieved — and I soon understood why. He had once confessed to me that he found it difficult to address topics such as menstruation and pads with the students because of deep-rooted societal norms. True to his words, he had cleverly steered their attention back to academic matters, waiting for my arrival to handle the delicate conversation. And as soon as I walked in, the atmosphere transformed. His shoulders loosened, and he quietly slipped out, leaving the floor to me.

I greeted the class — bright, curious faces from grades 6, 7, and 9 — and asked what they remembered from our previous session. Hands shot up eagerly. “Hygiene!” one said. “The importance of grooming,” added another. “Self-confidence,” a third chimed in. Finally, someone whispered almost shyly: “Adolescence.” I couldn’t help but smile. These were not just students — they were attentive friends, eager to learn and unafraid to remember. Their curiosity gave me energy as I began to speak about pads: how to wear them, when to change them, and how to dispose of them responsibly. Giggles fluttered around the room, but beneath the laughter was genuine attentiveness. Then, a boy raised his hand. His voice carried both innocence and frustration: “It doesn’t feel fair. Visitors always bring gifts for girls, but they forget us boys.”

His words stopped me for a moment. How could I explain this delicate imbalance? I responded gently: “What you see as gifts are actually necessities. But because of how society is structured, they appear as privileges. In truth, both boys and girls deserve equal support.”

His honesty lingered with me long after that moment. It made me wonder: what would a fair world truly look like? A world where menstruation was not taboo, where boys and girls both felt equally seen, supported, and valued. A world where gender did not dictate who received help, respect, or dignity. But even in that moment of questioning, I found hope. Hope in the courage of today’s youth to raise such concerns. Hope in their willingness to listen, to debate, to embrace conversations that once belonged to whispers and shadows. Hope in their ability to show up and give time to discussions about sexual health and wellbeing.

I thought of Professor Wangari Maathai’s words: “This land does not belong to us. We have borrowed it from our children.” And I realized — these children are not just inheritors of the future, they are its architects. So, step by step, I am walking with them — turning dreams of open, honest sexual health conversations into reality. I may not always keep time perfectly, but I know I am right on time for the change that matters most.

# When She Asked The Question.

*By Berta Kihenjo*

Have you ever been so excited for something that you toss and turn the whole night, and when morning comes, you are sleepy but still looking forward to the day? That was me this particular morning.

When I woke up, I went through everything in my head that I had planned for the day. My notes, the gift bags and activities for the session. I reminded myself that every workshop is different as I packed everything I needed for the day. My time as a facilitator has taught me that every group of girls brings a unique blend of silence, laughter, curiosity, and stories. No matter how much I prepared, I could never predict what would happen.

It was a hot day. A warm, welcoming, bright yellow that felt full of possibilities. When I arrived at the school, the sound of younger girls playing in the field, the light steps of others moving from class to class filled my ears. The room was well organised for my arrival.

That day, I was facilitating a session on body image and reproductive health. The girls were already seated and ready to listen to the not-so-new face. I had previously spent an hour with the same group to build rapport for future sessions. Still, I carried a bit of scepticism about how the day would go, though I promised myself to bring my A-game.

When I looked up after setting my things down, I saw something that gave me hope: Smiles. Smiles I had not seen before. I started with a simple hello, and the excitement in their voice reassured me. As always, I like beginning with a game.



We played 'the wind blows for ...' so everyone could learn something small about each other. The room was filled with laughter, screams, and chatter as the "wind blew" for anyone who loved cats, Sauti Sol, Nicki Minaj, drawing, Kiswahili, or God.

Then I began with what I thought was a simple question: "What do you love about yourself?" The room fell silent after so much excitement moments ago. I waited, giving them time. A minute passed. Then I shared something I loved about myself, hoping they would feel encouraged to join in. I could hear whispers, and only a few said something. That silence taught me self-love is not always easy, especially for young girls navigating pressure and insecurities. To encourage self-esteem, I told them to think beyond appearance and write down positive attributes on a small piece of paper to read to themselves every day. I emphasized the principle of loving yourself and planting a seed I hoped would grow.

As we moved to reproductive health, the energy shifted. Before I could say much on the topic, a paper was passed from the back of the room. It asked if drinking lots of tea and ginger can kill a foetus. Before I could read it aloud, a girl who could not be older than 15 raised her hand nervously and asked, "Madam, is it true that you can get pregnant even if your boyfriend withdraws?"

My face lit up as I listened to the question. I let out a breath I did not know I was holding as I answered her. The room was then filled with giggles and whispers with the girls discussing among themselves. I could feel the weight of unspoken fears and myths creeping in. I took a deep breath and answered gently but firmly, "Yes withdrawal is not a safe method of preventing pregnancy. There may be sperm that result in pregnancy even prior to ejaculation. The only way to be sure is to use reliable contraception or to abstain until you are ready."

Something shifted after that moment. Her courage had opened a door for others to ask questions. One by one, more hands went up. Questions poured in about abortion, periods, pregnancy, and beauty standards. Together, we began unraveling myths and misconceptions. They leaned forward to listen, sighed in relief at others, and laughed at the most bizarre.

## Is it true that you can get pregnant even if your boyfriend withdraws?"

That day, the room transformed from one of uncertainty to one of empowerment.

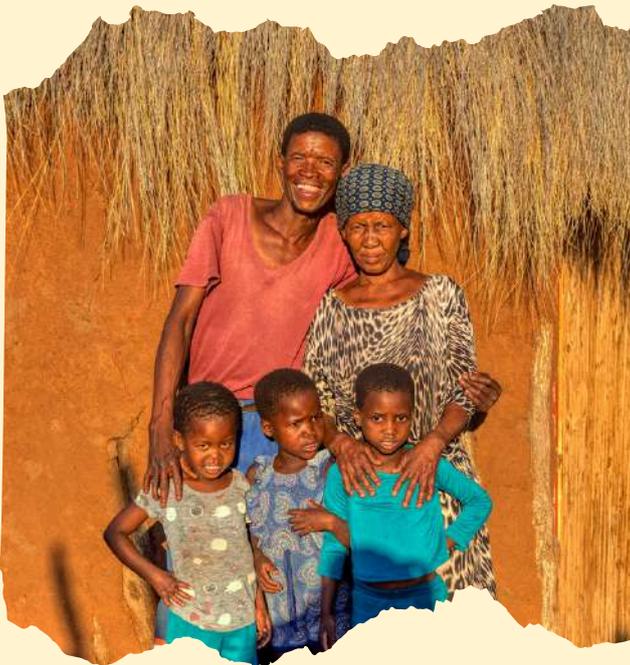
I could not help but smile as I went home that day. Tired but fulfilled. I realized that change can sometimes come from small rooms, in the voice of a timid fifteen-year-old girl daring to ask a question and in the bravery of a group of girls who are willing to listen, change their beliefs, and rewrite their futures. I also realized that even small questions can ripple outwards encouraging others. Change goes beyond us, facilitators, big campaigns, movements or policies.

This is my story of change. A reminder that courage and truth can transform a room, spark conversation and perhaps, in time, a generation.



# THE MAP AND THE BROKEN COMPASS, THROUGH A PARENT'S EYES

BY OLIVER CHARO



The skies were cloudy, giving off a hazy hue and indication for either a dull day or just maybe an optimistic one. The air felt musky, and heavy, with faint a smell of sewage spill, a common feature during rainfalls in this parts. Suddenly am jolted back to the present when the tuktuk am in hits a pothole.

The driver apologizes profusely; however, one passenger who seems to be having a bad day, hurls insults at him. In the midst of the exchange, an old lady asks the agitated passenger if he thinks his foul language sets a good example to the kids in the tuktuk. The passenger goes silent, and that marks the end of it. However, to me this is not an exchange but real time experience of how information is passed, how sex negative nuances are used to silence, model behaviour and the hierarchies involved. My line of work involves engaging the community on CSE in a county that is largely conservative, and which largely has myths and misconceptions on issues of sexuality education. This experience in the tuktuk just confirmed how we confine conversations around sexuality issues to morality and behaviour. The question that lingered was, what if the kids in the tuktuk wanted clarification on some of the words they had heard, who was going to engage with them openly and honestly?

On this Wednesday, I was going to speak to parents and their adolescents on CSE at a place called Rhonda, in Nakuru West. On arrival, parents were huddled in small groups, with the adolescents engaging at a distance, away from their parents, with some choosing just to stick by themselves. Upon noticing my arrival, everybody shuffles into the room and sits in the designated area. I walk in, the hall is expansive, and the group is seated in the middle. I could feel the expectations in the room, the silent murmuring that pointed to the audience trying to figure me out. There are older parents in the room, and I knew that I would navigate issues of resistance.





The session began by looking at sexuality and sexual behaviour by exploring personal experiences that shape our attitudes and values. We looked at fear, culture, experiences, education and peers and friends. The discussion also looked at complementing key concepts that relationships, values and culture, skills for health and well-being, violence and safety. Key to these discussions was coercion, consent, safety and sex positive messaging. The discussions were animated, full of fun and laughter, but there were key moments of reflection. One thing that stood out was an elderly man, who kept to himself, seemed in deep thought.

After the meeting, I engaged eager parents and adolescents who needed clarifications on personal questions, but something about the elderly man, I really wanted to have a conversation with him. As if n cue, he stood and approached me, “Kijana wangu, naweza kuongea na wewe”, he began. I nodded in acceptance, “lakini kando kidogo” he added, nodding in the direction that he preferred to have the conversation. He moved to the spot and waited. I concluded with the parent I was speaking to and proceeded to join him.

I requested that we sit down, to which he agreed. He began, “ My name is Elias, I am a father to two children a boy and a girl who are both adolescents, but their passed on a few years back”. “ sorry for your loss” I muttered, “ Thank you” he said and then proceeded “I have no idea how to approach this conversation”. he paused, “ Just speak your mind” I probed, he sighed then continued “Last week I found the girl kissing a boy near the gate, I got angry and punished her, I really want to talk to her but I do not know how to. On the boy, am noticing strange behaviour, he behaves like a girl, I do not want to imagine the worst” I breathed in and asked what his fear was. He said that he is afraid that his daughter is sexually active and doesn’t know how to protect her, and is worried about the boy (his words) “naogopa anapenda wanaume”. “ How does that make you feel?” I asked. He said he felt conflicted and at a loss. He acknowledged that the session provided great insights and practical approaches for such conversations, but he needed more information and support.

I began by exploring what he thought he wanted to share as information. He indicated that he needed them to understand that he desired to have his daughter safe, and indicated that he was not sure about the boy. I prodded further on his views on sexual orientation. He said he only recognized relationships between a boy and a girl or a man and a woman; this was new territory for him.

We discussed his fears, sexual identity, autonomy, safety, and well-being, agreeing on the importance of creating a safe space for his children. As he relaxed and opened up, I reflected on the uncertainty parents face and the value of such conversations—reminders that every encounter can be a teachable moment.



# LEARNING WITH SHARON

Since I came to Ronda, I have been privileged to have undergone several seminars, sessions and trainings. Most of the sessions especially on relationships focus on chastity, abstinence, disease prevention, and the risks associated with sex, like childhood pregnancies, HIV and Aids and other sexually transmitted infections. . The main channels have been Churches, schools and peer to peer learning where the youth are trained. In Ronda, there are many teenage mothers, I am one of the young women who started a family early, at 20 years I have 2 sons. As young people, we have always been taken through talks, where we were always given sanitary pads. It was always monotonous until when I recently attended a session at the Rhonda GBV and youth friendly center where we discussed pleasure based sexuality education. Very many interesting things were discussed and through it I learnt a lot.

You see, being 20, a girl with disability is not easy. When I had my first child, I started living with the father of my son. I was 17 years at the time, I had my second child at 19. I am a stay at home mother and so I depend on my husband for everything. Following the trainings I realized that I did not know much about my rights and I did not have accurate information on my sexuality. Most of the information I had, was learnt from my peers and my husband. He once told me, “Uko na bahati nimekuoa, wewe na hii mguu yako nani atakuoa tukiachana?” This statement lowered my self-esteem and most of the time when he asked for sex, I had to let him have because I feared he will get it from another person, or he will abandon me. The session helped me to get helpful information surrounding my sexuality. Through the sessions many youth were educated on pleasure based sexual education where topics like pleasure, consent, and healthy relationships. We also had sessions on Contraceptives, mental health, nutrition and Gender based violence where we were able to clearly discuss consent and rights of every young person.

I always felt that I must let my partner relate with me sexually out of fear. I was in a relationship that led to sexual encounters simply because I am depending on my baby daddy. I was not working so I felt trapped as my aunt who had brought me to Nakuru wanted nothing to do with me. We learnt about family planning and contraception. I also came to know about my bodily autonomy, “Mwili yangu ni yangu na hakuna mtu anaweza amua kile atafanya nayo, ni mimi kuamua”, consent, communication, emotional wellbeing, and pleasure as part of healthy sexuality. The facilitators used open discussions, storytelling, conversations to create safe space and they were non-judgmental.

This gave me the confidence to be able to take a family planning method that will keep me safe from having another child because I am not ready to have another baby. However, I did not share this information with my partner because I do not know how he will respond. When I shared about us engaging in sex when we are both in the mood and can enjoy, he told me, “Hii Maneno umetoa wapi, umeanza kuwa mjuaji” he has not been very receptive to the idea of my pleasure when engaging, being a PWD, there are some positions am not able to manage and when I tell him, “Hataki Kusikia” I have been thinking of leaving because I feel like he does not understand me, sometimes engaging with him my leg is painful and also he demands to engage even when am not ready, now I know that I should consent or else it is not happen.

I am more aware on pleasure, consent, respect, and it has enabled me to make safer, more informed, and joyful choices. I am less afraid as I have embraced pleasure-positive education, I feel safer because the risk of another baby is not there, I hope to be happier, and more confident especially if I will get out of this space where my self-esteem is being destroyed.



# Reflections

*When young people are trusted with honest, age-appropriate information, they don't become reckless—they become informed, confident, and safer.”*



Conversations about Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Kenya are often framed around fear, risk, and control. Sex is discussed as danger. Young people are warned, rarely listened to. Pleasure, agency, curiosity, and context are pushed to the margins—if they appear at all.

The stories in this Elewa collection invite us to imagine something different.

They reflect a growing shift toward sex-positive CSE—an approach that moves beyond the “triple threat” narrative of sex as only risk, shame, or punishment. Instead, these stories show what becomes possible when sexuality education is grounded in dignity, accurate information, and the lived realities of young people.

Across communities, we see how misconceptions around CSE continue to limit access to truthful, age-appropriate information. Many young people aged 10–24—and sometimes even older adults—have grown up without safe spaces to ask questions about their bodies, relationships, consent, or reproductive health. In the absence of these spaces, misinformation fills the gap, often through peers, social media, or silence.

What stands out in these stories is the power of questions. When young people—especially teenagers—are given room to ask what they are genuinely curious about, learning becomes relevant and transformative. CSE is most impactful when it follows different learning curves, responds to developmental stages, and centres the real questions young people are already carrying.

These stories also highlight the importance of intergenerational dialogue. In sessions where parents and caregivers participate alongside young people, long-held beliefs are challenged, unlearned, and reshaped. Many adults reflect on how what they were taught—or not taught—about sex and reproductive health has influenced how they show up today. These shared conversations are quietly reshaping norms, trust, and understanding across generations.

Importantly, Elewa Stories remind us that access to CSE is not equal. Out-of-school young people and marginalized groups are often the most excluded from structured learning spaces, yet they face the highest risks. Community-led, inclusive, and flexible CSE approaches are essential to reaching those who are most left out.

We hope these stories help readers see the real impact of sex-positive, age-appropriate CSE—not as an abstract concept, but as lived change. Change in confidence. Change in communication. Change in how communities talk, listen, and learn together.

If these stories resonate with you, we invite you to join the SRHR Alliance—to support community-based and out-of-school CSE sessions, challenge misinformation, and help expand safe spaces where young people can ask questions and get truthful answers.

Because when education is rooted in respect and curiosity, it doesn't just inform—it empowers.



# ABOUT ELEWA STORIES

Elewa is a transformative initiative strengthening sex-positive, pleasure-based Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Kenya. Through stories of change from facilitators and SRHR actors, Elewa highlights shifts from fear and stigma toward agency, joy, and informed choice—showcasing how empowered educators are reshaping how sexuality is taught, understood, and lived.

## TALK TO US

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