



2025 NEWSLETTER



Building Hope,
Building
Resilience



SRHR ALLIANCE

The Sexual and Reproductive Health and rights Alliance is a coalition of 19 civil society organizations that work towards Sexual and reproductive health for all.

Our Partners

1. Africa Alive
2. Africa Gender and Media Initiative (GEM Trust)
3. ACK Development Services Nyanza Region Limited. (ADS-Nyanza)
4. African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF)
5. Ambassadors for Youth and Adolescents Reproductive Health Programme (AYARHEP)
6. Centre for The Study of Adolescents
7. Childline Kenya
8. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
9. Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK)
10. Kisumu Medical and Education Trust (KMET)
11. Nairobites Trust
12. Network for Adolescent and Youth of Africa (NAYA)
13. Plan International
14. Support Activities in Poverty Eradication and Health (SAIPEH)
15. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO East Africa)
16. Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK)
17. Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (TICH)
18. National Empowerment Network of People living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya (NEPHAK)



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A NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Building Hope, Building Resilience

2025 has been a defining year for the SRHR Alliance, one of courage, creativity, and collective momentum.

Together, we have amplified the voices of young people, deepened partnerships across sectors, and continued to champion rights-based, inclusive, and pleasure-positive approaches to sexual and reproductive health.

From intergenerational dialogues to county-level advocacy, from the Say Yes to Youth interregional intervention at the UPR Extravaganza to the Kaleidoscope programme on improving maternal health, we have witnessed communities taking ownership of change. Each story in this newsletter of young advocates, bold educators, and grassroots leaders reminds us that progress is not abstract; it is lived, local, and deeply human.

We also recognize that our work unfolds in a complex environment, one marked by funding uncertainty, conservative pushback, and the persistent need for accountability in policy implementation. Yet, in the face of these challenges, our resolve remains unshaken.

As we look to 2026 and beyond, we remain guided by one truth: that SRHR is not only a health priority but also a justice imperative.

Our gratitude goes to all partners, funders, and allies who continue to believe in our mission and invest in our vision of a Kenya and an Africa where everyone can live, love, and thrive in dignity.

Leading with heart and purpose.



JUDY AMINA

BOARD CHAIR



PROF. CHARLES O. WAFULA

2025 has reaffirmed the strength of collective leadership. Under the guidance of the Board, and through the unwavering commitment of our partners, the SRHR Alliance has continued to grow as a trusted national convener and an agent of accountability in Kenya's SRHR landscape.

This year, we have witnessed significant policy dialogues, strengthened collaboration with county governments, and bold innovations from our youth-led and community-based partners. Initiatives like Mikeka Mifupi and Red Card kwa Grao have reminded us that social transformation begins at home in the conversations we nurture, the systems we challenge, and the norms we reimagine.

We are also proud of our progress in embedding governance excellence across the Alliance, from improved financial management and monitoring systems to our expanding network of credible partners. These milestones signal that our growth is not only programmatic, but institutional and sustainable.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to stewarding this vision with integrity, transparency, and foresight.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to thank our funders, partners, and the Secretariat team for their continued trust and partnership.



BREAKING THE SILENCE: CONFRONTING GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF COURAGE

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations, cutting across age, gender, and social boundaries. It is not only a personal tragedy for survivors but also a systemic issue that reflects and reinforces inequality in our communities. Addressing GBV requires more than awareness; it demands collective responsibility, survivor-centered support systems, and the dismantling of harmful social norms that enable violence to persist.

We must create spaces where survivors are believed, justice is accessible, and prevention is prioritized at every level, from households to institutions. Ending GBV is not a women's issue alone; it is a shared responsibility that calls each of us to act with courage, compassion, and unwavering commitment to equality and dignity for all.

BRIDGING GENERATIONS



In May 2025, the SRHR Alliance convened intergenerational dialogues in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Makueni, engaging over 70 participants across five generations. The sessions brought together community leaders, educators, youth, parents, health workers, and marginalized groups to unpack myths, share experiences, and reimagine Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Kenya.

Through storytelling, participants explored how culture, religion, and social norms shape perceptions of sexuality and pleasure. From the violent initiation practices shared in Nakuru to intersex identity experiences in Nairobi and reflections on cultural taboos in Makueni, the sessions revealed both deep-rooted barriers and signs of change.

Storytelling emerged as a powerful connector, bridging generations, inspiring empathy, and driving advocacy for sex-positive, inclusive, and rights-based CSE. The dialogues strengthened county SRHR accountability frameworks, built CSE champions, and encouraged greater youth inclusion in county advocacy and accountability dialogues. Looking ahead to 2026, the Alliance will expand the dialogues to more counties, deepen partnerships with county health departments, and document community-led CSE innovations to inform national advocacy and shape a future where sexuality education is comprehensive, pleasure-affirming, and rooted in dignity for all.

WHAT'S NEW?

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

#UsipoSkiaUmebant: The Youth Are Speaking, Loud and Clear Vijana wako ground

Under the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) platform, youth advocates from the Youth Empowerment Board (YEB) are leading the #UsipoSkiaUmebant campaign, a bold call to parents, teachers, religious leaders, and government: listen now, or get left behind. Vijana wako ground, facing the realities of teen pregnancies, HIV, and GBV daily.

We're done with silence. Through this campaign, youth voices are shaping county SRHR accountability frameworks and pushing for greater inclusion in policy and budget dialogues. We demand Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as a life skill that equips young people with knowledge on consent, relationships, and sexual health, because denying CSE is denying us a better future.

We also call for non-judgmental access to SRHR services, including contraceptives, STI care, and open, stigma-free conversations about pleasure. This youth-led movement is not just raising voices; it's shifting systems, strengthening accountability, and building a future where every young person is heard. #UsipoSkiaUmebant isn't just a slogan, it's a warning. The time to listen is now.



Celebrating Champions of Change

The Kenya SRHR Alliance marked a defining milestone through the Champions Gala Symposium, celebrating the close of the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) program. The event convened partners, government, faith leaders, media, and youth advocates to honor exceptional champions advancing SRHR in Kenya and beyond. Through shared reflections and recognition, the Gala highlighted five years of impact, reaching over 86 million people with SRHR information, strengthening accountability frameworks, and deepening youth inclusion in policy and budget dialogues.

This celebration not only showcased progress but also reinforced how collective action drives policy shifts, capacity strengthening, and community transformation. The evening renewed commitment to collaboration, sustainability, and the next chapter of youth-led advocacy. Anchored in unity and purpose, the Champions Gala reaffirmed the Alliance's one voice, bold, people-centered, and grounded in our mission to achieve SRHR for all through evidence, partnership, and forward-looking action.





**WHAT
WE'VE
BEEN UP
TO**

Pleasure as Empowerment

This year, the Kenya SRHR Alliance deepened its commitment to pleasure-based, sex-positive approaches in SRHR. Through our webinar “The Art and Boundaries of Sensual Communication (Talk Sexy)”, we explored Africa’s rich cultural history of sensual expression, from Swahili poetry to West African storytelling, while addressing the modern realities of social media, consent, and stigma.

By linking these insights to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), the Alliance highlighted how pleasure conversations, once silenced, can now be a tool for empowerment, respect, and well-being. Grounded in the 7 Pleasure Principles, our work continues to normalize discussions around sexuality, ensuring that people can love themselves, talk openly, and engage in relationships that prioritize mutual respect, rights, and joy.



Pleasure is African



At the Alliance, we are reclaiming pleasure as African, grounding sexual and reproductive health in pride, body autonomy, and cultural affirmation. Through our African Pleasure initiative, we celebrate local languages, art, and lived realities that honor pleasure as a right, not a taboo. By doing African Pleasure, we remind ourselves and our communities that to be whole, healthy, and liberated, we must embrace pleasure, not as imported, but as authentically ours, rooted in Ubuntu, respect, freedom, and the fullness of African identity.

Pleasure is deeply rooted in African heritage, woven through our songs, dances, poetry, and storytelling. From Swahili love poems to Yoruba oriki and Congolese rumba, African cultures have always celebrated sensuality, connection, and joy as vital parts of human experience. Yet, colonialism and conservative norms silenced these expressions, replacing openness with shame and stigma.





From Local Voices to Global Platforms: Say Yes to Youth at the UPR Extravaganza

This year, under the AU–EU Action Lab, the Kenya SRHR Alliance and CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality continued to champion youth voices through the Say Yes to Youth project an initiative that amplifies young people’s leadership in regional and global advocacy spaces.

One of the highlights in 2025 was the UPR Extravaganza, a creative and youth-led engagement on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In this United Nations process, countries’ human rights records are examined, and recommendations are made to improve them.

UPR is critical because it provides a powerful platform to hold governments accountable, influence national priorities, and ensure young people’s rights remain on the agenda.

As we look ahead, we’re excited to host more dynamic sessions, build momentum, and bring more young advocates into the movement. Join us and say yes to youth power by connecting with us through our social media platforms.



Voices Rising: Grassroots Movements Leading Change



This year, the Kenya SRHR Alliance strengthened collaboration with community-based organizations (CBOs) through the Haki Yetu, Wajibu Wetu project under Amplify Change, advancing advocacy for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across communities. Guided by the program’s mission to empower civil society to challenge stigma, transform norms, and influence policy, we worked closely with grassroots partners to amplify youth and women’s voices at the community and county levels.

Through targeted capacity-building and mentorship, CBOs are now better equipped to drive evidence-based advocacy, strengthen county SRHR accountability frameworks, and lead dialogues on GBV, contraception, and CSE. These actions are moving systems, enhancing capacity, deepening community ownership, and influencing policy commitments at the county level.

Together with Amplify Change and our network of CBOs, the Alliance continues to advance a unified, people-centered movement for SRHR justice, one that connects local action to national impact. As we look ahead to 2026, our focus remains on expanding grassroots leadership, scaling evidence-based advocacy, and sustaining gains for inclusive and equitable SRHR for all.



MIKEKA MIFUPI

Change Begins at Home



Through the Mikeka Mifupi initiative, the Kenya SRHR Alliance brought the Red Card kwa Grao campaign closer to the community, right into their living spaces. Designed as intimate household dialogues, Mikeka Mifupi created safe and familiar spaces where residents of the Airbase community could reflect on issues of gender justice, accountability, and safety. The sessions reached individuals who rarely attend public forums yet hold powerful perspectives on the topic of change.

Through these conversations, the Alliance strengthened grassroots accountability mechanisms, enhanced mentorship capacity, and deepened youth and community inclusion in dialogue on GBV prevention and SRHR advocacy. To date, over 50 households have been engaged, with mentors trained and grouped by target areas within Kamukunji Sublocation to ensure continuity and follow-up. This people-centered approach is transforming community conversations into policy-relevant insights, linking local action to county-level advocacy and stronger SRHR accountability frameworks.

As we look ahead to 2026, Mikeka Mifupi will expand its reach to new neighborhoods, anchoring community-led advocacy within county GBV and SRHR plans. The initiative reaffirms that real transformation begins on our mats, in our homes, and within our communities, where voices rise, systems shift, and lasting change takes root.



Kaleidoscope- scaling up sustainable solutions for women's and girls' health in Kenya

Kaleidoscope is a bold and transformative programme working to reduce maternal deaths and safeguard the reproductive health and rights of women and adolescent girls in Kenya. Guided by the vision of zero maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion and contributing to the reduction of Kenya's maternal mortality ratio from 362 to 300 per 100,000 live births, Kaleidoscope places young people and women at the center of its mission.

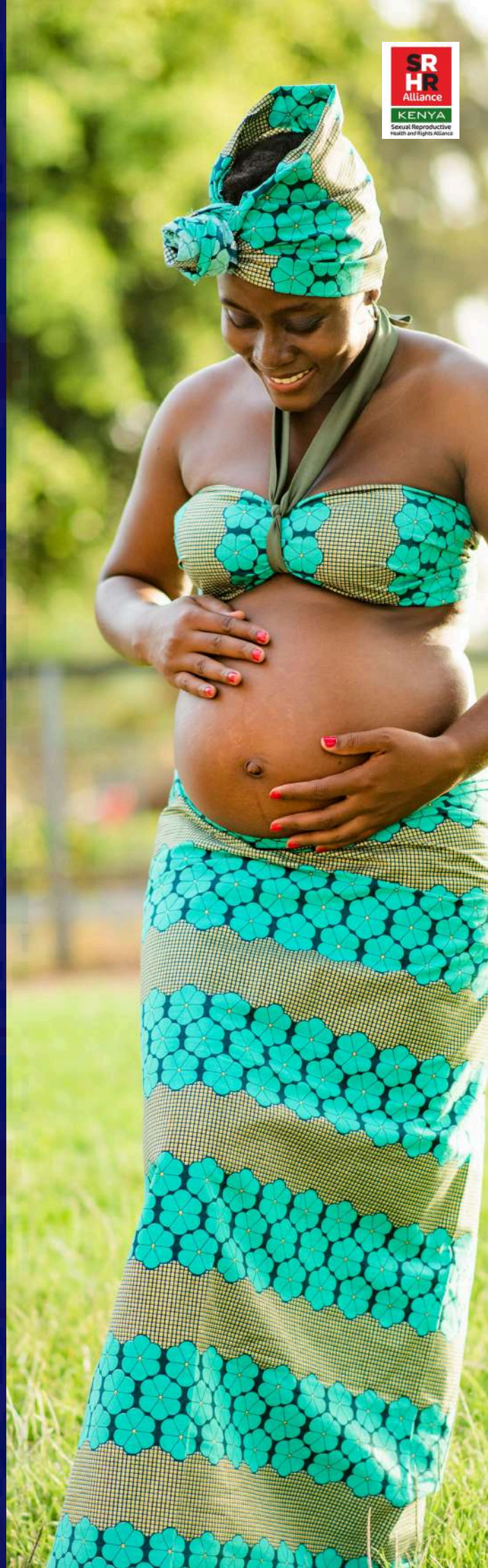
At its core, the programme ensures that adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) can access affordable, acceptable, and quality reproductive health information and services in target counties. It also focuses on harmonizing policy frameworks and strengthening health systems so that comprehensive reproductive health services, including comprehensive abortion care, post-abortion care, and youth-friendly services, are accessible at all levels.

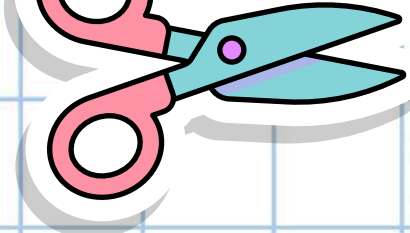
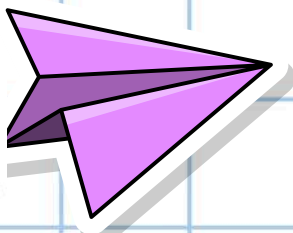
Kaleidoscope is led by the Ministry of Health through the Department of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (DRMNCAH) Division, in close collaboration with county health and technical teams. This leadership ensures national ownership, alignment with existing health priorities, and long-term scale-up for sustainability, embedding the programme's impact into existing structures.

The programme operates through three key strategies: policy review and advocacy to align laws and frameworks with SRHR needs; communication and narrative change to counter misinformation and elevate youth voices; and research and data for action to inform evidence-based advocacy and strengthen accountability.

Currently, Kaleidoscope is being implemented in Kwale and Samburu Counties, where it works in collaboration with partners including ADS Nyanza, KMET, RHNK, TICAH, and the Zamara Foundation. These collaborations bring together national leadership, local action, and youth engagement to build sustainable, inclusive, and responsive health systems.

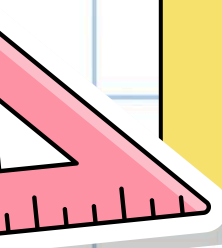
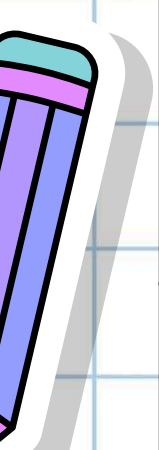
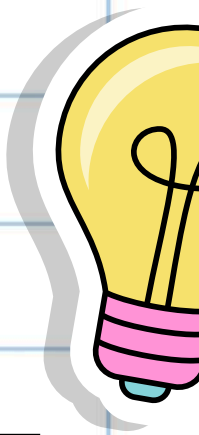
Through Kaleidoscope, we envision reduced maternal mortality, stronger policies, improved service delivery, and communities that support women's and girls' rights. By scaling up through government leadership and strategic partnerships, Kaleidoscope is laying the groundwork for lasting change, one county and community at a time.





SRHR Advocate

BINGO



Spoke on radio/TV about SRHR	Mobilized peers for an action	Created SRHR content (art, video, blog, etc.)
Mobilized peers for an action	Participated in a budget advocacy process	Knows 3 contraceptive methods
Promotes pleasure-positive messaging	Has challenged a harmful gender norm	Engaged parents or religious leaders
visited a Youth Friendly Center	Developed or contributed to a campaign	Practiced mindfulness

Our Advocacy Efforts



Staying on the Course

This year, we remained on the radar amid the shifting dynamics in the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) space. Building on the advocacy landscape developed last year, we have continued to use it to guide our engagements, measure levels of participation, and assess impact, especially among grassroots organizations that have localized and implemented it within their communities. Through these efforts, we are strengthening collective action and ensuring that advocacy remains grounded in real experiences and needs.

Changes in global funding cycles, particularly those influenced by shifts in U.S. and other government funding, have reshaped how SRHR advocacy is approached. These changes have underscored the need to advocate more strongly for domestic financing of SRHR. Across our networks, we have continued to engage governments and key stakeholders to ensure SRHR remains a priority in national and county budgets and is not overshadowed by other social or health agendas.

Our advocacy remains anchored in Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA), Gender-Transformative Approaches (GTA), and Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation (MIYP). These principles guide our collective actions, ensuring that we push for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable progress. This year also marked notable legal and policy milestones, including court rulings such as the recent Reproductive Health Policy decision, which has set an important jurisprudential precedent affirming reproductive rights as a constitutional and human right, especially on access to safe abortion.

Charting the Path Ahead

As we move forward, we remain optimistic. We look towards a 2026 where progressive legal frameworks are not only passed but implemented, creating an enabling environment for every adolescent and young person to fully attain their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our commitment remains steadfast: to keep SRHR advocacy visible, relevant, and impactful for all.

In a time of shrinking resources and competing priorities, we call on all SRHR partners, civil society organizations, donors, governments, and key stakeholders to sustain investment and collaboration in SRHR advocacy. Together, we can safeguard the gains made, close the remaining gaps, and ensure that the rights, health, and dignity of every person remain at the center of development.



ADVANCING SRHR IN KENYA

SRHR Progress and Priorities 2025



The year 2025 has been pivotal for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Kenya, marked by bold youth-led innovations, landmark conferences, and strong advocacy from civil society.

Youth at the Center.

In June, Mombasa hosted the 8th Pan-African Scientific Conference on Adolescent and Youth SRHR, convened by RHNK and the Ministry of Health. Themed “Adolescent and Youth SRHR in a World of Emerging Threats and Opportunities,” the conference spotlighted:

- Youth leadership through initiatives like the youth-led Chini ya Mnazi broadcast.
- Integrated care lessons from PS Kenya’s Accelerate Program, which combines SRHR and GBV services in underserved counties.
- Collaboration between youth and seasoned advocates to sustain impact.
- Enhancing political engagement to advance SRHR in policy and resource allocation.

Looking Ahead

The SRHR community now looks to 2026 to build on Kenya’s UPR outcomes, turning commitments into concrete progress through accountability, implementation, and sustained SRHR action for all.



Advocacy and Accountability

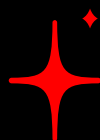
Civil society organizations remained vocal in 2025, pushing the government to honor SRHR commitments:

- UPR Review: Following Kenya’s 4th UPR in Geneva, CSOs pressed for implementation of accepted recommendations and continued to lobby for those only “noted,” including CSE and abortion law reform.
- Legal challenges: Petitions were filed against restrictive policies like mandatory parental consent for adolescents seeking SRHR services.



Bodies aren't inherently sexual

Bodies are not inherently sexual. How we perceive them is shaped by culture, context, and intention, not by the body itself.



Breastfeeding, medical illustrations, or someone simply existing in their body should not be automatically sexualized. When we separate bodies from sexual content, we create space for honest conversations about health, identity, art, and self-expression without shame or censorship. Recognizing this distinction is essential for body positivity and comprehensive sexuality education.



A LUMP I COULDN'T IGNORE: MY JOURNEY AS A YOUNG MAN WITH BREAST CANCER



I was 27 when I felt the small, hard lump just beneath my left nipple. At first, I brushed it off. Men don't get breast cancer, or at least, that's what I had always believed. I thought maybe I'd hit myself while working out, or it was just a swollen gland. Weeks passed, but the lump didn't go away. In fact, it became more tender, and I started noticing some discharge from the nipple. That's when fear began to creep in.

I remember the exact morning I finally decided to go to the hospital. It was a Tuesday. I stood in front of the mirror after my shower, staring at my chest. The area around the lump looked slightly darker and a bit sunken. Something inside me said, "This isn't normal." I wore a loose hoodie, partly to hide my anxiety, and headed to the nearest clinic.

The nurse who attended to me looked surprised when I mentioned a breast lump. She checked, frowned, and quickly referred me to a bigger hospital for a mammogram and biopsy. Sitting in the waiting area, surrounded by women, I felt completely out of place. Some glanced at me curiously, others sympathetically. I'd never felt more invisible and exposed at the same time.

A week later, the results came in: Stage II breast cancer. I froze. The doctor was gentle but direct. "Yes, men can get breast cancer. It's rare, but it happens. The good news is, we've caught it early." My head spun. How was this my reality? Cancer was something I associated with older people or distant relatives, not my own body. Telling my partner was the hardest part. At first, she didn't believe me. Then she became distant, almost embarrassed. She'd make jokes like, "So you have women's cancer now?" trying to lighten the mood, but the words stung. Some friends laughed nervously; others avoided the topic altogether.

**"YES, MEN CAN
GET BREAST
CANCER. IT'S
RARE, BUT IT
HAPPENS."**

A few even whispered that I must have done something "strange" to get it. The stigma was real and isolating. It felt like my masculinity was being questioned because of the diagnosis.

But I kept going, through surgery, chemotherapy, and endless hospital visits. I joined a support group where I met two other men who had walked this road. That was the first time I didn't feel like an anomaly. Their courage gave me strength.

Today, I'm two years cancer free. I share my story because I want other men to know that breast cancer doesn't care about gender. If something feels off, get checked. Don't wait. And if you're going through it, know that you're not alone, even if the world hasn't learned how to talk about it yet.

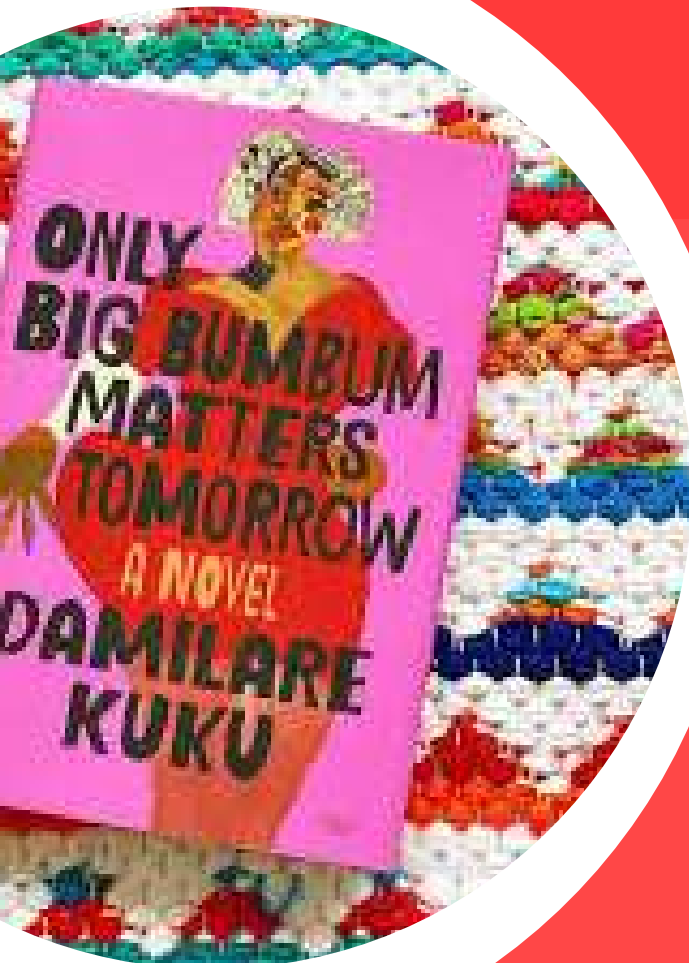
Brian, Breast Cancer Survivor

BOOK REVIEW: ONLY BIG BUM BUM MATTERS TOMORROW

BY DAMILARE KUKU

A book review

**“IN THIS WORLD, IT
SEEMS YOUR BUM
ENTERS THE ROOM
BEFORE YOU DO.”
TEMI_**



Damilare Kuku's *Only Big Bum Bum Matters Tomorrow* is a sharp, witty, and layered collection of short stories that explore how gender stereotypes, bodily autonomy, and pleasure shape the lives of contemporary Nigerian women. Through bold female characters and honest storytelling, Kuku invites readers to look beyond appearances and into the interior worlds of women navigating love, judgment, and selfhood.

One of the central themes is gender stereotypes. Characters like Morounkeji embody the pressure to conform to narrow beauty standards. In her story, she struggles with societal expectations that equate a woman's worth with her physical features, especially the obsession with having a "big bum bum." Her attempts to fit into these ideals highlight how gendered stereotypes are internalized and enforced by both men and women, creating cycles of insecurity and performance. Similarly, characters like Toun face moral scrutiny for choices that men in the same situations would easily escape, exposing the double standards at play.

The collection also powerfully explores bodily autonomy. Kuku presents women who, despite societal pressures, make deliberate choices about their bodies and lives. For example, Nneka chooses to prioritize her career and personal desires over cultural expectations of marriage and motherhood. Her story shows how asserting control over one's body and future can come at the cost of acceptance in a conservative society. These characters refuse to be silent or submissive; they carve out spaces for self-definition.

Equally important is Kuku's treatment of pleasure, which is handled with nuance and honesty. Characters like Yejide and Morounkeji explore their sexuality in ways that challenge shame-based narratives. Pleasure here is not portrayed as frivolous; it is political, radical, and deeply human. Kuku writes female desire without apology, making space for women to own their experiences rather than merely reacting to male expectations.

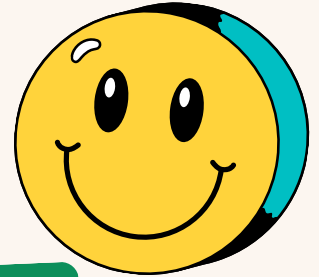
Through humor, frankness, and emotional depth, *Only Big Bum Bum Matters Tomorrow* dissects how stereotypes shape identities, how women reclaim their bodies, and how pleasure can be a form of resistance. Kuku's characters are not perfect heroes; they are complex, flawed, and real. This makes their journeys both relatable and powerful.

Ultimately, the book is a vibrant and necessary contribution to contemporary African feminist writing. It challenges readers to rethink the ways society polices women's bodies while celebrating the courage it takes to live authentically in such a world.

ED'S KONA



ED's Kona — A Living Diary of Leadership, Strategy, and Youth Power



Leading with Purpose with, Judy Amina

Earlier this year, we launched ED's Kona, a dedicated space on our website where our Executive Director, Judy, reflects on the dynamic journey of leadership within Kenya's SRHR movement. What began as a simple corner for reflections has grown into a vibrant mentorship platform that brings young advocates closer to the heartbeat of leadership, strategy, and movement-building.

Through ED's Kona, Judy takes readers behind the scenes of key moments shaping our collective work. In "Advancing Women's Health Roundtable," she reflects on the importance of intergenerational dialogue in shaping policies that center on women's health. Judy shares candid insights from the August roundtable discussions, emphasizing how women leaders are not just participants but shapers of national and county health priorities.

In "Joy is a Strategy Too," she highlights the power of joy as a deliberate act of resistance and resilience. Reflecting on the SRHR Gala, Judy reminds us that movements are sustained not only by strategy and resources but also by celebration, community, and collective healing. Similarly, her reflection on the Pan-African Conference highlights how strategy, relationships, innovation, and joy can work together to propel bold advocacy at the continental level.

One of the most personal and empowering pieces is "From Budgets to Boldness." Here, Judy opens up about her own learning curve — demystifying financial systems and showing that effective leadership often means stepping into uncomfortable spaces. She frames finance not as a technical hurdle but as a strategic tool that every leader, especially young advocates, must learn to navigate.

In pieces like "Airbase Youth Refuse to Be Ignored," Judy documents the courage of young people demanding accountability, positioning youth not as beneficiaries but as active drivers of change. And in "My Journey as Executive Director," she sets the tone for ED's Kona — a space for honesty, learning, and leadership that grows with the movement.

Visit ED's Kona to explore these powerful reflections. Whether you are a young leader, a partner, or simply curious about what leadership looks like in action, ED's Kona offers a front-row seat to the evolving story of SRHR advocacy in Kenya — told with heart, strategy, and vision.



WHY KENYA MUST END UNSAFE ABORTIONS NOW



"To deny safe, legal abortion is to deny healthcare, justice, and equality."

We must mobilise communities and systems, expand access to safe abortion services, and demand better sexuality education. We must listen to the voices of women and girls who have been silenced for too long. Meaningful implementation of abortion-related health guidelines and laws can save thousands of lives.

We must do better than burying our daughters. The right to decide whether and when to have children belongs to every woman. Protecting that right is not a favour; it is justice. Until Kenya ensures that no woman dies from unsafe abortion, our fight for dignity, autonomy, and accountability is far from over.

**BY DORIS KATHIA, RAISE YOUR VOICE CBO
PEOPLE DAILY KE 23RD SEPT 2025**

I cannot count the number of times I have heard a story of a girl, barely 15, bleeding to death because she feared being judged, arrested, or denied care.

At only 16, Sharon should have been in school preparing for her exams. Instead, she found herself in a dingy backroom, clutching the hand of a stranger who promised a "quick fix." She had no money, no access to contraception, and no one she could talk to. Terrified of stigma from her family and church, she chose silence over support. Hours later, she was rushed to a hospital, bleeding profusely. She did not survive.

Sharon's story is the daily reality for thousands of Kenyan girls and women. According to a 2024 study by the Ministry of Health, nearly 729,694 induced abortions occur in Kenya each year. Of these, many are unsafe, carried out under life-threatening conditions. Think about that for a moment. That number is not just a health statistic — these numbers are dreams cut short, families torn apart, and communities left grieving.

It is in these broken systems of stigma, silence, and shame that force women and girls into unsafe hands. It is a reminder that by refusing to fully implement laws recognising the right to healthcare and permitting abortion to protect a woman's life or health, we continue to play politics with women's bodies and refuse to keep quiet about it.

I know what it means when abortion is criminalised and stigmatised. It means young girls like Sharon in Kibra, Korogocho, or Mathare secretly drink harmful concoctions because they have nowhere safe to turn. It means women in rural Kenya are left to die quietly in backrooms, while society dismisses them as "sinners." It means health workers, who should be saving lives, are too afraid of the law's reprisals to act. This is not only negligence but a state-sanctioned violence against women.

We can no longer keep ignoring this. Kenya is paying a heavy price for its silence. Maternal morbidity and mortality remain unacceptably high, with unsafe abortion contributing between 7 and 13 percent of maternal deaths, claiming more than 2,600 lives annually.

But unsafe abortion is not just a health issue; it is a human rights issue. The right to dignity, autonomy, and to make decisions about one's body is enshrined in our Constitution and international treaties Kenya has ratified. To deny safe, legal abortion is to deny healthcare, justice, and equality.

Lights

Camera, ACTION!



RHNK conference



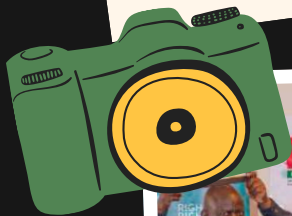
RHRH champions gala



Intergenerational dialogue



Red card kwa grao



Champions Gala

TALK TO US

- ✉ **Email: info@srhralliance.or.ke**
- 🌐 **Website: www.srhralliance.or.ke**
- 🏠 **P.O Box 12933 00100**
Mombasa Road
- 📞 **+254 769 478 605**



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