



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

# EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

The Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) is a national Kenyan not-for-profit women's rights organization. We are committed to advancing women's rights; and work towards achieving a society free from all forms of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

## MISSION

COVAW exists to champion the rights of women and girls to be free from all forms of violations.

## VISION

A society where women and girls enjoy equal rights, freedoms and thrive in safe spaces.

## CORE VALUES



### INTEGRITY

COVAW is committed to the highest forms of accountability and honesty



### DIGNITY

COVAW believes in freedom of choice and autonomy regarding bodily integrity



### COURAGE

COVAW stands for what is right and just and takes intentional bold steps in uncharted paths to effect change for women and girls



### SOLIDARITY

COVAW is inspired by the principles of diversity, equity and equality, and empathises with, and supports women and girls to access social justice and human dignity



### COMMITMENT

COVAW is passionate about working for the safety and the wellbeing of women and girls. COVAW has a pledge to fulfil its promises

Front cover photos: Covaw/Fridah Wawira

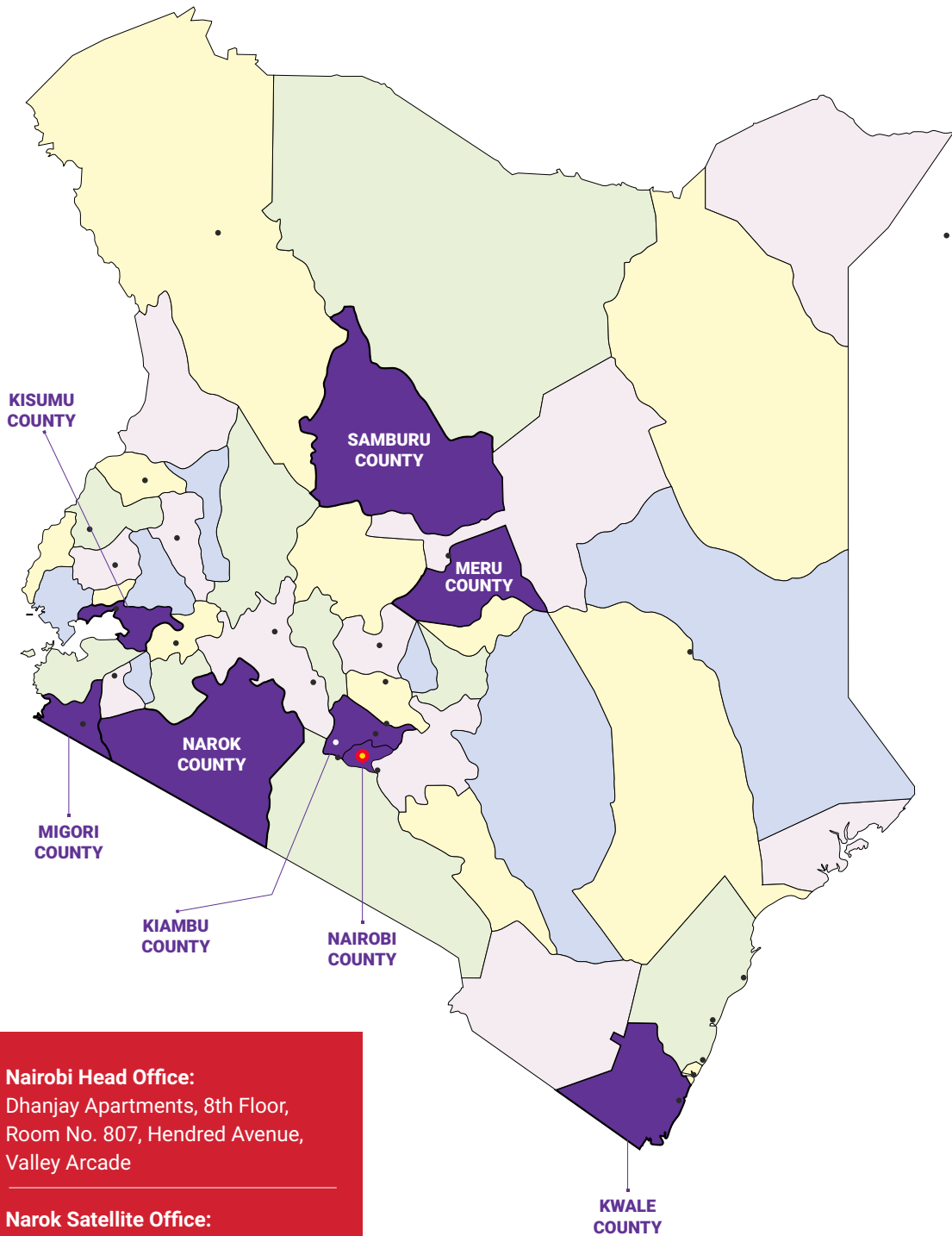


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*Commemoration of  
International Women's  
Day at Olshaiki village,  
Narok South  
Photo: COVAW*

# COVAW OPERATIONS IN 2021



**Nairobi Head Office:**  
Dhanjay Apartments, 8th Floor,  
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Valley Arcade

**Narok Satellite Office:**  
Agricultural Finance Corporation,  
Room No. 8, Narok-Nairobi Highway

**Kwale Satellite Office:**  
Darad-Gasi Plaza, 1st Floor,  
Room No. 6, along the Diani Beach  
Road, next to Aga Khan Hospital

# FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that we present the COVAW 2021 Annual Report. 2021 was yet another challenging year, marked by increased cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence and continued effects of COVID-19 pandemic – all compounding factors to vulnerability. This annual report provides a glimpse of our efforts to serve vulnerable women and girls exposed to or at risk of gender based violence.

In Kenya, regardless of constitutional and statutory provisions, access to justice remains elusive to most victims of SGBV. The inordinate delays in conclusion of cases have led to untold trauma with the attendant social-economic consequences to the victims, their families and the society at large. COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation by exacerbating the hitherto gaps in case management in the judiciary. Women and girls, particularly those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities remain the most adversely affected.

COVAW has invested in empowering women and girls to claim their rights; enabling equitable access to services, resources and opportunities; facilitating greater access to justice for survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV); and supporting change agents opposed to and committed to eradication of all forms of VAWG.

COVAW supported over 26,000 people directly and 4.2 million people indirectly in 2021. Whilst doing our outmost to reduce their hardship, uphold basic rights and maintain dignity and trying to address the root causes of SGBV through policy development. Our hope for 2022 and beyond is that greater efforts are made to find lasting solutions to ease access to justice & Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services. Women's leadership development and economic empowerment.

COVAW's strategic plan 2018 – 2023 looks into securing the rights of women and girls through influencing sustained change when addressing all forms of violations against them.

In 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, COVAW overcame many odds as it mitigated and responded to the impact of SGBV.



**Dr. Fatuma Ali**  
Board Chair

COVAW worked with state and non-state partners and with communities at the forefront. We kept our program participants at the centre of our work and strove to build their resilience.

We are extremely proud of the work done by COVAW staff in this challenging year and sincerely thank them for their commitment. We would also like to extend our gratitude to partners, donors and government officials for their continued collaboration and support.

Above all, the determination of the women, girls and communities we worked with remains our greatest motivation. We honour and celebrate them.

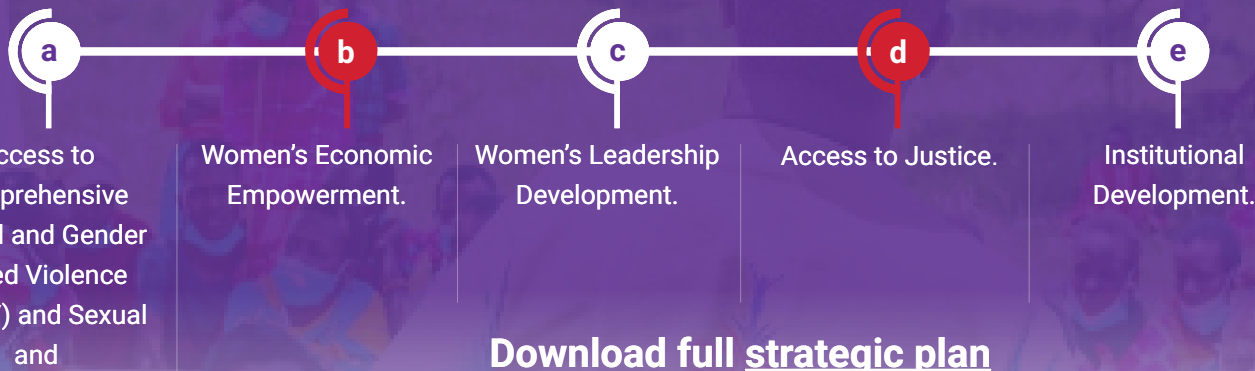


**Wairimu Munyinyi - Wahome**  
Executive Director



## STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

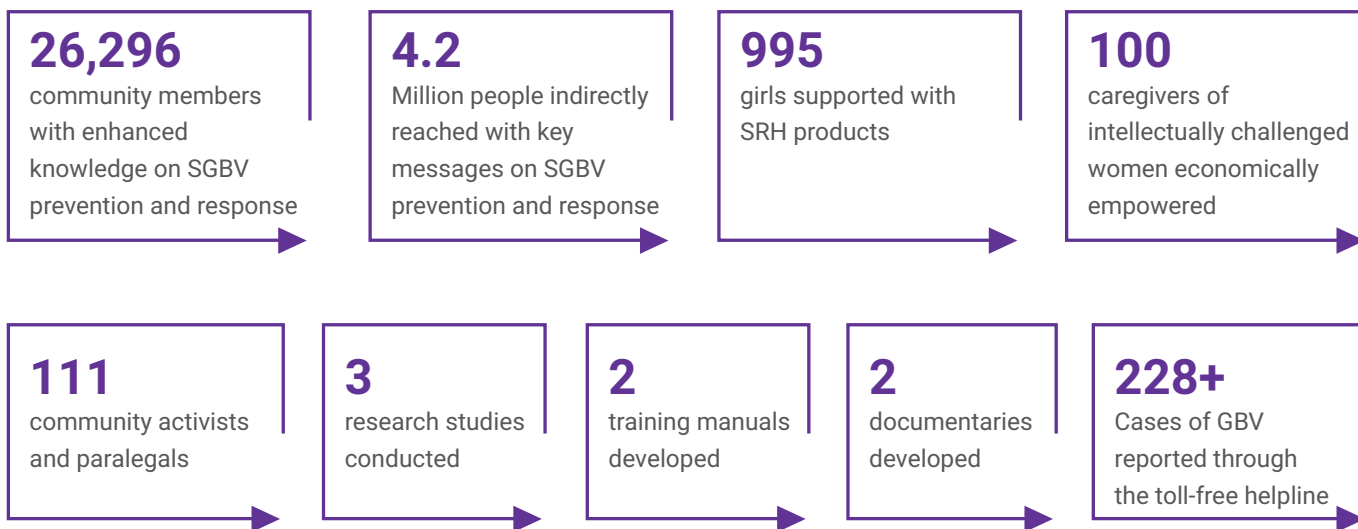
COVAW's strategic plan is anchored on on five key pillars/strategic focus areas:



[Download full strategic plan](#)

## 2021 OVERVIEW

This year 2021 marked the re-emergence of vulnerabilities largely driven by the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, National elections and economic hardship. The country recorded unprecedented levels of Sexual and Gender Based Violence as of 2020. To support our beneficiaries, realise their rights and access services, COVAW supported:



[Simplified SGBV reporting mechanism](#)

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR) SERVICES SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) SERVICES

COVAW, through the development of a simplified Sexual and Gender Based Violence reporting procedure and training of local communities has enhanced and made easy for reporting and response of SGBV cases

We provided legal representation and psychosocial support services, we refer survivors of SGBV for other support services including health services and other government services. In addition, the toll-free line that was established in 2020 is functional and continues to enable victims to get in touch with COVAW directly for support.

COVAW implemented a one-year project (March 2020-April 2021) under the 'Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance in Narok County. The goal of the project was to contribute to the reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality by safeguarding pertinent constitutional gains that allow access to safe abortion services in Kenya. Key achievements made included: Collaboration with the Narok Youth Parliament in the submission of

a memorandum to Narok County Assembly with recommendations on how to address rising cases of teenage pregnancies in the county, as a result, the Teenage Pregnancies Technical Working Group was launched. COVAW in collaboration with other human rights organizations and Narok County Assembly developed the Narok County Maternal and Child Health Bill (2021) which outlined key strategies for enhancing access to SRH services

in Narok County. COVAW held intergenerational dialogues with 460 community members with a focus on demystifying myths and misconceptions that hinder access to SRH services leading to an increase in community reports on enhanced uptake of family planning services. Please watch the documentary on *Enaipirta enkishon ang: It's about our lives. A call to enhance access to SRHR in Narok County* [here](#).

## ACCELERATING END OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING (FGM/C)

**F**emale Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) remains a key problem in Kenya and paves way for greater violations of rights such as early marriages and dropping out of school.

In 2021, we implemented three projects to accelerate an end to FGM in Narok county. The projects were:

- Leveraging on FGM Movements to Enhance Access to SRH services;
- Accelerating an End to FGC in Maasai and Samburu Communities and Komesha Dhulma: Mitigating SGBV through Enhancing SGBV Access to SRH Services.

Focusing on the most vulnerable communities - Maasai & Samburu – COVAW ensured that key stakeholders working on FGC

including 29 primary school teachers, 45 public officers & 40 community activists were trained and their capacities on managing goal oriented anti-FGC campaigns strengthened. COVAW also participated in the formulation of Narok County Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy which addresses key challenges in SGBV prevention and response.

To help abandonment of FGC, COVAW is part of the taskforce developing Narok Anti-FGC policy. Using community – led approach we engaged community activists as anti-FGC champions. Leveraging on FGC Movements to enhance SRHR rights, COVAW, initiated and strengthened a collaborative initiative with the anti-FGC

movement across Samburu, Migori, Narok and Meru counties, through capacity building of 14 movement leaders on managing goal-oriented anti-FGC campaign and the development of a joint campaign strategy.

Three communities, namely Takitech, Chilani and Kablecho made a decision to abandon FGM. 521 community members from the 3 areas came together on the 19th of November 2021 to publicly declare FGM abandonment. On that particular day, 117 girls from the three communities graduated without a cut. Watch COVAW documentary on **Discarding the harmful. Exploring Alternative Rites of Passage** [here](#)

## ENGAGING MEN AS ANTI-FGC CHAMPIONS

**M**atita Ole Reiya, aged 54 years from Sekenani. He is married to two wives and has 10 children, 5 girls and 5 boys.

*“Initially, he was reluctant to attend the dialogue forums conducted by COVAW on anti-FGM/C, since he felt it was women’s affair. Additionally,*



*Mr. Matita Ole Reiya (The Anti-FGC Champion) during community dialogue at Sekenani*

*he felt the anti-FGC campaign was a threat to his culture. He considered men who participated in the forums as weak and traitors to their community and culture.” Says Belgrade, COVAW’s Programme Officer. He could not understand how these men could sit and converse with women and children openly in the same forum. According to him, that was a taboo and it symbolised weakness on the part of men.*

One day, he was approached by COVAW’s community activist who held a discussion with him in relation to the forums and encouraged him to attend the dialogues and get to know more about the topics discussed. He reluctantly abided and attended one of the dialogue forums. As the open conversations

continued Mr. Matita Ole Reiya realised that there was a lot of knowledge and information sharing.

*“I now know and understand the negative health implications of FGC, I was very distanced from my children especially my daughters. I need to pay more attention to issues that will affect them.” Says Mr. Matita Ole Reiya.*

He encourages men whenever he is given a chance to talk during the forums, to protect their daughters and not to allow them to undergo the cut.



*Joint dialogue at Lolgorian*

## WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

COVAW seeks to change views on women’s leadership, catalyse access to opportunities, and mentor and position women and girls as key leaders at community, national and international levels.

Our overall objective is to increase women and girls’ occupation and meaningful participation in leadership processes at all levels across all sectors.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESOURCES THROUGH GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

**C**OVAW, in partnership with Voice Global currently implementing a project titled TUPO

TUSIKIZWE (We are here. Listen to us) in Kwale County. The project aims at empowering marginalized women and girls, including those with disabilities to participate in

the county budget processes in Kwale County by enhancing their voices to demand for the uptake of their priority needs and equitable distribution of resources.

*“It was key to empower the rightsholders to voice out their needs during resource allocation*

*forums other than not speaking at all. With monthly community sessions, more rights-holders became aware of the need to be vocal during the public participation forums and disseminating information to all members in the village units.” Says Sandra – COVAW’s Program Officer.*



*“In collaboration with the village and ward administrators COVAW developed village development plans that covered the priorities of the village unit for the year 2022/2023. This initiative was to ensure that the village unit speaks with one voice during the public participation forums. In the fifteen villages that we worked to develop the village development plans; 32 proposals were incorporated into the financial year 2022/2023 that will be implemented after the new government assumes office. This here is a huge milestone for all of us” adds Sandra.*

The engagement of women with disabilities in the budgeting process has improved. This has been realized through close collaboration with the county PWDs network through the National Council for PWDs (NCPWD). 60 Women-led Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) jointly developed a lobby paper on disability-inclusive budgeting and submitted it to the Budget Office in Kwale County. The Lobby paper detailed the priority

needs of the PWDs to be included in the incoming financial year 2022/2023.

A GRB technical working group was formed in 2021 comprising 30 champions and 60 women-led DPOs. The team developed a GRB memorandum that was presented

to the county officials during the stakeholders’ meeting held in August 2021. Representatives of the County Budget and Economic Forum committed to allocate funds in the next financial year 2022/2023 to facilitate more civic education on the budgeting process at the village unit level.



**Public participation forum, rightsholders demanding for Mteza Dispensary to be fully equipped**

## ENSURING MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups in the informal settlements of Nairobi, COVAW in partnership with **Christian Aid Kenya** implemented a rapid response project on socio-economic support and prevention of SGBV. 100 households including those with girls and women with intellectual challenges were provided with cash transfers that enabled some of them to revamp their businesses and access better quality healthcare; 20 survivors of SGBV received psychosocial support services to help them cope with the trauma of the experiences they had gone through; 720 community members were directly reached through key messages on SGBV prevention and reporting mechanism. The documentary **Double Pain: SGBV During Times of COVID-19** summarizes the experiences of the target communities.

**A**ccess to justice is a critical component of COVAW's work. In partnership with **Open Society Foundations(OSF)** scaled up its access to justice work by promoting an enabling legal environment for SGBV Victims. The project's overall goal was to improve response to sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls. Through the project, COVAW trained 532 law enforcement officers from Nairobi, Migori and Kisumu on SGBV legal framework, collection, preservation and presentation of watertight evidence. 11 pro bono lawyers from Nairobi were trained and mentored on the significance of taking up pro bono cases and how to address challenges/obstacles while dealing with the Kenyan courts. COVAW supported 16 survivors of 2017 post-election violence from Kisumu County to undergo counselling. The psychosocial support sessions helped them cope with the trauma as a result of sexual violence.

COVAW led a consortium of organisations in filing a constitutional petition seeking reparations for SGBV victims during the 2007/2008 post-elections violence. 13 years later, in December 2020, the High Court of Kenya passed judgement in favour of the petition, awarding compensation to some of the victims. As part of a consortium, COVAW filed an appeal in 2021 challenging the judgement made over the constitutional petition that sought reparations for SGBV

survivors, seeking to have all survivors considered for compensation. These are cases with a national and regional/global impact in terms of setting precedent and influencing policy and legal reforms. COVAW has filed an appeal for the rest of the survivors who were left out.

COVAW undertook research on legal and administrative bottlenecks to effective and efficient delivery of justice for survivors of SGBV in Kenya. A key finding was that there is indeed an inordinate delay in the determination of cases under the SOA. Data obtained from the respective Sexual Offences Case Registers revealed that in four out of seven court stations, the percentage of the 2017 SOA cases concluded was below 50% at the end of October/early November 2021.

Similarly, 50% of the number of closed cases were actually withdrawn mostly under section 87(a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). Section 87(a) allows a public prosecutor to withdraw prosecution of any person at any time before judgment is delivered. The full report **DELAYED. DENIED. Legal and Administrative Bottlenecks to Effective and Efficient Delivery of Justice for Survivors of SGBV in Kenya** can be found [here](#).

COVAW with support from **UAF-Africa** published a newspaper article on SGBV, Elections and Responsibilities. The full article can be accessed [here](#) and worked closely with the Nairobi Gender Sector Working Group in the development of the Nairobi County SGBV Prevention, Response and Control Act which was assented into law on 15th November 2021.



*A mural on SGBV reporting mechanism in Mwiki area, Nairobi County.*

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

**COVAW aims to improve its efforts to restore and enhance comprehensive sexual and gender-based services across different counties. We continue to support people of concern ensuring they receive the assistance needed in a timely manner**

**D**espite achievements, a few challenges were encountered. Response to large numbers of

SGBV cases remains disjointed, as the referral systems was not seamless with major issues being within the health system.

As the world continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Shrinking funding opportunities for women organisations continues to be a key challenge. There is an urgent need to rethink SGBV financing architecture and support early solutions and long-term solutions processes as the impact of COVID-19 continues to contribute to overall reduction in funding.

Regardless of our concerted efforts, we also were faced with slow prosecution of cases, lack of willingness by survivors to attend court sessions and rising cases of Female Genital Cutting. COVAW, continues to sensitise court users' committees on the plight of SGBV survivor and engage with survivors

and duty bearers encouraging them to attend the cases, working alongside the pro-bono advocates.

There are continued opportunities at national and county level for COVAW to work and ensure effective collaborations with relevant government agencies, county government and other stakeholders in terms of enhancing services and accountability to duty bearers.

COVAW strategic use of ongoing projects and research agendas to create space to work with women in leadership and elected leaders in Narok and Kwale in bringing about longer-term solutions to SGBV and inform policy engagement.

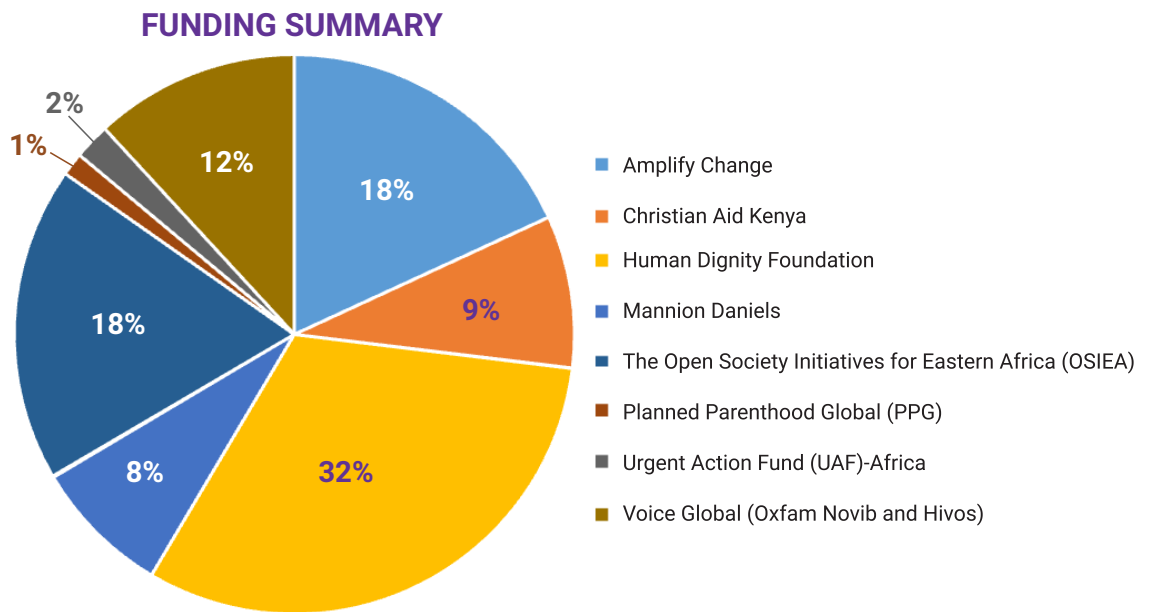
Additionally, there is prospect in implementing sustainable income

generating opportunities to expand empowerment activities for women and ensure service inclusivity of other groups at risk of Gender Based Violence within existing GBV programming.

Our organisation recognises that no single actor can sustainably address the root causes of discrimination and Violence Against Women and Girls. We will engage diverse actors and pursue complementary strategies across multiple levels to achieve our vision. COVAW will also continue to nurture partnerships to scale up and accelerate solutions that we have tested and proved to work.

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

COVAW maintains its fund base through multi-donor funding. We remain duly accountable to the funds bestowed on us and aim to ensure accountable and prudent utilization of resources.



**Thank you for your support**

### Your support drives our work:

All over the world, our supporters like you – use their voice to champion for the rights of SGBV survivors and raise funds. Make a donation to change a life. To support COVAW's work kindly contact us at [info@covaw.or.ke](mailto:info@covaw.or.ke)



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