



No longer Silent: Widows Leading Change



Dear reader,

It's a pleasure to welcome you to yet another exciting read. Nyanam phase one anthology introduced us to the issue "Widowhood stigma" where the stories explored the lives of 10 Nyanam widows who have since graduated from our three year program and are now leading change in their communities.

This second phase, dives deeper into the lives of 10 more widows showcasing the power of sisterhood and our solution for change "Voice of Change"

It goes without saying that these narratives carries with them a weight of pain, hope and love. An illustration of how we can build communities where widows and their children thrive.

A big thank you to our entire team, who ensure these stories are documented.

We hope these stories encourage you to hold a widows hand.

Evelyn Odhiambo



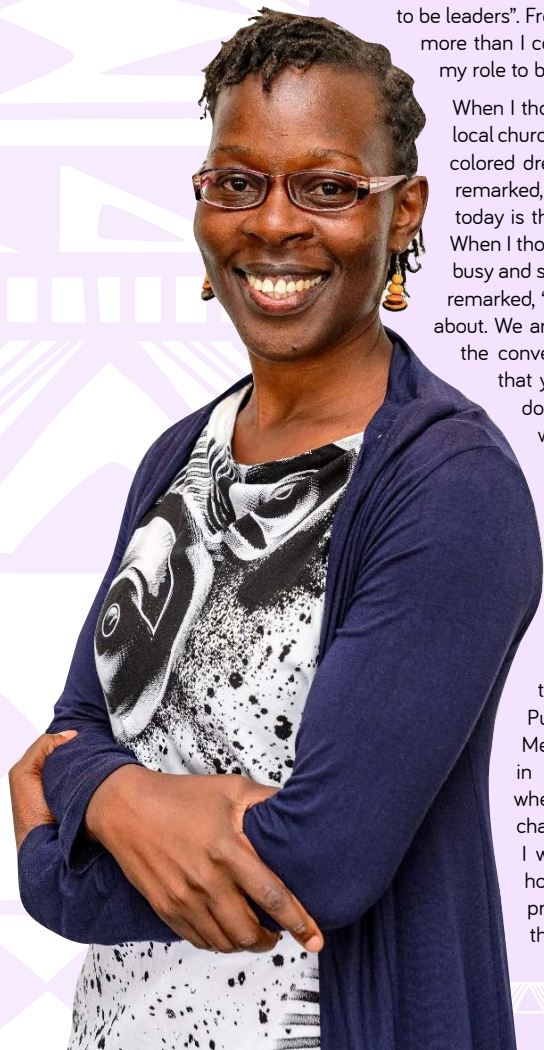
Introduction

From the Founder's Lens

In my first ever meeting with widows in 2017, I learnt the need and the power of community, listening and stories. My friend Beryl and I invited a few widows to our local church for a conversation. I was returning from a Christian Women's Leadership Conference in Nairobi, where I had met widowed women leaders from South Sudan, and from where God clarified the mission of Nyanam "prepare widow to be leaders". From the first meeting, I knew God was ready to do more than I could ever imagine with Nyanam, and considered my role to be one of being a channel for God's action.

When I thought twenty women would gather with us at the local church, the church was full of 80 widows in their vibrant colored dresses and hopeful faces. An 84-year-old widow remarked, "I have been a widow for the past 50 years and today is the first time I am in a gathering just for widows." When I thought that as heads of households the widows are busy and suggested they could meet once monthly, another remarked, "Young girl, you don't know what you are talking about. We are going to meet every week!" When we opened the conversation with a question on what do you need that you have to receive from one another and what do you have that you can offer each other? Love was the first response, an answer I did not expect. The only material ask from the widows on that day was, "If we could only have the Bible in our language" a signpost to where they found hope and comfort.

These 80 widows formed two of Nyanam's first widow circles and for 12 months, we left them on their own, to meet weekly and to offer each other love, encouragement and support. In those 12 months, I was completing my Masters in Public Health from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. I was also studying the stories of widows in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, from where I marveled at the similarities in the contexts, challenges and injustices widows faced. Importantly, I was receiving marvelous updates from Beryl of how the widows were studying the Bible together, praying for one another, visiting the sick among them, pooling labor in their farms, raising funds



Introduction

to pay school fees, renovating and building houses for each other. I was jubilant. If my role was only to mobilize the widows to be in community with each other, I was proud of the work we had done.

Yet, the widows' love for each other and their deepening of our understanding of the webs of challenges they were navigating inspired us to establish Nyanam, to support their resilience and action. This anthology comes as we are celebrating seven years of formal partnership with widows in the Lake Victoria region. In this time, Nyanam has grown fast, 41-fold from the 80 to 3300 widows. This year, we graduated our first cohort of 521 widows, whose confidence and pride in their accomplishments inspired me more. I remembered holding that piece of prayer paper in 2017 "prepare widows to be leaders", feeling half amused and half nervous, and now with pride, seeing bold widow leaders whose voice and action was making profound differences for themselves and their communities.

Positioning Nyanam as a learning organization from the onset has been one of the most critical strategic decisions. We never needed to know it all. We needed to listen and learn from the widows and their children, and co-create the paths ahead together, valuing the contributions each brings to the table. At one point when we were figuring out metrics for measuring our impact and asking widows what change they experienced, I was pleasantly surprised to hear their emphasis on the sense of peace they gained after joining Nyanam, a metric we hadn't thought about. Another time as we were wondering how to tackle widowhood stigma at the societal level, we observed how widows' positive presence in the communities, showing up together in solidarity and as contributors, shifted attitudes. Sometimes I go back to our photo library and notice big shifts in facial expressions, from gloomy, doubtful, frowning faces in our first encounters with widows to bright, confident and smiling faces as widows engage with Nyanam and graduate.

As we transition to the next seven years of Nyanam, we enter a season likely to be defined by even faster growth. I am confident in the leadership of about 50 widow mentors and over 200 widow trainers who are prepared to lead and support implementation of our unique model - Voice of Change - beyond their communities to other counties in Kenya and countries in Africa. A world where widows are viewed and treated as whole and worthy is possible. Nyanam widows are at the center of transforming cultures to recognize their inherent and independent dignity and worth. We invite churches and community-based organizations to partner with us to grow this movement of widows leading positive change in their communities.

Dr. Jackie Odhiambo

Founder and Executive Director Nyanam



Preface

In Honour of My Mother and Grandmother

Clifford Ochieng

Operation and Administrative Lead

They fought hard. Then they gave all they had. But life, in its quiet cruelty, dealt them heavy blows. In this reflection, I walk back through the shadows and light of my childhood in Mathare, guided by the sacrifices of two extraordinary women—my mother and grandmother. Between hunger and hope, grief and grit, they never stopped believing. Not in miracles, but in us. In dignity. In tomorrow.

Born as the third of six children into the vibrant yet unyielding heart of Mathare, I carry vivid memories of my mother's quiet courage. A widow, she bore her sorrow with grace, shielding us from the weight of her loss. I remember how each school uniform she handed over felt like an act of faith, how every meal prepared was a silent vow that we would not be left behind. Resilience wasn't something I read about—it was something I watched her live, day after day.

When my grandmother stepped in to raise me, love took on a different shape—calloused hands that held gently, a voice that soothed, and a will that refused to break. Her strength didn't shout; it endured. She taught me to carry empathy like a torch, to see the world not just as it is, but as it could be.

Their battles were fought in silence: against stigma, against poverty, against hopelessness. But in their bones, they carried dreams bigger than the lanes of Mathare. They believed in us before we ever believed in ourselves. Through them, I came to understand that opportunity and dignity are not luxuries reserved for the privileged—but the birthright of every human being.

I write this in honour of them. If nothing else, let these words serve as a quiet offering to their memory. May the strength they showed awaken in you a courage to pursue what matters—fiercely, relentlessly, and with love. And may the heavens remember their names every time we rise.



I was born in Mathare, third in a line of six children, where every sunrise came with a challenge, and every sunset with gratitude. Ours was a life shaped by narrow alleys and wide hopes. After my father passed, the world didn't pause for our grief. It kept moving. And so did my mother.

She became everything. Provider, protector, prayer warrior. Grief was heavy, but she carried it alongside the weight of our future. She didn't speak of sacrifice; she lived it. With every school fee paid, every meal found, every illness tended to—she was building a world where her children could dream, even when she was too tired to dream for herself.

Then there was my grandmother. When she took over caring for me, I met love in its most grounded form. Her hands were worn, but they planted strength in me. She didn't need to say much—her actions were loud enough. Through her, I learned that compassion and discipline could share the same breath. That care isn't always soft—it's steady.

Watching these two women—one young and burning with purpose, the other old and unyielding—I began to understand that greatness isn't always loud. Sometimes, it wakes before dawn to cook porridge. Sometimes, it sits quietly in the back row at a school meeting. Sometimes, it just keeps going when everything says stop.

Their sacrifices were seeds. I am part of the harvest. This piece, these words—they're for them. For my mother, whose belief in us was unshakable. For my grandmother, whose hands shaped the person I am. If there is any strength in me, it is because they showed me how to stand. And if I ever find my way to light, it will be because they kept the flame alive, even in the darkest seasons.





Nyanam
widows rising

Dedication

Dedication - To 3300 Nyanam widows and widows globally who have risen from the struggles building stronger and safer communities.

Credits

A massive thank you to the 10 widows whose stories weave a narrative of positive transformation.

Conceptualized:

Evelyn Odhiambo - Nyanam Communication and Partnership Specialist

Interviews by:

Daniel Ogetta

Written and Designed by:

Daniel Ogetta

Edited by:

Dr. Jackie Odhiambo - Founder and Executive Director Nyanam

Angie Okhupe - Nyanam Board

Grace Kinda - Nyanam Board

Bethany Dixon - Nyanam Board

Supporting team:

Nicodemus Agumba - Operations and Program Lead

Clifford Ochieng - Administration and Operations Specialist

Berly Ochieng

With broken hands, I built a home

Helida Leah

Widowed in 1995

When my husband died in 1995, I was left with nothing, but our daughter and a future clouded in uncertainty. In the four years of our marriage, we sired three children. Two died, and I was left with only one, a girl. At the time my husband's death, the dowry had not been paid and, as a result, his family told me I had no right to anything. I had no land, no house, and no means to sustain myself.

Life instantly became tough. I survived on menial jobs. I tried to stay with different relatives, but their kindness had limits. Some would accommodate me for a while, then change their minds. I became like a parcel passed around, with nowhere to call home. Eventually, I ended up back in my father's house. He was alive then, and as much as he could, he helped me.

One day, he sent me Ksh800 {~\$8 USD}. At the time, it felt like a fortune. I used it to start a small maize business, hoping it would be the beginning of something stable. But I didn't make much profit. The little I earned wasn't enough to cover rent or buy food.

I was often locked out of our rented house when rent fell late. Still, I didn't give up. From the little I saved, I began buying iron sheets, -one or two at a time. The day I reached 25 sheets, I started building my own house. The walls were mud, the floor dusty, and the roof thin, but it was mine. Yet, even then, I couldn't feel at home within it. That's what trauma does: it robs you of rest. Trauma does that. You achieve something, but your mind won't let you settle.

That was before I met Nyanam. The first time they came, I didn't think much of it. Just another NGO, I thought. They said they worked with widows, and they brought Bibles. That intrigued me. But when they began to teach from those Bibles, my heart stirred. They didn't just read Scripture, they connected it to our lives. They spoke of widows in the Bible —women who had endured sorrow, injustice, and isolation— and somehow, in their worlds, I felt seen. Nyanam kept coming. And slowly, I began to heal.

I began to participate in the Nyanam trainings. I learned



about farming. They taught me leadership, something I never imagined for myself. I used to fear speaking in public, but soon I was encouraged to attend barazas (village meetings), to raise my voice, to be counted.

One training changed me profoundly: how to process documents. I got my husband's death certificate. That may sound small, but for a woman who was denied everything, that paper was power. It meant I could apply for his pension. It meant I existed, officially.

Then came the savings group, table banking. I contributed small amounts and got access to loans. That's how I expanded my farming. Added to the kitchen-gardening skills, I started with vegetables, then maize and sorghum. People noticed, I no longer begged for food; I sold food.

With time, I joined the community health promoter program. I was trained in nutrition, maternal health, HIV prevention, and sanitation. Neighbors came to me for help. They called me "doctor", a joke at first, but one that filled me with pride. I helped pregnant women get to clinics, advised young girls on hygiene, and supported other widows who were still where I had once been: broken, ashamed, hopeless.

Then I took another leap. I built four rental houses on a small piece of land. They're not much, but they bring in a steady income every month. That money sustains my farm and pays my grandchildren's school fees.

Speaking of grandchildren, one of the greatest joys in my life today is raising them. I have four who live with me. They eat what I grow. They see how I lead. They watch me preach at church, clean up after sick neighbors, and walk confidently into public spaces. They know strength because they live with it.

Not everything has been easy. I still have days when memories overwhelm me, especially when I remember how I was once made to feel like nothing. But those moments are fewer now. And I know how to ground myself. I pray. I go to my group. I talk to other widows. We lift each other up.

Some of the women I've mentored have started small businesses. Others went back to school. A few even joined local government committees. We are no longer silent. We are not just recipients of help, we are now leaders in our communities.

Sometimes people from the village stop me and ask, "Helida, how did you do it?" I smile and say, "God and Nyanam." Because truly, Nyanam gave me tools, but it was God who gave me the strength to use them.

If my journey were a song, it would start in a minor key —low, quiet, and aching. But as it goes on, it would rise, gathering drums, flutes, and voices until it ends in harmony. That's what healing feels like. That's what rebuilding looks like. It starts slow, with broken hands and a tired heart, but eventually, it becomes a dance.

I am Helida Leah: a widow, a farmer, a community health promoter, a preacher, a landlord, and a grandmother. I began again. And you can too.



I rose from silence, rejection, and dejection... to sunrise

Rose Achieng' Ochieng'

Widowed in 1999

He was his mother's only son. But in 1999, after three years of sickness, he died. In those sunset years, he lived in town with another woman. I stayed in the village. People whispered. Then they shouted. They said I was the reason he was sick. That I had cursed him. That my presence was poison.

They told him to chase me if he wanted to live. And one day, he did. He came home, looked me in the eye, and told me to leave. I left. I packed my things with shaking hands. My children cried. I cried too.

A month later, he died. Just like that. They sent for me to travel to Nairobi to prepare for the funeral. I went. I was innocent, and I knew it.

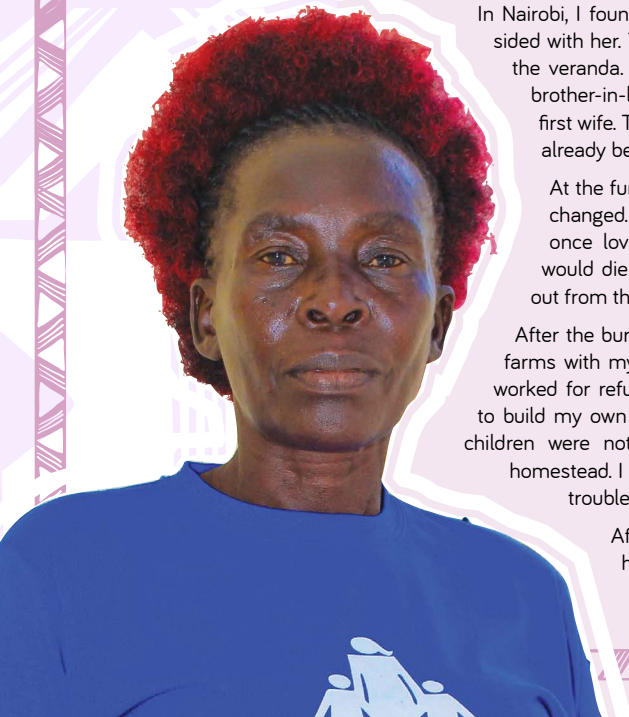
But innocence doesn't protect you from cruelty.

In Nairobi, I found his other wife in the house. His family sided with her. They made me and my children sleep on the veranda. For days, we slept in the cold. Until one brother-in-law came and reminded them I was the first wife. Then I was allowed in. But the damage had already been done. I had become invisible.

At the funeral, I spoke of our life before everything changed. How we used to travel together. How he once loved me. Some mocked me. They said I would die soon. I was too thin, they said, too worn out from the hardship I was enduring.

After the burial, I tried to rebuild. I worked on people's farms with my son. We had nothing. The company he worked for refused to release his benefits. I was forced to build my own house in a polygamous home. Even my children were not allowed to fetch firewood within the homestead. I used the back door of the house to avoid trouble.

After the mourning period, I remained in my home with my children. We struggled, but I



did what I could. I had retired, but I still found ways to make some money. I sold vegetables, kept chickens, and did anything that would keep food on the table and school fees paid.

When I built my home, the family fenced everywhere, including gates, to deter people from getting into my house. Fortunately, I sought intervention from the chief. I continued working on people's farms until I educated my child to the university level, and some of my husband's friends were helping him as well.

Then one day, I saw a woman with vegetable seeds. Her name was Beryl. I asked her where she was taking them. She told me about a widow's group in Osiri under Nyanam that they visited often and took the seeds to them. I asked if I could get some too. She told me they worked with groups, not individuals. So I gathered women. We formed a group. That's how I joined Nyanam.

When I joined, I felt alive again. We studied the Bible. We heard stories of other widows. We shared our widowhood stories and knew I wasn't alone. I could finally leave my house and walk with my head high. Nyanam taught me agriculture, trauma healing, leadership, land rights. They sent me for training, and when I came back, I taught others.

If Nyanam had not entered my life, I think I would still be struggling in silence. Now, I am our church's treasurer. I am a leader. I help other widows. I once helped a sick widow who had given up. I took her to the hospital. Today, she is thriving.

People in the village ask where I'm going whenever I leave. "To a Nyanam meeting," I say with pride. My children are proud. They tell me not to stop. "You are respected now," they say.

When I look back, I don't feel bitterness. I feel gratitude that I stayed. That I fought. That I raised my children. That I met Nyanam.

Today, I live with purpose. I speak without fear. I lead in church. I teach others. I know my rights. I have land. I have vegetables. I have hope.

If my life were a proverb, it would begin in darkness and end in dawn. If it were a song, it would be sung by women drawing water, their voices rising like the sun.



When Nyanam gave us Bibles, I knew I wasn't alone

Beatrice Adhiambo, 46

Widowed in 1995

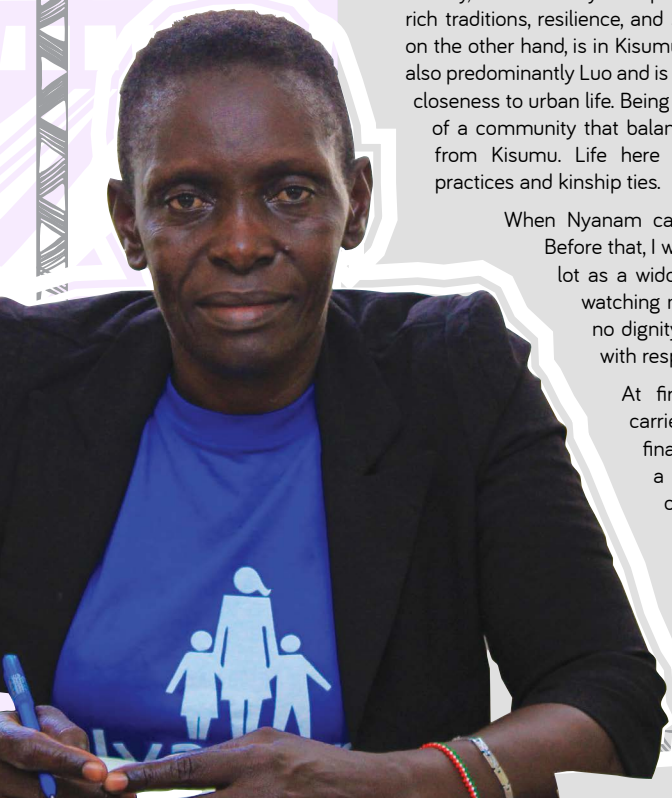
Thirty years have passed since my husband died, and I still remember the pain of that season. If someone had told me back then that I would be where I am today —speaking with confidence, teaching others, and leading— I would have laughed through my tears. Because honestly, I was broken. I didn't think I'd survive.

But I did. And I am thriving.

I hail from Gem Yala and I'm married in Korando. Gem Yala is in Siaya County, western Kenya. It's part of the Luo heartland, known for its rich traditions, resilience, and strong sense of community. Korando, on the other hand, is in Kisumu County, not far from Kisumu city. It's also predominantly Luo and is known for its blend of rural charm and closeness to urban life. Being married in Korando means being part of a community that balances tradition with modern influences from Kisumu. Life here is marked by deep-rooted cultural practices and kinship ties.

When Nyanam came into my life, something shifted. Before that, I was simply existing. I had accepted my lot as a widow, begging for food, and sometimes, watching my children go hungry for days. I had no dignity, nor voice. My family didn't treat me with respect. But Nyanam changed all that.

At first, I just listened. Their teachings carried so much hope. It felt like someone finally saw me, not as a burden, not as a failed wife but as a woman capable of standing again. Nyanam taught us agriculture, and I took that seriously. They gave us a multi-storage unit, and by God's grace, it was placed right in my homestead. Today, no matter how late I return home, I don't have to worry about



feeding my children. I just walk to my multi-storage and pick fresh vegetables. What's more, out of your own initiative, we added another storage unit... That's how empowered we've become.

Nyanam also taught us that reading the Bible is not just a routine but a way of truly understanding God's word. Before, I would read without grasping what the verses meant. Now I read and understand.

We were especially encouraged through stories of widows in the Bible. Those stories struck a chord within me. They made me feel like I was in the scripture and reminded me that God cares deeply for people like me.

And then there was table banking. Oh, how little we knew back then! I had never saved a cent, nor dared to dream of borrowing to build something of my own. But today, table banking is the lifeline of my business. It was my first step out of desperation.

You see, at one point, my house collapsed. I had nowhere to go and ended up sleeping in a church. Before that, I'd been inherited—according to Luo customs—by a man who later abandoned me when the house fell. People advised me to find another man to inherit me, like that was the only way forward. But the more I attended Nyanam's sessions, the more that idea faded. I realized I didn't need another man. What I needed was to believe in myself.

So, I took a loan from our table banking group and started selling mandazi. That's when the change really began. Slowly, with each sale, I began to stand again.

Nyanam didn't stop there. They supported our children's education and trained them in more than academics. They trained them in leadership. I used to think leadership was only for elected people. But they taught us otherwise. Today, I lead in church and in our Nyanam group. I even preach the gospel. Imagine that! Preaching was something I never dreamt of doing. But now it's part of who I am.

I remember my first meeting with Nyanam like it was yesterday. What touched me most was when they gave us Bibles. That's when I knew I was in the right place. It was a blessing, confirmation that I was no longer alone.

Nyanam helped us in so many ways: water pumps for agriculture during the dry season, capital for table banking, business skills, and even emotional support. I've changed so much that people now whisper, "She must have found a job somewhere." They look at how I carry myself and wonder what happened. I always smile and say, "My office is Jesus."

The truth is, Nyanam didn't just give us fish. They taught us how to fish. I even managed to save enough money to process my husband's death certificate, something I had been denied for years



by my brother-in-law.

These days, I run a small business, making handbags and selling and mandazi in the mornings. I use the profits to contribute to our savings group, borrow more capital, repay, and keep growing. That's how I've survived and rebuilt my life.

One moment I'll never forget was hearing the gospel of St. Luke during one of our training sessions. It reminded me of God's faithfulness and His call to serve. Today, I lead the gospel team in my church and the procurement team in our Nyanam group. I am no longer in the background - I am fully present.

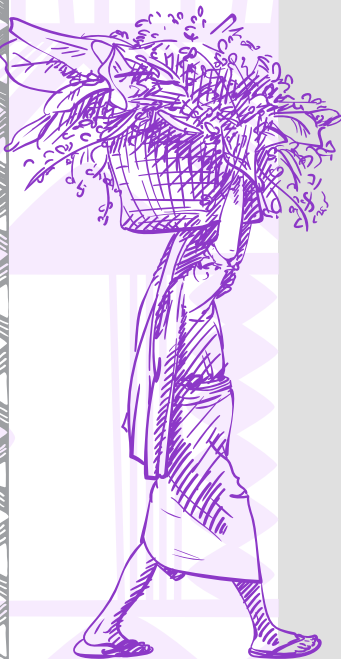
I've also mentored other women. I've supported groups like Baraka Widows and a team of 30 women in Yala. Some want to join my group, but I encourage them to start their own so they can build the same kind of success we've experienced. Leadership, I have learned, means multiplying impact. I want other women to rise too.

Even in my family, things have changed. Before, they didn't involve me in anything. But when my aunt's son died recently, I was the one they called. I coordinated everything. My children created a WhatsApp group to help fundraise and we gave him a proper send-off. That kind of respect —from my family and my children— is something I never had before. It means the world to me.

But not everything has been easy.

As I prepare to graduate from Nyanam's program, I feel the weight of a new responsibility. It's time for us to become the light for others. We must go out and show other women the way. Nyanam has trained us not just for our benefit, but for our communities.

I'll never forget the teachers at Nyanam. The people who taught us the Good News that transformed our lives. And Jacky, the leader of Nyanam, I admire her life deeply. She's changing the world, one widow at a time.



From widowhood to leadership

Millicent Atieno
Widowed in 2007

My world turned upside down on March 13, 2007, when I was just 19 years old. I was already married, and my husband died after a short illness. He was buried three days later. The swiftness of it all—his sickness, his death, his burial—left me in disbelief. One minute I had a husband, the next I was alone with three children and a future I could no longer picture.

I thought the pain of losing him would be the hardest part. It wasn't. Soon after the burial, my in-laws began showing their true colours. My mother-in-law and sisters-in-law came and took two of my children, leaving me only with the youngest. They said I wouldn't stay long, that I would leave eventually. I remember overhearing them talking in hushed tones, saying there was nothing I could do. And at that moment, they were right. I felt powerless.

Before his death, my husband and I hadn't had an easy life. He didn't have a stable job. We survived mostly through small-scale farming. Just before his passing, we had harvested groundnuts, sorghum, and maize. But after the funeral, all of that was taken by my in-laws. They claimed it belonged to their son. I was left with nothing. No food, no children to hold, no land, no one to stand up for me.

Then came the talk of *tero*—widow inheritance. In Luo culture, this was expected. I was still very young, and my in-laws told me that if I wanted to remain on my husband's land, I had to be inherited. It wasn't a request. It was a condition. I agreed, though I didn't feel ready. The man who inherited me lived in a nearby trading centre. He wasn't abusive, but he wasn't exactly supportive either.

When I asked my late husband's family for land to build a house, they told me to prove I was serious. So I sold the little I



had left —some green grams I'd hidden— to buy building materials. They eventually gave me some round poles, and I began putting up a house. But my money ran out. The house was never finished.

So I started working. I weeded people's farms, fetched firewood to sell, and made charcoal. I walked long distances just to earn enough to buy a handful of nails or a sheet of iron. During rainy seasons, I would run home mid-task to find my children soaked in the leaking house. I would huddle them under the table and cover them with polythene. Water dripped from the roof and flooded the floor. The shame of it. The helplessness.

Eventually, I managed to save enough for 12 iron sheets. It wasn't much, but it was the beginning of a better shelter. When my son joined Form One, I didn't know how I would pay his fees. But I worked extra hard, juggled multiple jobs, and finally managed to send him to school. He completed Form Four two years ago, and that's one of my proudest achievements.

Come 2022 and everything began to shift. One of my co-wives told me about Nyanam. She said it was a place for widows, a place where women like us gathered, prayed, and supported each other. I was curious. I had never heard of such a group.

When I joined, something inside me shifted. I walked into a room full of widows —each with her own pain, each with her own story— but all of us bound together by the common thread of survival. For the first time, I didn't feel strange or alone. I found healing through the Bible studies we held. We read about women in scripture who had suffered just like us. We reflected, cried, laughed, and prayed. We discovered that our stories were not new and that God had not abandoned us.

Nyanam didn't stop at prayer. They supported our children, including mine. My second child had just joined Form One, and I was desperate for help. Nyanam gave me Sh5,000 towards school fees. That small act restored a piece of my dignity.

They also gave us vegetable seeds for kitchen gardens. I planted mine, watered them with care, and soon I was harvesting sukuma wiki and spinach. I fed my children and sold the surplus at the market. Slowly, the money began to flow. I joined the table banking group and started saving and borrowing to grow my little business. For the first time in years, I was not just surviving. I was building something.

The training sessions at Nyanam changed my thinking. They taught me about my land rights, that I was entitled to a home, to inheritance, to leadership. They taught me that I could lead not only in my household but also in the community. I was taught about HIV prevention, youth empowerment, and even soap-making. Our soap project now helps fund our table banking group.

Looking back, I remember how one rainy day I had rushed from a



Nyanam meeting to find my children soaked again, hidden under the table like before. But that was one of the last times. Today, our house is different. Our lives are different.

I have true friends now. One of them told me recently, "Everything you've shared with me has changed my life too." That meant so much to me.

To be honest, I used to hold bitterness in my heart. I often wondered why my mother-in-law didn't lift a finger to help me. Just selling one goat could have made a difference. Instead, she told me I was "too young to live the life of a widow." She saw my youth as a reason to dismiss my suffering.

But I've made peace. Through Nyanam, I have found a different kind of family.

Now, when people see me, they see a changed woman. I feel like a changed woman. My children smile more. Their school fees are handled with more ease. I walk with my head held higher.

If Nyanam didn't exist, I truly believe my life would still be stuck and maybe even worse. The knowledge I've gained has empowered me. Today, I know my rights. I speak up. I lead. I teach others.

There was even a land dispute recently. Before, I would have been afraid. But this time, I stood firm. I knew what the law said. I knew what my rights were. And I helped.

To the widows out there who are still suffering in silence, I say this: don't give up. Respect yourself, stay pure, and fear God. And if you ever get the chance to join Nyanam, please do. It will change your life.

To the donors and supporters of Nyanam, I say thank you. Thank you for restoring dignity to women like me. Thank you for helping me learn the Word of God, not just in theory but in practice. Even my children have benefited from the youth programs. When I hear what they've learned, my heart fills with pride.

My journey with Nyanam has been like that of a baby: first I was born, then I crawled, then I walked. Now, I run. I lead. I teach.

I am no longer just a widow. I am Millicent Atieno — A mother. A farmer. A leader. A voice.



My life's journey is a miracle

Margaret Atieno Abwao
Widowed in 2015

I'm a widow and a member of the Chiruoth Majehera group.

My husband died on July 15, 2015, the ground beneath my feet shifted. The days that followed were clouded in with confusion. I found myself asking questions I didn't have answers to: How will I survive on my own? How will I manage this household? How do I even begin again?

During that time, I heard about a widow's gathering while I was in church. Jacky was coming to lead it. She told us the story of the widow in the Bible who was blessed by God's servant with everlasting oil. Something about that story stayed with me - the idea that a woman like me could still be seen, still be blessed, still be enough. That's how I encountered Nyanam.

Before I joined Nyanam, I was living in uncertainty. I didn't know where I was coming from or where I was going. I only knew I didn't want to continue feeling lost. I was searching for something — maybe hope, maybe strength — and Nyanam gave me both. They taught us that a widow is not someone waiting to be helped. A widow can be a leader in her home, in her community, and in her own life.

One of my greatest struggles was learning how to provide for myself. After my husband passed, I had never made any financial decisions on my own. I didn't know how to manage resources or budget for a household. But at Nyanam, I began to learn. I joined because I wanted to rediscover myself, to gain clarity, and to walk with others who understood what I was going through. Unity, I've come to learn, is strength.

Our first lesson at Nyanam was about the widow who had only a



little oil, and how, through the prophet Elijah, God showed that even the smallest offering can become more than enough when placed in His hands. That story gave me hope. It made me feel like I too had something to offer. We were around 100 women at that time. We began visiting each other's homes. Some of us were living in extremely difficult conditions, broken mud walls and leaking roofs. We came together to help rebuild, little by little.

But not everything was smooth. Some women refused to help others, saying, "She's just an in-law," or "She's too weak to help us, so why should we help her?" Even with those challenges, we pressed on. Eventually, we became about forty committed women — those who truly believed in lifting each other up.

Nyanam changed me. It gave me courage. Once, someone tried to grab my land. They even reported me to the chief claiming I was occupying land that wasn't mine. But I remembered the lessons from Nyanam — stand firm, know your rights, speak up. I went and did a land search. I found all my documents, gathered evidence, and presented my case. The false claims were dismissed. That day, I walked home with my head held high. That's what knowledge can do for a person.

Through Nyanam, I also joined table banking. I took small loans, learned how to invest wisely, and started a small business. I was taught how to calculate profit, how to make sound decisions, and — most importantly — how to protect my property. We were told: Don't just sell your cow or your land when things get hard. Think it through. There's always another way. Those teachings have stayed with me.

One of the toughest battles I faced was changing the land title deed from my late husband's name to mine. My own children didn't support me at first. They thought I was trying to take everything for myself. But through Nyanam's support and patient guidance, I was able to explain why it was necessary. Eventually, I managed to do it. That title deed now bears my name. That victory was hard-won — and I'm proud of it.

My life has completely changed. People who knew me before say I'm not the same woman anymore. I'm born again. I teach the Bible, both at church and at Nyanam. I can now stand in front of people and speak with confidence. I'm no longer afraid to approach chiefs or government officers when there's a problem. I know what to say, and I know my rights.

Had it not been for Nyanam, I probably would've lost my land. I wouldn't have known the legal process, or even that I had a right to fight. But now, I have that knowledge, and no one can ever take that from me. To the widows who haven't joined Nyanam yet — I say this: Don't delay. Nyanam is not just about giving handouts. It's about rebuilding your life. Yes, they help us with houses, water tanks, kitchen



gardens. But more than that, they give us the tools to take care of ourselves.

When I graduate from this program, I will go back and teach other widows, and my children too. I'll teach them the importance of fearing God, of knowing their rights, and of never giving up. If there's one thing I'll never forget, it's how Nyanam helped me secure that title deed. That piece of paper gave me more than just ownership — it gave me peace.

To me, healing means being restored — not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. I now read the Bible and understand the stories in a different light. When I read about widows in scripture, I see myself. I understand their pain. And I also understand their strength.

Some people left the group. Some came back. Some didn't. To those who are still outside, I urge them — come back. Or start your own group. Don't walk this journey alone. With Nyanam, we have been lifted from a place of darkness into light. We've been taught our rights, how to navigate conflict, how to lead ourselves.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when gatherings were restricted, Nyanam still found ways to reach us. They divided us into small groups of ten and continued their visits. They never abandoned us.

I look back now, and all I can say is: my life's journey is a miracle from God. Every single change I've experienced has come through His grace — and through the work of Nyanam. I no longer walk in fear or shame. I walk in dignity, confidence, and faith. And to me, that is the true meaning of healing.



From grass to grace

Caroline Akinyi Otieno
Widowed in 1995

I have walked this widowhood journey for thirty years. I got married in 1995, into a polygamous home, full of challenges I couldn't yet imagine. Over time, I lost my husband, and then my mother-in-law. When my husband died, I was left with two young children — one in Class Two, the other just starting nursery school. Life, from then on, was never easy.

At the time, I was trying to make ends meet by teaching children in a spare room at our local church. It wasn't much, but it gave us something. Then one day, the church told me to leave. No reason, just a notice and just like that, the only place I had to earn income from was gone. I shifted to another location, though paying rent was a struggle. Still, I kept going. Later, I found another church and started again, and by God's grace, I began getting more and more pupils. The church saw this and decided to build classrooms, offering me a formal teaching job. But I turned it down.

It wasn't pride. It was something deeper. I felt called to do this work differently, on my own terms. I prayed about it. And one day, as I was in prayer, a thought came to me: What about the old house of my mother-in-law? It had been sitting there, locked, unused, forgotten. I approached her co-wives and asked for permission to fix it up and use it as a classroom. They agreed. That abandoned, dusty house became my classroom. And from that space, I began to rebuild my life bit by bit, lesson by lesson.

I'm 54 years old now. The journey hasn't been smooth. There were times I didn't know how I'd pay school fees or feed my children. There were moments when I felt truly alone, especially when one of my mothers-in-law tried to take away the piece of land where I had built a small house. They chased me away. It broke me.



But I held on, especially because my first mother-in-law encouraged me not to give up. Later, we discovered that my father-in-law had left behind another piece of land that hadn't yet been distributed. When the time came to divide it, I was given a portion. That's where I now live. That's where my home stands.

It was through church that I first heard about Nyanam. A few widows from our congregation were part of it, and they often shared what they were learning when we went out for fellowship in homes. One of them introduced us to someone from another church, who encouraged us to join. And so I did. It felt like a place I belonged. Nyanam, it turned out, is a family of women who understood my pain, who had faced rejection, loss, and uncertainty like I had. They didn't need long explanations. We just knew.

What struck me most in those early days at Nyanam was how intentional the program was. They didn't just say, "We help widows." They said, "This is for widows. Only widows." And they said, "We will teach you, but the foundation will be the Word of God." That touched me deeply.

The first real change I experienced at Nyanam was trauma healing. For years, I had been walking around with pain from being chased away, from rejection by my in-laws, and even by the church that once supported me. I had grown used to carrying that pain like a bag on my back. But Nyanam slowly helped me put it down. Through storytelling, through scripture, and through listening to others, I began to feel seen, heard, and whole.

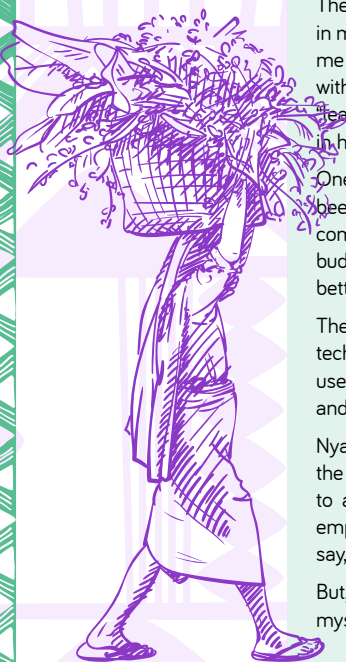
Then came the leadership trainings. Nyanam taught me how to be a leader in my family and community not just by title, but by how I live. They trained me to take care of my health, manage my emotions, and nurture peace within myself and those around me. I had never thought of myself as a "leader" before. But now, I saw that leadership starts in the small things like in how I talk to my children, how I manage a conflict, and how I show up.

One training that really transformed my life was on microfinance. I had been running the school for years but without any structure. Money would come and go. I couldn't track it. But through Nyanam, I learned how to budget, keep records, and even pay myself. Now, I manage my finances better, and I know what comes in, what goes out, and how to plan.

They also introduced me to kitchen gardening — the simple farming techniques for growing vegetables at home. I started planting for my own use, and eventually began selling the surplus. It brought in extra income and filled me with that made me feel proud.

Nyanam also taught us about land rights. They explained how to protect the little we had, how to secure our homes and land legally, and how to avoid being cheated out of our inheritance. For the first time, I felt empowered not just as a woman, but as a widow who could stand up and say, "This is mine."

But, what changed most, was how others saw me and how I began to see myself. People now come to me with their problems. I give advice. I am



invited to speak at forums. I have even helped other women — single mothers and widows — find short-term jobs through my school. I tell them, “You may feel forgotten, but you’re not. There’s still something in your hands. Start there.”

Nyanam has given me confidence. People now say, “Look at Caroline. She’s a strong woman.” But they don’t know the tears it took to get here. They don’t know how low I felt before I joined. Without Nyanam, I wouldn’t have discovered my potential. Truly, I had no vision. But today, I feel I have moved from grass to grace.

I look back and smile when I think of how far I’ve come. I took my child to college. I built something out of nothing. And now, others use me as an example.

There’s a song I love — it says, Whatever God has given you, don’t let Satan take it. That’s how I live now. I protect what I’ve built, and I encourage other widows to do the same. To the ones who are still sitting at home, quiet and hurting, I say: Join something. Find your people. Don’t just sit and wait. Do something.

I thank Nyanam for all they have done. For showing us the way. For helping us discover peace and strength. For reminding us of the Word of God. Because now, I don’t lose hope. I don’t live in fear.

As I graduate from this journey, I plan to continue connecting with my fellow widows. We need to keep going, keep sharing, and keep lifting each other. We must form welfare groups, strengthen our bonds, and help others who are still in darkness.

And the one thing I’ll never forget is this: The Word of God has given me courage. I may be a widow but I am also a mother, a teacher, a leader, a friend, and a woman who refuses to be afraid.



They thought I would leave, But I stayed

Beatrice Atieno Obware,
Widowed in 1999

I was still young when my husband passed away in 1999. We had two children together, but one died, so I was left with only one child and a house that couldn't even keep out the rain.

It was a grass-thatched house, poorly covered, and after my husband's death, life took a very difficult turn. He had been doing manual work before falling sick, and when his condition worsened, he was brought home. That's where he passed away. Many people assumed I would run away from our home after his death, but I had already made up my mind: I wasn't going anywhere. I had decided to stay.

The challenges that followed were heavy. I was rained on in that leaky house. I didn't have enough food. I had no support system. To provide for my child, I started working on people's farms. It was tough labour, but I managed to get something small to eat, day by day. Eventually, I saved up just enough to buy five pieces of iron sheets, and with those, I began building a more secure home for myself and my child.

Because I had some education, I looked for work in local NGOs within the village. I was lucky to find cleaning jobs in one of them, but that didn't last long. When it ended, I started a fish-selling business. It wasn't easy but, at least, it helped me survive and feed my family. Over time, I had more children. I raised them, struggled with them, and supported my son all the way through to university.

But as a Luo woman, it was important



that I establish my own homestead —dala. According to our customs, this affirms one's place and legacy. But that was another battle. My in-laws, especially my brother-in-law, didn't want me to settle on the land. He was eyeing it for himself. It felt like a fight for survival every day but I stayed the course. I refused to be intimidated. I wanted my children to have a home and a future.

At church, a few of us widows began meeting and formed a small group. We started encouraging one another, sharing our stories, and lifting each other up. At some point, some members of our group attended a seminar and came back with news of an organisation called Nyanam. They said it was a group working to support and empower widows. That's how we first connected with Nyanam.

When the Nyanam guests visited us, we were excited and hopeful. We sat down with them, talked about our lives, and made plans for the future. And when they returned, they brought us something we hadn't even asked for: Bibles.

That moment changed everything.

Before Nyanam, our meetings mostly focused on finances and our struggles. But with the Bibles came something deeper. We began studying the Word. We started preaching to one another. That was our first real wealth from Nyanam — it was not money but spiritual nourishment. I was drawn to it immediately. It gave me a kind of hope and courage that I hadn't experienced in a long time.

Then the training began. The first thing Nyanam taught us was about leadership and not the kind you find in titles or offices, but leadership that starts in the home. We were reminded that as widows, we are the heads of our households. We must take charge, not wait for others to lead us. That struck a chord with me. I wanted to be the kind of leader that's strong, grounded, and able to bring change.

Nyanam's teachings weren't shallow. They touched the core of who we are and how we live. We were taught that whatever we do —even something as simple as planting a kitchen garden— must be done with purpose, and that everything must align with Biblical teachings.

We were also taught to know and care for our health. Before, I didn't even know how to access medical insurance. But now, I'm registered under the Social Health Authority. That's a big step for someone like me, who once feared even the idea of going to the hospital.

Nyanam didn't stop at teaching. They trained us in land rights, which is so important because widows often face land-related violence or dispossession. They taught us how to save, how to protect our property, and how to build wealth. Through table banking, I've learned to manage money well. I now understand how to separate capital from profit. If I buy fish worth one thousand shillings, I must track my profit and never touch the capital. That kind of knowledge has changed my business and my life at large.



Beyond business, we were taught about mental health, how to manage stress, depression, and all the emotional weight we carry as widows. We learned conflict resolution, how to nurture peace in our homes and communities, and how to stand firm in the face of challenges.

One of the most powerful lessons I've taken from Nyanam is servant leadership. I now understand that being a leader doesn't mean sitting and commanding. It means working alongside others, getting your hands dirty, and guiding your family with integrity. I lead by example. I work, I provide, I plan, and I grow.

Today, I have my own kitchen garden. I plant vegetables, and we always have something to eat. We use multi-storage methods to preserve food, and we no longer go hungry. My home has become a model of resilience and progress.

People used to look down on me. I was the widow who lived in a collapsing house. They thought I had no direction. But after joining Nyanam, things changed. People now come to see what I've built. They see the transformation. They see peace. They see leadership. I've become someone they listen to. I'm now a trainer of trainees, sharing the same lessons that transformed my life with other widows.

Without Nyanam, I wouldn't be here today. I had the knowledge, but I didn't have anyone to help me unlock my potential. Now, I'm not only confident but also empowered.

To every widow out there, I say this: Join Nyanam. Don't isolate yourself. Join the sub-groups and embrace the journey. You will witness and experience change, just as I have. Nyanam is more than an organization. It's a lifeline.

Thanks to Nyanam, I raised my son all the way from nursery to university through table banking, faith, and resilience.



God is the planner

Elizabeth Adongo,
Widowed in 2013

I'm 40 years old now and I became a widow when I was just 28.

It's been twelve years since my husband passed away, leaving me with three young children. My firstborn was in class five, and my youngest hadn't even started school.

When he died, I was completely shaken, afraid and lost. I felt like I had been singled out by fate, like I was the only one going through such a storm. My husband was the lastborn in his family, and I too was the youngest. That made things harder. There were no peers who could guide me through the unfamiliar path of widowhood. I had no one to comfort me or even show me what to do next.

I remember those early days, the long, quiet nights and the constant worry about how I would raise my children. I constantly wondered how we would survive. It felt like a heavy cloud was always hanging over me. That kind of fear stays with you. You walk around with it like a burden no one else can see.

Then, one Sunday in church, an announcement was made about a meeting for widows. I went with my mother-in-law. That day, I met Jacky. She spoke about creating a union of widows, explaining that it was a space where we could come together, share our struggles, support one another, and find solutions as a group.

My mother-in-law was already part of another group, but for the rest of us who weren't affiliated with any, we decided to form a new one. At the beginning, we were around 100 women. But as time went by, people stopped coming. The numbers kept shrinking, and I, too, stopped attending. For three months, I stayed away.

Then something unexpected happened. A very old woman from the group came looking for me. She said,



“You’re too young to disappear from us. Come back.” I hesitated, but my mother-in-law encouraged me to rejoin. When I finally returned, the group made me their secretary.

That small gesture gave me a sense of purpose again.

We started simple: prayers, encouragement, and Bible teachings in church. Slowly, we began to form something more structured. We rebranded and called ourselves “Chi Ruoth Majehera Mogwedhi” — a phrase that loosely translates to “a loving and blessed widow.”

We began table banking with just twenty shillings each. After meetings, we’d go home with a little sugar or other essentials. It might seem small, but it meant the world to us.

Nyanam came into the picture around this time. The first thing they introduced us to was the Word of God. That became our foundation. Through the story of Prophet Elijah and the widow who only had a little oil, we learned that even when we feel like we have nothing, God can multiply it. That lesson was our beginning.

As we continued meeting, Nyanam began equipping us with skills in business, agriculture, leadership, and understanding our rights. I took a loan of 2,000 shillings and used it to buy clothes at Kibuye Market to sell. I had trained as an Early Childhood Development (ECD) teacher, but the income was so little, it could barely sustain us. So, I shifted my focus to business.

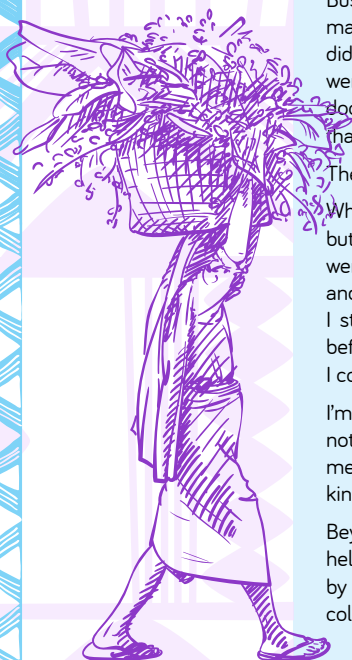
Business was one of the things Nyanam trained us on, including how to manage it, how to keep records, how to budget. Honestly, before that, I didn’t take those things seriously. But through their teachings, my eyes were opened. Slowly, my business grew. I went from hawking clothes door-to-door to owning a shop at Inpour Shopping Centre. Today, I run that shop full time.

The transformation wasn’t just in my finances. It was in me, too.

When my husband died, my confidence died with him. I was a teacher but I couldn’t even speak in front of people. I always worried that others were looking at me and thinking, “There goes the widow.” I carried shame and self-doubt. But Nyanam helped restore me. Through the teachings, I started speaking again. Then teaching. Then leading. Today, I stand before people with boldness. I speak in church, I preach the gospel, and I counsel other women and even youth in the village.

I’m no longer the woman who used to cry in public. I’m respected now, not because I’m perfect, but because of the change people have seen in me. Even the children of fellow leaders come to me for advice. That’s the kind of transformation Nyanam has brought into my life.

Beyond the teachings, Nyanam also supported us practically. They helped pay school fees, and one of my children is still being supported by them today. My firstborn is now in university, and the second is in college. Sometimes I look at them and think, “If it weren’t for Nyanam,



where would we be?"

Another powerful thing Nyanam gave us was access to seed funds for microfinance. That opened doors for us to get larger, more meaningful loans. With that, my business expanded further. I started thinking like an entrepreneur, not just a seller. Now, I want to grow even more and employ other widows in my shop so that together, we can thrive.

Leadership is another area where Nyanam made a huge impact on me. The training I received helped me understand servant leadership, how to guide others with humility and vision. I can now lead our group, introduce new projects, and even train others. I've also learned how to work with youth.

For a long time, people expected me to leave after my husband's death. Some assumed I would remarry or just disappear. But I stayed. I held on. I raised my children. I built a life. Now, I've become an example and proof that even young widows can choose to stay and thrive.

If Nyanam hadn't been there, I don't know where I'd be. Their teachings changed everything from how I run my business to how I make decisions. They taught me to pause, reflect, and choose wisely. Those lessons are still with me today.

If I could sum up my journey, I would say this: God is the planner. He is the one who writes each of our stories, even the painful parts. And through Nyanam, I have seen how He can turn mourning into dancing.

To the widows who haven't yet joined Nyanam, I urge you to come experience the teachings, the support, and the sisterhood. It's not just a group. It's a place where lives are rebuilt.

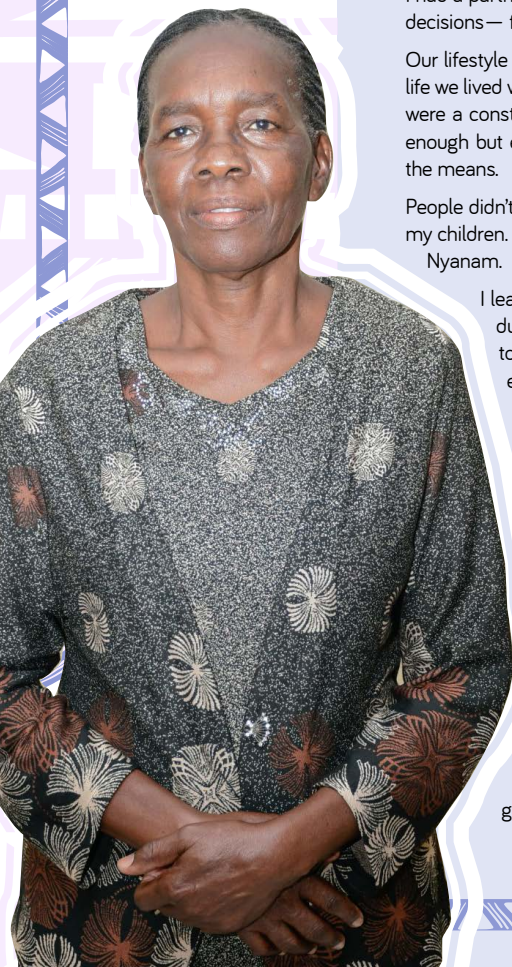
And to Nyanam: Thank you. Please don't stop. Your vision of seeing thriving widows in Africa is not just a dream, it's already happening. I am living proof. After I graduate, I want to continue growing my business and create employment opportunities for other widows so they too can rebuild their lives.

The one thing I'll never forget is the teachings. They gave me skills but more than that, they gave me courage, purpose, and the ability to solve problems. They reminded me that even when all you have is a little oil, in God's hands, that is more than enough.



From hopelessness to healing

Sarah Ogendo,
Widowed in 1999



When my husband died in September 1999, everything changed. We had shared a life, raised four children together, and supported one another. But suddenly, I was alone. My eldest child was just in class eight, and my lastborn in class one. I was still working, but my earnings could hardly sustain us. Before, I had a partner to lean on. Now, every responsibility — school fees, food, decisions— fell on my shoulders. Life didn't pause for my grief.

Our lifestyle had to change. I tried, with all I had, to maintain the kind of life we lived when their father was alive, but I was struggling. School fees were a constant worry. Food became a daily challenge not just having enough but even knowing how to grow it. I lacked the knowledge and the means.

People didn't think I would manage. They didn't believe I could educate my children. And at times, I doubted myself too. But then, I encountered Nyanam.

I learned about Nyanam through my group in Kisian Railways during their recruitment drive. Initially, I missed the chance to join because I was tied up with work, but later, I was encouraged to seek permission so I could attend the trainings. That first training —on servant leadership— opened my eyes. It wasn't just theory. It was practical, powerful, and personal.

What drew me to Nyanam, what made me trust them, was their commitment. I saw the women they had trained go on to teach others. There were follow-ups. There was community. Nyanam wasn't just about sitting in a room and learning; it was about transformation and I saw that firsthand.

From the start, Nyanam treated us with dignity. The staff were respectful and warm. They consulted us before beginning any project, ensuring our voices were heard. Eventually, they identified me as a mentor and asked me to help facilitate some of the trainings. That gave me a sense of purpose I hadn't felt in years.

One of the teachings that transformed me most was about asset management. I used to look at my large compound and see only the labour it took to slash the grass. But Nyanam taught me to see it as an asset. I began to redirect the little money I had. I learned how to grow vegetables, not just seasonally, but all year round. With their encouragement, I even dug a borehole and bought a water pump for irrigation.

Before Nyanam, I used to buy all my vegetables. Now, I grow my own and even sell some. That's more than economic improvement; it's independence.

But it wasn't just about material things. Nyanam nurtured my spiritual life too. They gave us Bibles and based many of their trainings on scripture. I began helping other widows connect their stories to biblical teachings. I had once been a quiet woman, emotionally withdrawn, holding so much pain inside. But sitting in a room, listening to other widows share their stories, something shifted. I realised I wasn't alone. Others had suffered, some even more than I had. That gave me strength. That gave me hope.

The trauma healing sessions were especially powerful. I began to understand that healing wasn't just possible, it was within reach. I started sharing my story. Little by little, the grief that had weighed on me began to lift. I discovered a new identity: I was not just a widow; I was a leader. I could walk others through the same healing I was experiencing.

People now see me differently. I'm no longer just a grieving woman. They call me teacher and a counsellor. And I carry that title with pride because I know the journey it took to get here. I've encouraged widows to join Nyanam, and I continue to mentor others through what I've learned.

Looking back, I often wonder: what if Nyanam didn't exist? What would my life look like? Honestly, I don't like to think about it. I might still be lost in sorrow, stuck in that dark place. But instead, I'm here, living proof that hope can rise from the ashes. Even my family now treats me differently. Where there was once conflict and disrespect, there's now peace and understanding. Nyanam's teachings on peacemaking have become central to how I live and how I teach. I always say violence doesn't pay. Approach every situation with peace, and you'll find a way through.

My journey with Nyanam has brought not just personal healing, but joy to my children and my entire family. They've seen their mother rise again. They've watched as I transformed from a woman who had lost direction to someone full of purpose and vision.

To other widows out there, I say this: if you're lost, find Nyanam. And if you can't find them, find one of us. We're here. We're walking proof that healing, dignity, and purpose are possible. You just need someone to walk alongside you. Nyanam did that for me and I will never forget it.

Even after graduation, I'm not letting go. I'm ready to serve in any capacity. If I were to forget everything else in life, I will not forget that Nyanam helped me find myself again.



How Nyanam changed my story

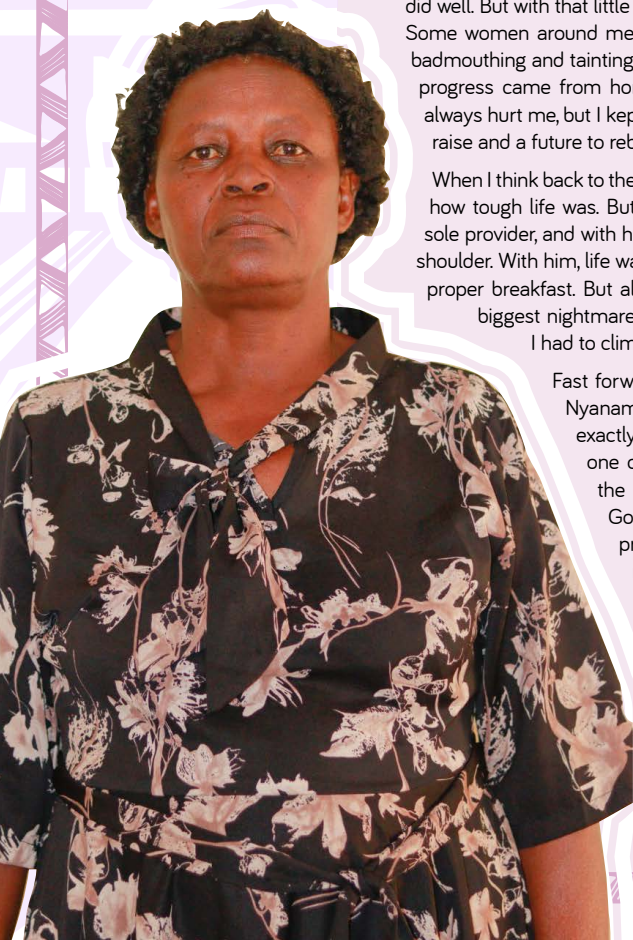
Hellen Atieno Ochieng,
Widowed in 2006

My journey into widowhood began when I was only thirty. My husband, who had been my companion, my provider, and truly my everything, passed away after a short illness. His death left me with four young children depending entirely on me.

Soon after his funeral, I used part of the money I received to start a small business. I worked hard, and through God's grace the business did well. But with that little success came a different kind of challenge. Some women around me, whom I believe were just jealous, started badmouthing and tainting my name. They refused to believe that my progress came from honest work and determination. Their words always hurt me, but I kept moving forward because I had children to raise and a future to rebuild.

When I think back to the days after my husband's death, I remember how tough life was. But I also see how far I've come. He was the sole provider, and with his departure, that burden fell entirely on my shoulder. With him, life was great. We lacked nothing. We always had proper breakfast. But all that went with him. School fees was my biggest nightmare, and every term felt like a huge mountain I had to climb.

Fast forward to 2018 and my pastor told me about Nyanam International. I joined without knowing exactly what to expect, but that decision became one of the most important steps of my life. At the time, I was already teaching the Word of God, but I knew deep down that I lacked the professionalism and deeper understanding needed to guide others. When Nyanam took us through Inductive Bible study, it opened my eyes. I began to understand Scripture in ways I had never understood before. That training changed not just how I taught, but how I lived and how I connected with God. When I saw that Nyanam was offering training that aligned with my needs, I felt like God



was finally answering my prayers.

One of the opportunities Nyanam gave us was the chance to recruit other widows. I pride myself with having recruited tens of groups to Nyanam, and as a result of this achievement, I became a mentor. Today, I am a trainer of widows. Having been in their shoes, I graciously walk with them through their own journeys of grief and healing.

The mentorship training included but were not limited to Peace Making, Good Governance, and Human Rights. We have learned so much. Nyanam equipped us with agricultural skills, and today we have thriving kitchen gardens. They also introduced us to the multi-storey gardening project, which has hugely transformed how we grow food. In our group, every widow owns a Bible, and it is one of the things we treasure deeply.

Of all the teachings, that of servant leadership has truly transformed my life. It taught me that leadership involved, quiet strength, and purpose.

Even more transformative was the teaching on peace making. Before Nyanam, I was not at peace with myself. I carried so much hurt, fear, and confusion. Their teachings softened my heart and renewed my spirit. The difference is visible not just to me, but to others as well. Even women who are not widows wish they could join Nyanam, though the organization works strictly with widows.

Through Nyanam, I have inspired many people. I have learned how to relate with others harmoniously, and that has changed both my life and my family's life. We have been taught how to lead our households with wisdom and grace. The leadership at Nyanam is peaceful, loving, and caring. May God bless them for the work they are doing in our lives.

As I graduate, my heart is full of gratitude. My only message to new recruits is that at Nyanam, you only need to **work hard, be kind, and respectful**. With these values, transformation is guaranteed.

As my cohort graduates, I am joyous. Beyond celebrating this milestone with fellow widows, I just can't imagine ourselves in gowns, sharing cake, and rejoicing in how far we have come.

I will never forget the business skills I learned from Nyanam. They, wholesomely, remain the most important tools I carry with me into my next life. I know this is not the end of my story but the beginning of a new, hopeful chapter.



Epilogue

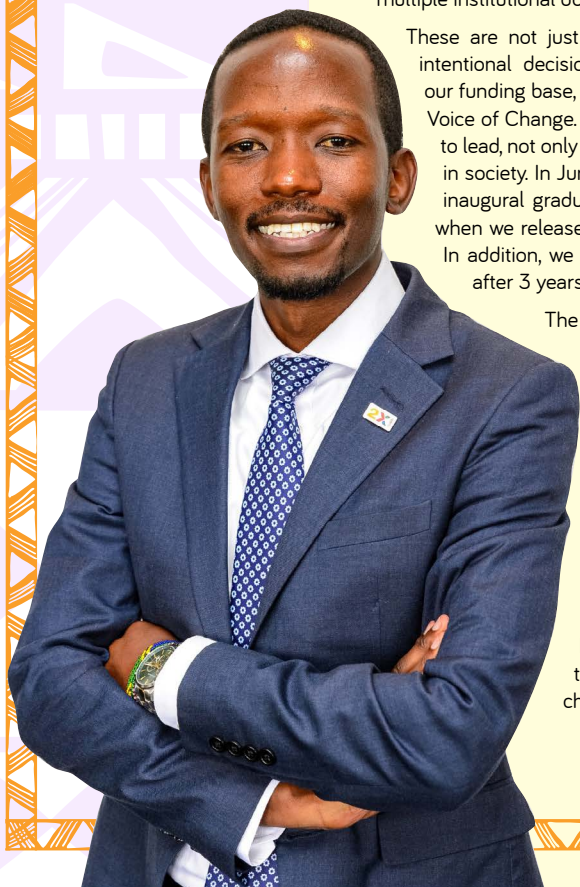
A Reflection from the Board

When we began this journey seven years ago, Nyanam was little more than a dream shared by our Founder and a handful of widows. Today, that dream has grown into a movement with thousands of women at its heart. From those first leadership circles, where widows gathered to share grief and courage, we have seen the birth of a powerful network that is restoring dignity, building livelihoods, and shaping communities across the Lake Victoria region.

The Board's responsibility has always been to chart a path that balances vision with sustainability. In 2020, Nyanam's work touched just over 100 widows with a modest budget of under \$20,000. Today, we are serving more than 3,000 widows and 1200 children, with multiple institutional donors and a well-defined growth strategy.

These are not just numbers; they are milestones that reflect intentional decisions—strengthening governance, diversifying our funding base, and refining our model into what we now call Voice of Change. Each step has been about preparing widows to lead, not only in their families, but in their communities and in society. In June 2025, we graduated 521 widows from our inaugural graduation ceremony, marking a pivotal moment when we release these leaders to change their communities. In addition, we issued the first Land Title Deed to a widow after 3 years in the succession process.

The stories in this Anthology remind us that data alone cannot capture the breadth of Nyanam's impact. Behind every percentage point of improved food security or reduced depression lies a widow who has found her voice again. Behind every new house built is a family that now sleeps in safety. Behind every land rights case filed is a woman who refused to be silenced. As one widow shared, "Through Nyanam, I felt like the heavy burden was being lifted... I went from sorrow to resilience, hope, and purpose." Her words speak to the transformation that occurs when widows lead change themselves.



Epilogue

Another widow captured it even more simply: “If you have not yet joined Nyanam, come and discover the good things it has to offer.” That spirit of invitation, born out of lived experience, is what gives our mission its authenticity. These voices remind us that while we measure progress in programs and budgets, the real measure is the hope restored in individual lives.

As we look to the next chapter, our vision is both inspiring and sobering. By 2030, Nyanam seeks to reach 15% of widows in the Lake Victoria region—over 30,000 women.

Achieving this will require more resources, more leaders, and more innovation. It will also require us to hold tightly to the personal touch that has made Nyanam unique—the songs, the prayers, the small acts of solidarity that have bound this community together.

On behalf of the Board, I offer gratitude to every widow who has shared her journey in these pages, to our staff who carry the mission forward daily, and to our partners who make this work possible. As we close this first season of Nyanam and step into the next, my prayer is that the seeds of hope planted here will continue to bear fruit far beyond what we can measure.

Teddy Onserio

Outgoing Nyanam Board Chair





 www.nyanam.org

 [@Nyanam Widows Rising](https://www.youtube.com/@NyanamWidowsRising)

 info@nyanam.org

 [@Nyanam International](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nyanam-international)

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