



Nyanam International  
Annual Report  
2019



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## 1. Message from the Founder



*Jackie (left) with her mother Rebecca who has been a widow for 20 years*

### *The invitation*

A Bible story in Luke 14:16-24 describes a banquet in which a Master sends his servants to invite his guests to the banquet. The invited guests skip the banquet for various reasons. This causes the Master to send his servants to bring everyone else they can find on the streets and who is willing to join the festival, to come to the banquet.

Our journey with widows at Nyanam, in some way mirrors this parable. Nyanam is like the servants, a guide sent to invite the widows, the heroes, to brave a path of hope that leads to positive social transformation in their personal and communal lives. Our vision is for widows to transition from being lonely to being connected, from poor to economically independent, from unheard to the voice of change, and

from helpless to the change leaders. Experiencing this transformation is like sitting at the banquet table: a place of fulfilment, abundance, community and joy. But it does require the widows to drop all excuses and journey from the streets to come to the banquet table, where they can experience abundant lives.

Widows with Nyanam have embraced this invitation and taken proactive steps to experience this positive transformation. From weekly to biweekly meetings in their leadership circles (widow-to-widow support groups), they have used their resources to creatively address their emotional, material and spiritual needs. They have built contagious friendships, demonstrated in the love and support they offer each other in times of need. They use the word of God as a light for their path, comfort when their journey is rough, strength when they feel weak, and as an inspiration to be fruitful in their lives.

As a sent guide, Nyanam looks for resources and partners to enable the widows reach the banquet table. From micro-enterprise training, property rights training, micro-credits for loans, and mentorship workshops for the widows' children, we are grateful to support the widows in their path of hope. We thank all Nyanam volunteers, donors and partners, local and international, who devoted their time, wisdom and resources to encourage the widows in this journey. As we reflect on all that the Master enabled us to accomplish in 2019, we hope you are inspired and feel invited to journey with us. It is the servants' joy too that the guests arrive at the banquet.

Jackline Odhiambo  
Founder and Executive Director  
Nyanam International

## 2. Organizational Background

### 2.1 Why Widows

“It can be said that there is no group more affected by the sin of omission than widows. [Widows] are painfully absent from the statistics of many developing countries, [and] rarely mentioned in ... women’s poverty, development, health or human rights [publications]” (1). This was the opening statement in the United Nations’ *women 2000* report, yet nearly two decades later, little has been done to address the plight of widows. Most widows in developing nations continue to endure extreme poverty, physical and sexual violence, economic exploitation, ill health and socio-cultural marginalization (2).

In Kenya, an estimated 8 million women are widows (2). The death of a husband comes with a loss of social status, with widows experiencing twice as much physical, sexual and economic violence than married women (3). In the Lake Victoria region, patriarchal norms such as widow inheritance<sup>1</sup>, ‘sex for fish’<sup>2</sup> and property disinheritance heighten poverty in widowhood (4–7). These practices also expose widows to HIV with more than 60% of HIV positive women being widows (4,5,8). The effects of these injustices are detrimental to the widows, the widows’ children and to the wellbeing of whole communities.

### 2.2 About Nyanam

Nyanam International is a Kenyan non-governmental organization that helps widows in the Lake Victoria region become visibly connected, confident and competent to lead positive social transformation in their communities. Our journey began in 2012 with the establishment of Mboti Sunrise Primary School - currently owned by the government, drilling of a community borehole in partnership with a local organization - Kenya Water for Health, training of early childhood teachers, and creation of curriculum enrichment programs to facilitate learning in local schools. Once the school was established, our work evolved to a focus on widows as the most vulnerable women in our context.

The purpose of our work is to enhance the dignity and agency of widows in these contexts. We connect widows through leadership circles (support groups). We increase widows’ confidence and competence through capacity building on leadership, voice of change, human rights, micro-enterprise, agriculture, health and nutrition. Widows then lead by implementing self-designed social change projects that address barriers to their freedom and agency. These empowered women lead positive social transformation not only in their communities, but also in their families for future generations to come.

### 2.3 Mission Statement

We prepare widows to lead positive social transformation in their communities through capacity building and resourcing that enables widows to be connected, confident, competent leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> A traditional widow support system in which a male next of kin should provide economic, emotional and parenting support to widows in a non-sexual relationship. Currently, the system exposes widows to sexual and economic exploitation, and most widows get infected by HIV through widow inheritance.

<sup>2</sup> A sexually exploitative economic system following low fish production from the Lake Victoria. With low fish production, women fish vendors compete on fish purchase, fishermen demand sexual favors in order to let women buy their fish.

## 2.4 Vision Statement

A society in which widows thrive.

## 2.5 Our team

The governing structure of Nyanam is composed of:

The <b>Board of Directors</b> comprises of five members who help in decision making on matters pertaining to the organization.	The <b>advisory board</b> consists of different professionals who offer their professional skillset to Nyanam when need be and volunteer in taking part in leading Nyanam's initiatives.	The <b>management team</b> consists of local members who help in the implementation of the activities and the day today running of the organization.
Teddy Onserio Haotian Xu Grace Kinda Emmy Lippold Jackline Odhiambo	Bethany Dixon Elizabeth Nielson Felix Otieno Odhiambo	Nicodemus Agumba Beryl Ochieng Clifford Ochieng' Rebecca Dero Jackline Odhiambo

## 3 What Nyanam does

Our work seeks to:

1. Break the silence on widowhood stigma and plight
2. Help widows navigate singlehood through community building
3. Build the capacity of widows to effectively address their basic needs
4. Promote economic, cultural and health justice for widows

To achieve these goals, we implement programs in three areas: leadership development, economic empowerment and community engagement. Our programmes address the personal and socio-economic needs of widows and their children. The following are the activities we implemented in 2019 under each programmatic area.

### 3.1 Leadership development

Leadership development involves all our capacity building initiatives that are aimed to improve widows' connectedness, confidence and competence in become effective leaders of social transformation in their communities.

#### 3.1.1 Leadership circles

Leadership circles are widow-to-widow support groups where widows come together weekly to bi-weekly to offer each other love, encouragement and support. Each leadership circle engages in activities that improve the widows' spiritual, economic and psychosocial health. In January 2019, we had 60 widows, from Kisumu County in 2 leadership circles. In April 2019, we created a third leadership circle in Siaya County, adding 20 more widows for up to 80 widows in total. Widows use their connectedness in the leadership circles to influence each other in leading self and household well.

In 2019, we implemented monthly group counselling session in each leadership circle, totalling to 45 group counselling sessions. We also offered individual counselling; however, these were based on need and we plan structure this better as we recruit counsellors in our program.



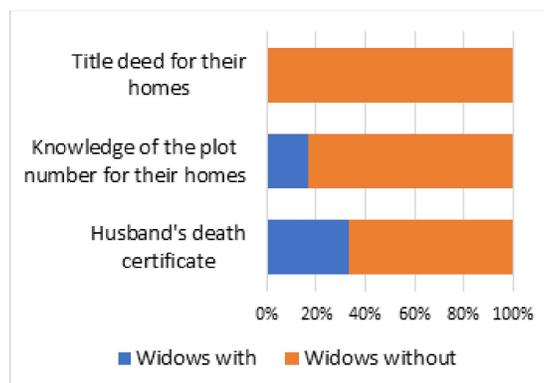
*Chi Ruoth ma Jahera Leadership Circle*

### 3.1.2 Curriculum development

We completed our first draft of our 'Voice of change' curriculum, led by our Executive Director, Jackline Odhiambo. Voice of Change is a widow centric curriculum that creates space for widows to analyse their lived experiences and amplify their voices for positive social change. We plan to improve and pilot the curriculum in 2020. This curriculum should be a resource for widows globally.

### 3.1.3 Property rights training

Through partnership with Transparency International Kenya, we held a workshop with 30 widows on land property rights. Although the laws for Kenya provide for women to own property, most women do not own land owing to the traditional practice of patrilineal inheritance of land. As result, many widows lose access to the land owned by their deceased husbands, and face eviction from their homes. The figure below shows that all the widows in this training lacked title deed in their names. In 2020, Nyanam will develop curriculum on property rights that will help widows map their journey to land ownership. We will also seek partnerships with Pro bono lawyers who can represent the widows in the land ownership process.





*Elizabeth (right) from Transparency International providing legal advice to Dora, a widow with Nyanam, concerning her land*

## 3.2 Economic Empowerment

### 3.2.1 Micro-enterprise Training

We implemented a 3-day micro-enterprise training with 30 widows in partnership with Women in the Window International (WiW) USA. WiW sent two of their servant leaders from South Sudan, Paula Achan and Margaret Barsaba who led the training with Nyanam. During the training, the widows studied Biblical women in business, and mapped their talents and market opportunities in their communities and developed 9 business plans for varied products/services they wanted to offer. They studied the four legs of marketing (product, price, promotion and place) and the need to invest in every leg to ensure the sustainability of their businesses. They learnt how to set price for their products accounting for all the production costs and profit, and to keep proper records for their businesses. At this training, the widows felt they drew closer to God and improved their ability to manage their businesses effectively. We thank WiW for this opportunity!



*2019 Micro-enterprise training with 30 widows from 3 leadership circles*

### 3.2.2 Micro-credits

We gave 2 leadership circles a small seed money (US\$300) based on group sizes to expand the pool of resources the widows can borrow from in their Table banking. Table banking is a group savings and lending scheme in which members pool their savings and borrow from this savings to strengthen their businesses, as well as respond to emergency financial needs. After a period, the borrowed money is returned with a 10% interest. The interest increases the pool of money available for further borrowing. By the end of the year, the US\$300 had increased by 50% to US\$450



Widows open their purses to starting savings during Table Banking Activity

### 3.2.3 Widow-led initiatives

We celebrated the initiatives of the leadership circles in enhancing widows' socio-economic development. With their resources, the widows bought 16 solar lamps, 26 goats, 10 plastic chairs, 30 group uniforms for their group branding. They also renovated houses for 10 widows, built a house for one widow, and fundraised to support their children through education. We are proud of the resourcefulness of these women and their ingenuity in using their limited resources to improve their wellbeing.



Widows carrying their solar lamps home

### 3.3 Community Engagement

#### 3.3.1 International Widows Day 2019

We celebrated our first International Widows Day with 60 widows. International Widows Day was launched by the United Nations in 2010 to raise awareness about the plight of widows. The invisibility of widows in national and global human rights agenda caused the United Nations to launch this day. In addition to raising awareness, the aim of this day is to galvanize support for positive change in widows' lives.

The widows shared personal stories of renewed hope, confidence and a sense of purpose in the widows' lives, presented songs from their widows' choir and showcased their micro-enterprise in an open market where they made sales too: vegetables, fruits, seeds, firewood, second hand clothes, sewed and crocheted table cloths, and animal ropes made from sisal. Nyanam gave the widows a gift of a kilogram of sugar each and expounded on the widows' invitation to lead. We also prayed for health, strength, unity and for success in our journey to the banquet table. A community of friends from Ontario, Canada, also joined in the celebration of International Widows Day, by signing a card for the widows. All in all, the widows experienced the love and support intended for the International Widows Day. They experienced the joy of being part of a local and a global community that cares.



*Widows sharing a meal on International Widows Day 2019*

### 3.3.2 Home visits

We visited 10 widows who welcomed us to their homes and shared their stories. From these visits, we identified one widow, Mary, who for 13 years had been waiting for her house repair. We resolved to support Mary in building her house. Mary contributed 4500 bricks and 7 tonnes of sand. The widows in her leadership circle contributed nails and water for construction. Nyanam contributed the rest of the material including labour.



Mary's house in February  
2019



Mary (in yellow headwrap) in  
her new house with Nyanam  
team

### 3.3.3 Youth Mentorship Workshops

We held two workshops with youths. The first workshop with 50 children targeted 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders at Mboto Sunrise Primary School. Through games and storytelling activities, the youths wrote and read aloud their stories, sharing dreams for themselves and their families and describing hopes of becoming teachers, engineers, pilots, and doctors. Students also shared what they were grateful for, including their families, the opportunity to go to school, and provision of food and clothing. This workshop aimed at building confidence in speaking in public as well as nurturing creativity in storytelling.



*Mboto school kids with their stories during youth mentorship workshop*

In the second workshop led by four youth leaders who also grew up as widows' children, the youths shared their personal stories of overcoming adversity. They challenged the 23 widows' children to have a personal vision for their future, and to be determined, focussed, persistent and patient in achieving that vision. Their stories highlighted the need for courage and taking initiative over self-pity, perseverance over losing hope, and forgiveness over bitterness, to overcome life's challenges. In small groups, the widows' children created and presented short dramas that demonstrated the various challenges they face: lack of school fees, managing boy-girl relationships, dealing with peer-pressure, and balancing household responsibility with schoolwork. We hope to create more of these opportunities and to use storytelling and drama as a pathway to finding solutions to the challenges the youths face.



*These girls wanted to become architects and chose a project during the workshop with widows' children to design and construct a house*

### 3.3.4 Youth Camp

Through partnership with AIC Church in Kenya, we led a workshop on healthy relationships with 400 youths at 1-week youth camp. We sponsored 46 widows' children to the camp. Evelyn Odhiambo, a local youth leader, led the workshop on healthy relationships. All the 400 campers mapped their relationships with family, friends, mentors and community members. They then analysed the nature of these relationships, whether good or bad and the reasons for the nature of the relationships.

From relationship mapping, the campers learnt 6 conflicted management strategies they could use to improve their relationships: collaboration, give in, compromise, aggression, appeal to authority and avoiding/delaying. They discussed the need to pick the best strategy for a given conflict and dramatized the application of these strategies in solving conflicts in boy-girl relationship, parent-child relationship, and sibling relationship. The dramas were creative and insightful.

We also held a panel discussion to analyse relationship issues that emerged from the mapping and conflict management activities. The campers shared questions ranging from the right age to enter a boy-girl relationship, why men can be polygamous and not women, and what to do when one can't find employment after education. They also enjoyed the study of the book of Colossians during the camp, and many found learning about their identity in Christ eye-opening.



*Evelyn leading the workshop on healthy relationships at the Youth Camp*

### 3.3.5 Global visits

Harriet and Ros from Liverpool, one of our donors from the United Kingdom, visited us for 2 days and shared in the educational challenges for young girls. From this visit, Harriet committed to be a monthly donor at Nyanam.

Elizabeth Nielsen, our major family donor and a member of our advisory board from the United States visited us for 1 week. Elizabeth shared a Bible drama on a widows' endless oil with the widows from 2 Kings 4:1-7, distributed 80 Luo Bibles to the widows, and visited with the widows in Siaya County for a Sunday Service. The widows introduced Elizabeth to local food and ways of cooking.



*Widows dramatizing the endless oil story from 2 Kings 4:1-7*

Bethany Dixon from Elmira Canada, who is also one of our donors, a member of our advisory board and a volunteer with Nyanam also visited for 2 weeks. Bethany held the youth mentorship workshops with 70 children, and supported Jackie in developing our Voice of Change Curriculum.

### 3.3.6 Annual Nyanam Meeting

We concluded the year with our annual team building meeting where we thank all of our volunteers for their efforts throughout the year and planned for engagement for 2020



Nyanam local team with their families and all the youth leaders and volunteers

## 4 The Impact of Nyanam

### 4.1 What numbers say

Leadership development	Economic empowerment	Community engagement
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 leadership circles	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 widows trained in micro-enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 group counselling sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> 30 widows trained in property rights	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300 given in seed funding which grew to \$450	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 widows celebrated International Widows Day
<input type="checkbox"/> 100 widows reached	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 house built for a widow	<input type="checkbox"/> 400 youths trained in a youth camp
		<input type="checkbox"/> 70 youths in mentorship workshops

## 4.2 What widows say



### **Syprosa: I am gaining the confidence to encourage other widows**

*'After my husband died, my house also got burnt with everything in it. I only had one piece of clothing that I escaped the fire with. I would wash this cloth in the night, so I could wear it in the day. With my little children, we made a shanty shelter for ourselves. Whenever it rained, it rained hard on us. One day, a fellow woman came to visit me and said she had seen my problems. She built a new house for me and put my children through school. She helped change my life, and now through the leadership circles, I can help others, too. I am gaining the confidence in myself that I did not have before. I am grateful that I can share my experiences to encourage other widows.'*



### **Mary: When we meet, I'm taught, comforted, challenged, encouraged and changed**

*"We have centralized the word of God in our meetings. It is what makes the leadership circles unique from other women groups that I have been part of, which focus solely on material development. When we meet, we read the word of God, and one of us teaches on the word. We have witnessed behaviour changes among us. Some widows have stopped brewing or getting drunk on alcohol when we confronted the impact of our businesses and lifestyles on our lives and our children. We also share our personal problems for advice and material support where needed. I have sisters to lean on in times of trouble."*



### **Dora: Through table banking, we can borrow capital for our businesses**

*"My desire is for all of us widows to rise together, especially economically. In two years-time, I would love to see every widow leading their business, so that no one is left poor. A group business project would be great. We must all rise and shine together."*



### **Rose: We educate our children**

*"We know how education is important and we don't want any of the widows' children to miss out on school because of financial reasons. The goats we have bought help as education savings, but we need to strengthen our business so that we can also contribute educational funds."*



### **Salome: We pool labour for our farms**

*"Some widows have land but lack resources to cultivate it. They end up having little harvest but not maximizing the productivity of their lands. Last year, we pooled labour to cultivate these farms. A good number of widows still have the food from last year's harvest. When we finished with our farms, we also offered group labour for income generation. But, we faced competition from owners of tractors, none of whom come from our villages. Our dream is to own a tractor as a group of widows. We will use this to cultivate more farms and generate more income. This will change our opportunities and those for our children."*

### 4.3 What donors and volunteers say



Elizabeth (left) sharing encouragement with widows

#### **Elizabeth Nielsen: The Desire of their Hearts**

*'On Monday, July 15, I got to be the hands of Jesus sharing His word with widows who had asked for copies in their own language. Every month in the village of Osiri, these widows gather to encourage each other and to receive training in leadership and God's word. On International Widows Day, June 23, they had heard a sermon challenging them to be rooted in God's word and expressed their deep desire to each have their own copy of the Bible in their language.*

*I heard about their desire and was planning a visit to the area in the near future, so I sent out a quick email to friends and family to see who might want to help provide Bibles for the widows. Within a few days, I received pledges of*

*enough support to go ahead with the order of 60 Bibles. On the appointed day, Jackie and I travelled to meet with the widows at the AIC church in Osiri. We enjoyed watching widows present a drama based on the widow whose tiny bit of oil filled many jars. Then I told them about the families who had donated the Bibles and passed them out into their eager hands.*

*One woman hugged me in tears. I was overcome myself thinking of my great uncle who translated the New Testament into an African language. Pastor Nicodemus challenged the women to read one chapter of Luke each week and be ready to discuss their reading each month as they gather. Then the group erupted into song and dance, praising God for his gift to them, and I sat in wonder at the work of God.'*



Bethany (standing on right) chatting with Nyanam Youth Leaders

#### **Bethany Dixon: Infectious hope and joy**

*"The opportunity to spend time here and see the amazing work that the widows, their children, and the Nyanam team are doing has been incredible. The hope and joy we have shared is infectious, and I am grateful for the ideas we have shared for facilitating the achievements and dreams of widows and their children. I have deep respect for the way that the widows are leading their own empowerment and how the Konyango team is working alongside them. God is truly*

*moving in these communities, and the hard work and deep dedication of every person involved is making those miracles possible. I look forward to continuing to walk together and share hope, ideas, and dreams."*

## 5 Spotlights

### 5.1 Partner Spotlight

#### Women in the Window International

Women in the Window International (WiW) is a global Christian women’s organization that uses bible-based curriculums to equip and empower women leaders to reach their full potential in Christ. WiW trains women across cultures and generations in Latin America, Asia, Middle East and Africa. WiW trainings cover a range of topics according to the needs of the women they serve ranging from leadership, trauma healing, advocacy, spiritual formation, micro-enterprise, nutrition.



From left to right: Jackie, Paula, Marilyn, Kim (the Executive Director of WiW) and Elizabeth

In April 2019, Our Executive Director, Jackie, spent a week in Northern Uganda with WiW where WiW implemented an advocacy training for refugee women from various refugee settlement camps Uganda. The refugee women dug deep into the word of God through WiW’s inductive bible study. WiW’s bible study approach gives women the tools to discover bible truths on their own and apply the truths to their lives. The refugee women developed their advocacy goals and strategies aimed at ending rape of women and girls in refugee camps, drug abuse and early marriage.

### 5.2 Donor spotlight

We thank individuals and organizations who provided the resources, time and skills to enable all the work we accomplished together in 2019. In particular, we appreciate the following individuals and organizations:

Individuals	Organizations
Steve and Elizabeth Nielsen and family	Women In the Window International, USA
Bethany Dixon and family including church family	Christ Church Liverpool, Liverpool UK through Women’s event
Harriet Wilkins	Transparency International, Kisumu, Kenya
Cheryl Shanks	Center for Learning in Action, USA through Give IT Up Book Drive
Patrick Lin	
Lindsay Fergusson	
Donna Denelli-Hess	
Margaret Barsaba	
Teddy Onserio	
Grace Kinda	
Rhina Ondiso	
Marilyn Farag	
Kim Kerr	
Paula Achan	
Kathy Caprio	

## 6 2020 Outlook

<p><b><u>January:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Youth workshops</li> <li>- Developing fundraising strategy</li> <li>- Government registration as NGO</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>February:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth workshops</li> <li>- Executing fundraising strategy</li> <li>- Create new leadership circles</li> <li>- Micro enterprise training for 100 widows</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>March:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create new leadership circles</li> <li>-Agricultural Economic Project</li> <li>-Review of Voice of change curriculum</li> <li>- Start promo video for International Widows Day</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>April:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create new leadership circles</li> <li>-Youth workshops</li> <li>-Human Rights training with Transparency International</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>May:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Preparations international widows day</li> <li>-Preparations for servant leadership training</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>June:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-International Widows Day Celebration – 23<sup>rd</sup> of June</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>July:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Servant leadership training with Women in the Window International</li> <li>-Agricultural Economic Project</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>August:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Youth workshops</li> <li>-Create evaluation system</li> <li>-Planning meeting for 2021</li> <li>-Human Rights training with Transparency International</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>September:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation for the voice of change</li> <li>-Fundraising strategy for 2021</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>October:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Voice of change training</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>November:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Youth workshops</li> <li>-Voice of change follow-up</li> <li>-Executing 2021 fundraising plan</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>December:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Youth camp</li> <li>-Voice of change follow-up</li> <li>-Annual general meeting</li> <li>-Executing 2021 fundraising plan</li> </ul>
<p>*Monthly: Board meetings, Management team meetings, Spiritual counselling meetings for widows</p> <p>*Weekly/bi-weekly: Leadership circle meetings</p> <p>*Quarterly: group counselling sessions</p>			

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