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## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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## 1 ABOUT NYANAM

Nyanam International is a Kenyan non-governmental organization working with and for widows living in rural areas along Lake Victoria region of Kenya. We connect widows and build their capacity to be confident and competent leaders of positive social transformation in their communities. Our work is holistic and person-centered, honoring the dignity and agency widows have and addressing socio-economic and cultural injustices that inhibit ability of widows thrive. Nyanam widows lead positive social transformation not only in their communities, but also in their families for future generations. Nyanam currently serves widows in Rarieda Sub-County in Siaya County, and Seme, Kisumu West and Kisumu East Sub-Counties and Kisumu County.



### 1.1 Message from our Board Chair, Teddy



2021 has been a year with unprecedented challenges and many of us turned to our loved ones for support. In such times, the plight of the most vulnerable in our society such as Nyanam's widows is heightened. On behalf of the Nyanam board, I would like to begin by sincerely thanking you for your prayers, donations, referrals, and volunteer time. A little goes a long way, especially for a small organization like ours.

Nyanam has significantly higher demand for its services than we have resources for. The board made strides to grow Nyanam's capacity and grow its resources. We began the process of registering as a charitable entity in the USA with support from Sidley Austin LLP and we hope to complete it this year. We also made strides to formalize the board and will further enhance our governance this year.

We are also keen to build Nyanam's internal capacity to serve more widows. This includes strategic support to Jackline and the team in areas such as communications, story-telling, organization compliance, staffing, among others. A strong organization translates to an empowered widow community. The support given to widows during such dire moments is literally life changing. THANK YOU and consider supporting Nyanam in 2022, in whatever capacity possible.

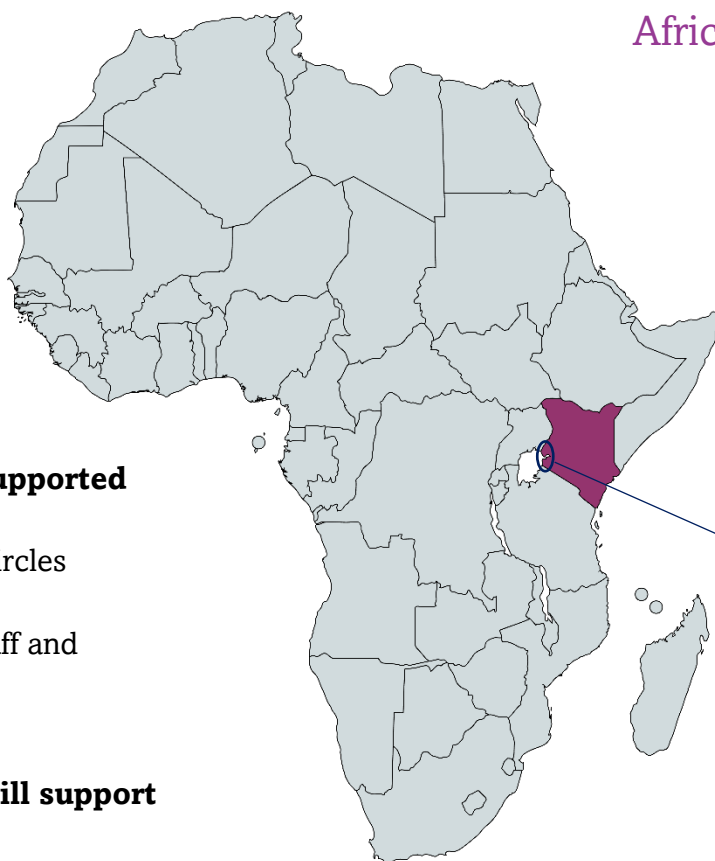
## 1.2 Our values

- **Loving connections:** We connect widows through leadership circles (widow-to-widow support groups) to promote widow unity and reduce isolation and loneliness. Nyanam widows meet on a weekly to bi-weekly sessions to offer each other love, encouragement and material support, for their spiritual, emotional, and economic wellbeing.
- **Deed listening and learning:** We practice deep listening to the life stories of widows to accurately respond to the needs of widows and their children and grow trust in our work and relationships. This practice of listening breaks the culture of silence and invisibility of widows and the challenges they face. It also amplifies the voices of widows. We have learnt that listening is love, is power and is life.
- **Bible-informed trainings:** We implement Bible-informed capacity building to affirm the God-given dignity, agency and freedom widows and their children have and grow their leadership to co-create communities where widows thrive.
- **Restorative justice:** We use restorative justice approach to correct socio-economic and cultural injustices against widows and their children. This approach ensures widows maintain relationships they value and remain safe in their communities while creating space for those who have perpetrated injustices against widows to consider change.
- **Meaningful participation:** Widows participate meaningfully in the work we do. Widows and their children define the programs we with Nyanam team as facilitators. We engage widows with knowledge and skills to multiply this work within their communities.
- **Amplifying voices:** We believe in the power of storytelling to drive engagement and change. We learn from the stories of our own Nyanam widows, the stories of widows in the Bible and stories of African widows in the literature. This integrated learning provides local, historical and global perspectives that inform our work. We also conduct research on our work to generate evidence that will inform scaling our interventions and share lessons learnt.



## Our vision

Africa where widows thrive!



**Sub-Sahara Africa** has an estimated 24 million widows. In Kenya, widows are estimated to be 10% (4.7 million) of the 47 million people in the country.

**Where we work now:**  
Western Kenya around Lake Victoria, a region inhabited mainly by the Luo people.

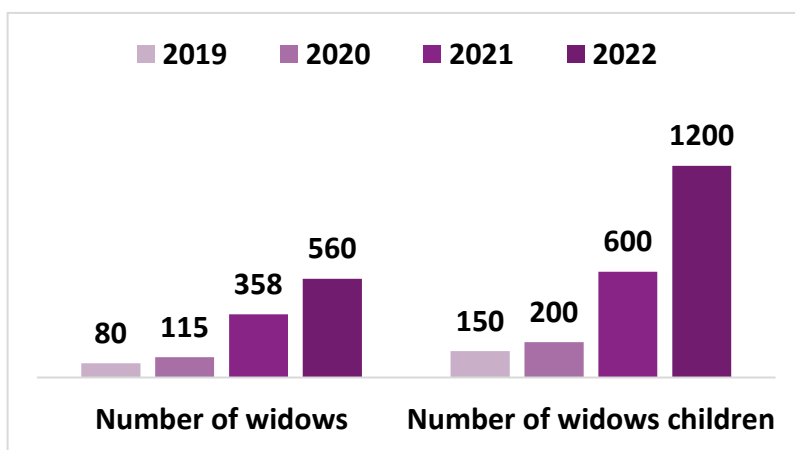
### In 2021, we supported

- 358 widows
- 12 leadership circles
- 2 full time staff
- 10 part time staff and volunteers

### In 2022, we will support

- 560 widows
- 20 leadership circles
- 6 full time staff
- 24 part time staff including widows, and volunteers

**The annual growth** in the widows serve is demand driven. Widows and their communities hear about Nyanam’s work and request to be part of it. Widows at Nyanam also organize fellow sisters to join this restorative justice work.



### **1.3 Message from our Founder and Executive Director, Jackie**



After three years of beginning our work with 80 widows, we have grown to over 500 widows! Widows made this growth possible. Through a pandemic, they organized each other to create more leadership circles, and offer one another love, encouragement and support. In 2021, we grew in the richness of our programs. We structured our community-based group counselling program to tackle issues of stigma that stress widows. We implemented a trauma healing intervention that catalyzed healing journeys. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, widows learnt to lament, to rest and to forgive. Rest and self-care were powerful lessons for a community of women overburdened by roles in parenting, providing and protecting their children. We were amazed when one of our local chiefs reported seeing Nyanam widows providing counselling to other women and youths in the community. We saw our mission alive, widows leading!

We also grew in the new friends and partners that joined our family and thank each one of them for the live-giving support. In this report, we share not only the work and its impact in 2021, but also the voices of widows' themselves, weaved through all of our work. Our growth has just started. Isaiah 54 uses the metaphor of widowhood to communicate God's promises to God's people. We are excited to enter the next 5-years of our work with a vision for Nyanam Community Center, a facility that will foster personal and collective community growth, offering education, entrepreneurship, arts, and community-based services, while creating employment for widows and youths. Enjoy this report and thank you for praying and growing with us!

### **1.4 Message from our International Engagement Coordinator, Bethany**

2021 was a wonderful year for our engagement with our international family of supporters. We were joined by wonderful Williams interns in both January and June-August to support our work in research, fundraising, and communications, and they all brought invaluable skillsets and passion to our team. Among other projects, the interns updated Nyanam's website, developed our social media presence, and wrote several successful grant proposals. They also helped organize two virtual fundraising events, and we are immensely grateful for generous support from our donors during fundraisers in February and June of 2021. The highlight of our virtual events came in November, when we had our first opportunity for widows to share directly with our supporters. Four widows joined the call and shared passionately about their experiences with Nyanam, leaving us with immense inspiration and hope. We are so proud to work alongside these talented leaders, and we hope to create many future opportunities for our international supporters to hear directly from the widows moving forward. Thank you so much to all who supported Nyanam's work in 2021, and we look forward to connecting with you all in 2022 and beyond!

## 2 NYANAM IN 2021

“I want to pass my gratitude to Nyanam because since I joined the organization and experienced their teachings, I have enjoyed goodness, love, support and care among widows. I am saying thank you so much and asking Nyanam to continue to support us and build our capacity to love, respect, interact and know how to speak with the community in love and respect.” **Benta, a widow**



208 widows joined Nyanam in 2021, increasing the widows from 115 to 358, and from 3 leadership circles (LCs) to 12 LCs.



280 Bibles distributed to widows. 24 widows, 2 per LC, trained in WiW Narrative Bible Study. The widows multiplied the training to 358 widows in their LCs



24 widows, 2 per LC, trained in Voice of Change. The widows multiplied the training to 358 widows in their LCs



24 widows from 12 LCs trained in microbusiness increasing total widows trained to 148



A written and video curriculum on kitchen gardens created in partnership with 2 widows



23 widows who are peer counsellors trained in a 3-day trauma healing intervention. We will multiply this training to 560 widows in 2022!



84 group counselling sessions held covering 7 critical topics in widowhood. 85 widows received one-time or ongoing individual counselling



7 community partnership meetings for land justice held



20 widows trained in government budget making process and public participation for self advocacy

### 3 LEADERSHIP

Our leadership program grows the faith, confidence and skills of widows to be effective transformational leaders.



#### 3.1 Leadership circles

In 2021, 243 widows joined Nyanam, increasing our leadership circles from 3 to 12 and the widows we serve from 115 to 358. The leadership circles enable widows to encourage each other emotionally, spiritually and financially. We shared scripture on Isaiah 43:1-6, encouraging the widows to be strong and courageous even as they pass through various trials. The new circles selected their activity leaders. These are widows volunteering to be trained so they can train the rest of the widows in their circles. We also distributed 280 Bibles, as the first gifts we offer widows who join Nyanam.



208 widows joined Nyanam in 2021, increasing the widows we serve from 115 to 358, and from 3 leadership circles (LCs) to 12 LCs.



280 Bibles distributed to widows

“A huge huge huge thank you to God, there is nothing I can give God because you have done something wonderful for me, you have given me the word of God with its root. The Bible I have is very old, God knew it, and I was in the process of buying another Bible. But God has brought me this Bible before I bought another, so I give huge thanks to God.”

**Margaret, a widow**

“I want to say a big thank you to God because since we came together in our leadership circles, we have experienced and shared love and togetherness as Mond Ruoth (Wives of the Lord). May God continue to build and support us widows. Right now am not being seen as bad neither do I relate to others negatively. I have experienced calmness and peace within me since I joined Nyanam’s leadership circles.”

**Gaudencia, a widow**

### 3.2 WIW narrative Bible study

WiW Narrative Bible Study provides the widows with tools for a self-discovery of Bible truths and deepening personal relationship with God. In small groups widows glean Bible truths and share their lessons with each other using skits, songs and stories. The Bible study focuses on stories of women in the Bible. This Bible study is part of every training we implement, be it microbusiness, property rights, trauma healing and others. It aims for the widows to discover their infinite value and profound influence they have as women of God as they deepen their relationship with God. In 2021, Nyanam trained 24 widows on Inductive Bible Study where the widows were empowered and equipped to train other widows in their communities through the outpouring of God's Spirit.



24 widows, 2 per LC, were trained in WiW Narrative Bible Study. These widows multiplied this training to 358 widows in their circles.

“ I have learnt the value of understanding the depth of the word of God and applying what I have learnt in my life. I plan to teach those who are ready to listen, starting with my leadership circle who are 27 in number, and then my church members who are 40 in within the coming 4 months.”

**Mary, a widow**





### 3.3 Voice of Change



Voice of Change is a widow-centric curriculum that seeks to unpack the difficult experiences of widowhood and amplify the voices of widows. The curriculum uses stories of widows in the Bible as mirror stories that Nyanam widows evaluate then reflect on the similarities and differences with their own stories. Each year, Nyanam widows study one topic in the curriculum which culminates to action taken by the leadership circles to address the problems they have identified during the study.

In 2021, during a 4-days training, widows explored the concept of home and remarriage using the stories of widows in the Bible in Ruth 1 and Genesis 38. The training engaged widows through a thought-provoking question: **where is a widow's home upon a husband's death?** The widows discussed the “home options” they have, the advantages and disadvantages they face with each home option they choose, what influences their decisions for home, how their homes are viewed and treated in the community and what can be done to improve their home situations. The curriculum brings to light core issues that widows face and provide the widows with opportunity to change the narrative and experiences surrounding these issues. Through the training,



24 widows, 2 per LC, trained in Voice of Change. These widows multiplied the training to 358 widows in their circles

## 4 LIVELIHOODS

Nyanam’s livelihoods programs seek to improve food and nutrition security and support the widows’ efforts to grow sustainable businesses.

### 4.1 Micro-business training

2021 marked our 3rd microbusiness training supported by Women in the Window International. We trained 24 widows from 12 leadership circles. The widows studied Biblical women in business, mapped their talents and market opportunities in their communities and developed 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 learned how to set the price for their products, accounting for all the production costs and profits, and to keep proper records for their businesses. In total, Nyanam has trained a total of 148 individual widows on micro-enterprise since 2019. These widows have been in charge of multiplying the knowledge acquired during the training to their leadership circles and beyond.

“I lived with my husband who could not allow me to venture into business for he would ask whatever I lacked that would propel me to venture into business. After he passed on, I ventured into livestock business. I started with one goat and I have made good progress with my business. I now live well, eat well and sleep well.”

**Margaret, a widow**

“ From this training I have discovered that honesty and good interaction with the customers is a good thing in business as it cements good customer relation.” **Alphonsina, a widow**



## 4.2 Kitchen gardens

After investing in over 200 kitchen gardens in 2020, we focused on ensuring our training tool was fully developed and available to be used with our widows and other women around the world. Jotham, our livelihoods coordinator, together with Hellen and Rebecca who are both Nyanam widows, collaborated in creating a written and video curriculum. The three led our first virtual global training of kitchen gardens organized by our partner Women In the Window International called “[Gather We Grow](#)” with participants from India, Bangladesh, Ghana and the United States.

Stories of how widows are sustaining their kitchen gardens reverberated across the villages. Kitchen gardens have not only given many widows personal projects to work on, these gardens have also improved access to healthy and nutritious vegetables, and created opportunities for widows to be generous with other members of the communities. Some have turned these projects into small business for additional income. Many have talked about how being busy in their farms keeps them away from small troubles, improves their physical health, and reduces their worries about where food would come from. Community members have also noticed improvements in the lives of widows due to this project as noted here by a local Assistant chief.



“Ever since my widowed mother-in-law joined leadership circles with Nyanam, her productivity and activeness increased especially at agricultural level where she pays close attention to her kitchen garden. Equally her health has improved and we are happy to see her more active and happy.”

**Assistant chief –Masala Sub-location, Rarieda Sub-County, Siaya**

## 5 HEALTH

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose great health, social and economic challenges to many around the world. For those marginalized in our societies like widows, the consequences of the pandemic are dire on mental and physical health. In 2021, Nyanam focused on projects that would provide mental and spiritual health support through trauma healing, group or individual counselling for the widows.



### 5.1 Trauma Healing Training

Widows go through many traumatic experiences after the death of their husbands that often lead to hopelessness, fear and confusion visible in sadness, denial, anger, emotional outbursts, insomnia, difficulty with relationships, and depression. With our partner Women in the Window International, we implemented a 3-day trauma healing intervention with 23 widows who are peer counselors and community health workers for their leadership circles. During the training, the widows learnt what the Bible says about suffering, the importance of sharing our pain, grieving and lamenting. The women wrote down places of pain in their lives and practiced bringing their pain to the cross. They also learnt the need

for self-care and rest. These widows have already started using their training experience to support other widows in their leadership circles and local communities.

“ I have noticed a group of widows meeting, although I never knew how. But I have had an experience of one widow who has been offering counselling to not only widows but also children and I am excited to invite the widows during our Baraza so that they can educate and impact of the entire community.”

**Assistant chief – Kwoyo Kaila – Seme Sub-county**



**Widows' voices at the training:**

“I have realized that I am not the only one who feels overwhelmed.”

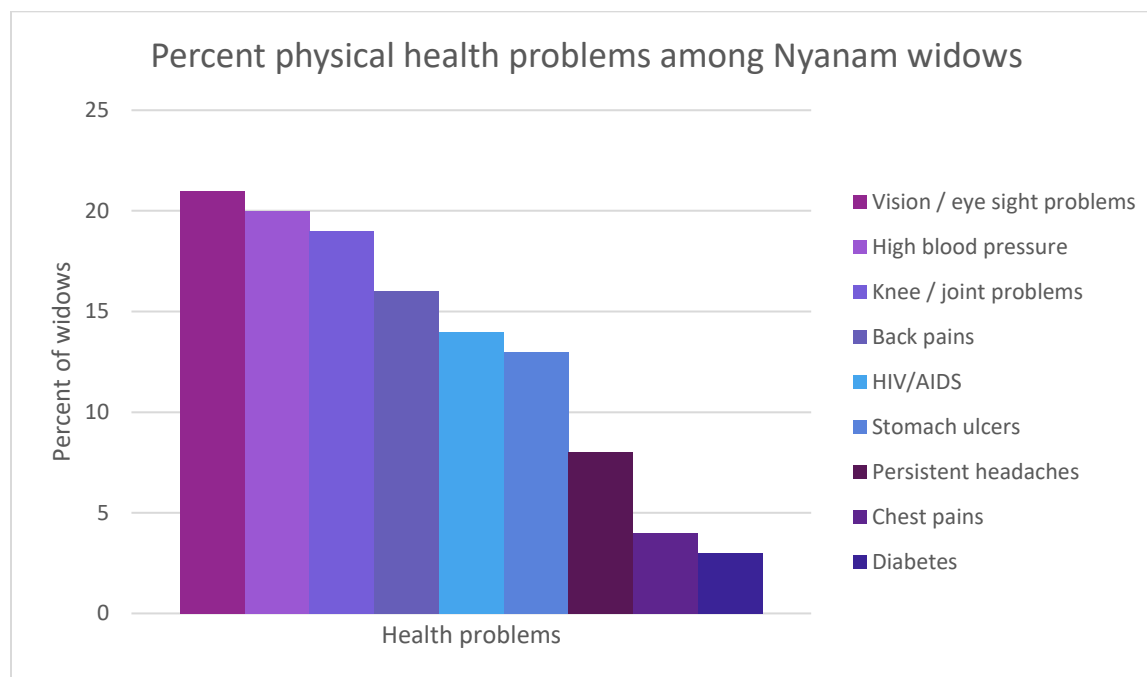
“I have discovered that talking is good but most important is that I must be a good listener who can encourage someone through the word of God.”

“From now moving forward, I know I am going to make friends and forgive those who hurt me.”

“What I like is that I feel relieved and I can now help those who are traumatized.”

## 5.1 Physical health needs assessment

Nyanam currently does not have a program to respond to the physical health needs of our widows. About 79% of Nyanam widows report various physical health problems as shown in the figure below. We held our first physical health needs assessment meeting with widows to discuss ways in which Nyanam could better support these needs. Areas raised included access to health insurance, sexual and reproductive health education, mobile clinics and having a Nyanam nurse to help with home visits, screening and advice.



## 5.2 Group Counselling

Over the year, we implemented 84 group counselling sessions reaching 358 widows. Group counselling at Nyanam. These sessions were led by our professional counsellors, Pastor Nicodemus and Pastor Eunice who visit with our leadership circles for counselling sessions monthly. In 2021, these group counselling sessions covered the topics of widow inheritance, societal stigma, internalized widow stigma, widows and the local government, and widows’ freedom in cultural and religious practices. These sessions are opportunities for widows to critically analyze oppressive experiences that are often silenced in the community, and offer each other practical advice on how to manage and overcome these challenges.

“Nyanam encourages widows using the word of God and helps widows understand themselves better as agents of change they want to see in their lives. The organization offers widows a platform to share their stories with one another. This makes them feel loved and encouraged.”

**Rose, A widow**



### **5.3 Individual Counselling**

In 2021, 85 widows received individual counselling, in single or multiple sessions. Most of the issues the widows brought for individual counselling included property disputes, access to healthcare, school fee for their children and relationship problems with their children and extended families. Our counsellors encouraged the widows, offered practical advice such as reporting cases of property disinheritance to the local chiefs, and journey with widows to government offices to ensure their pleas were heard. These needs show us the opportunities for growth in our comprehensive support of widows.

“I am pledging my support and opportunity for partnership with Nyanam. This is because I once received a widow in my office who had a request of me to write her a letter to inherit her late husband’s land.”

**Assistant Chief – Kogonyo – Kisumu West Sub-County**

## 6 JUSTICE

Our justice program seeks to restore relationships and resources widows have lost due to unjust practices. Property disinheritance is key among these.

### 6.1 Land justice

Our land justice program uses restorative justice approach to help widows regain access and ownership of land that they have been disinherited from. This program has several projects including creating property rights curriculum, educating widows and communities on land laws and rights in Kenya, training of widows and youths to be paralegals, and providing legal support through legal clinics and court representations. We works with a team of pro bono lawyers who lead the education and the legal aspects of this work.

To launch this program, we hosted seven community partnership meetings with local chiefs, assistant chiefs and clan elders from locations and sub-locations in Kisumu and Siaya counties where Nyanam widows come from. **13 Nyanam widows leaders** co-led these meetings with us, sharing their experiences of property disinheritance with **16 clan elders, 6 assistant chiefs, 1 chief**. The partnership meetings aimed to sensitize local administrators about Nyanam’s work in their villages and forge strong partnerships with them and create more awareness about the different oppressions widows face and how the local administrators can help in assisting widows’ access justice.

We also held a virtual meeting with a team of pro bono lawyers and explored possible way of partnering in help our widows access land justice through a process that priorities widows’ peace and safety. We are excited to start our land justice program in 2022 to start supporting widow’s property ownership using restorative justice.





## 6.2 Usawa Mashinani

In partnership with Transparency International-Kenya Western branch, Nyanam conducted a capacity strengthening for the widows in being able to recognize corrupt practices, and also act against such practices through a program named Usawa Mashinani. This program empowers women and marginalized groups to participate in public finance management and decision-making process at the county level.

**20 widows from 9 leadership circles** in Kisumu were trained on the channels of reporting corruption cases and budget making process at both national and county levels of government. The training created awareness among the widows on corruption and its effects, channels to be followed when reporting corruption cases, and institution fighting against corruption in Kenya.



“I want to thank God since He brought Nyanam closer to us widows; I have experienced peace and reduced mental struggles because of the engagements we have in our leadership circles. It’s my prayer to God, that Nyanam continues to teach and empower widows, through their work in the communities. May God bless Nyanam’s families so that, we can continue listening to their teachings that helps and save our lives.”

**Margaret, a widow**

## 7 2022!

We are full of joy and expectation for 2022. After three years of serving widows, we have grown from 60 widows in 2019 to 560 widows in 2022. We are excited to continue our individual and group counselling program, implement our voice of change curriculum and trauma healing, scale up our kitchen gardens project to additional 400 widows, support widows through our land justice program, and create learning opportunities for widows' children. Join us in reaching our 2022 budget goals to accomplish this work ahead of us.

“The teachings I have received have made me strong and brave though I had lost my husband. I have known how to speak to my children as I try to teach them to be respectful people in the future. With all these teachings, I say thank you to Nyanam who has positively transformed my mind and taught me to value myself. What I can request from Nyanam, is for them to continue supporting widows with critical financial skills like the use of table banking projects, because sometimes, widows face financial hardships in silence and do not know what to do.”

**Marcela, a widow**



## 5-year opportunity: A Nyanam Community Center

Nyanam community center represents our vision to foster transformative community participation by providing a facility for education, sports, entrepreneurship, arts, recreation, celebration and community-based services, led by widows and youths.



The center will sustain itself through affordable membership programs and hosting of external training and conference events. It will create employment for widows and youths, who will lead its day-to-day management.

We envision the following events and services at the center:

- Education: We hope to provide our youth access to books, materials, and spaces for them to learn. We will focus on African and social justice literature.
- Health and legal services: Our trained widows and youths will offer community-based mental health and paralegal services.
- Talent: We will nurture undeveloped talents in dance, theatre, music, culinary arts and vocational skills.
- Economic activities: tailoring, culinary, weaving, and farming. These economic activities will also raise additional income to sustain the center.
- Spaces: Books, computer, playgrounds, counselling rooms, music center, playgrounds, teaching and innovation labs

## 8 Our team and our supporters

The Board of Directors	The Management and Staff team	Core volunteers	2021 Volunteers and Interns
Teddy Onserio Haotian Xu Grace Kinda Emmy Lippold Jackline Odhiambo	Jackline Odhiambo Clifford Ochieng' Nicodemus Agumba Eunice Otieno Clifford Ochieng' Evelyn Odhiambo	Bethany Dixon Beryl Ochieng Rebecca Dero Jingyi Liu	Jotham Oyugi Norah Midianga Faith Achieng 8 Williams Interns

We want to thank our board for guiding Nyanam to a more just present for widows. We thank all our volunteers, individual donors, institutional partners and funders. A special thank you to Bethany Dixon for her volunteer leadership in coordinating our international volunteers and supporters. We thank Williams College Career Center for the students they send our way to learn from our work and to contribute to its growth. We also thank Women In the Window International for their faithful partnership with us since 2019, each year WiW has continued to bring creative and healing training such as Trauma healing this year that saw widows find a way of releasing the heavy burdens they carry. We thank David Weekly Family Foundation for trusting us with resources to support our staff and land justice.





*Widows are one of us!*