

# Advocacy Wins for Women's Health and Empowerment In Kenya

Advocacy is a central part of how Pathfinder advances SRHR around the world, and that has been true in Kenya as well. Pathfinder has worked closely with local Kenyan partners to develop progressive, people-centered policies and systems that have improved the health and well-being of Kenyans. Two recent advocacy wins led by Pathfinder in Kenya exemplify these efforts.

Pathfinder, a locally-led INGO, has been an established development partner in Kenya since 1959. Pathfinder has worked with 250 government agencies—including the Ministry of Health; National Council for Population and Development; Ministry of Devolution, Planning, and Vision 2030; Ministry of Education; Gender & Youth Directorates; and Children's Department—to improve and sustain the provision of high-quality, evidence-based, and gender-transformative sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and pioneer national efforts to address HIV/AIDS.

## **Advocacy Win # 1:**

**9,680 adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in Mombasa County enrolled, supported, and engaged in socioeconomic activities, like vocational training and education, business start-ups, and voluntary savings and loan associations.** Their participation in these activities reduced their vulnerability to HIV infection by providing alternative sources of livelihood and empowered them to respond to their SRHR and social needs.

In Mombasa County, AGYW face myriad challenges, including high HIV prevalence rates (9%), poverty, drug abuse, lack of education, idleness, early sexual debut caused by peer pressure and rapid urbanization, risky sexual behavior, limited or no parental guidance, and inability to negotiate for safe sex. These factors adversely affect household incomes, savings, investment, and labor productivity, and have increased the number of orphans and child-headed families.



*A group of women celebrates during a graduation ceremony at Dzikunze dispensary. Photo: Alfred Ameyo*

To address these challenges, the \$53.2 million USAID-funded **Afya Pwani project** (2016–2021), led by Pathfinder in partnership with Palladium and Plan International, partnered with the Mombasa County government to implement the \$7.7 million USAID-funded **Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS)** program (2018–2021), which reached a total of **29,897 AGYW, ages 9–24**, with HIV prevention interventions.

Pathfinder recruited and trained 350 community AGYW mentors on gender, AYW mentorship, and sexual and gender-based violence, who became program advocates. A few mentors were trained on effective behavioral interventions for HIV prevention, specifically “Healthy Choices for Better Future” targeting AGYW ages 9–13 years; “My Health, My Choice” targeting girls ages 14–17 years, and “Shuga II” targeting AGYW ages 18–24 years. In addition, Pathfinder trained 47 mentors in financial capability and entrepreneurship, who later became role models and program advocates and followed up with the girls they mentored.

## Achievements for AGYW: DREAMS Mombasa (2018-2021)

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| 28,048 AGYW (9–24 years) reached by DREAMS program  |
| 9,680 AGYW enrolled in Combined Socioeconomic Approaches  |
| 1,849 AGYW linked to technical vocation education and training and local artisans post-training; 166 linked to internships after training |
| Of these 1,849 AGYW, 54% in wage employment/self-employed post-training   |
| 405 AGYW mentored and provided with business start-up kits  |
| 22 Voluntary Savings and Loans Associations formed; 7 legally registered and opened bank accounts   |
| KShs 300,000 (USD 3,000) in savings made by older AGYW  |
| 15,459 AGYW provided with information on contraception; 744 counseled and received contraception (see Figure 1)                           |
| 16,990 received FC2 condom education through the Female Health Company FC2 project; 7,634 accessed condoms                                |
| 698 AGYW interacted with the <i>askNivi</i> digital platform, an automated conversational agent) for SRHR information                     |
| 4,676 AGYW screened for STIs  |

## Advocacy Win # 2:

**150,000,000 KES (\$1.3 million USD) from the M-Pesa Foundation to implement an integrated two-year program in Ndhiwa, Homabay County, Kenya, which will advance the provision of quality health care to mothers and their children.** The project will strengthen the health system to increase access to antenatal care, skilled delivery, postpartum services, nutrition services, immunizations, family planning, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Pathfinder, in partnership with [AMREF Health Africa](#) (consortium lead), [Pharma Access Foundation](#), and [Action Aid Kenya](#), received support from the [M-Pesa Foundation](#) in September 2021 to implement the project *Uzazi Salama*, or “Safe Parenting” in Kiswahili. This project is the result of three years of sustained advocacy efforts at the community level and at the national level. Our advocacy work entailed — targeting national policymakers that promoted Pathfinder’s family planning and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) work in Kilifi as high-impact practices through the Ministry of Health’s Reproductive Health and Family Planning Technical Working Group.

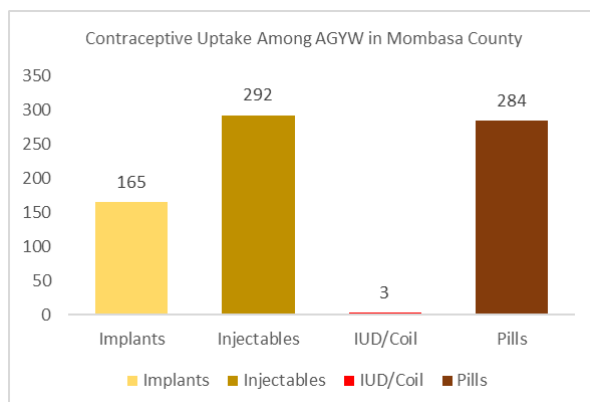


Figure 1: 744 AGYW were counseled and received contraception

In addition to supporting the integrated services mentioned above, *Uzazi Salama* seeks to improve social determinants for RMNCAH, including positive gender norms, women’s empowerment, and better WASH practices. The project will draw from Pathfinder’s experience implementing two projects in Kenya: the USAID-funded [Afyu Pwani](#) project, which integrated RMNCAH, family planning, WASH, HIV, and nutrition in Kilifi county, and the [Health of People and Environment in the Lake Victoria Basin](#), an integrated women-led climate resilience and population, health, and environment project in Homabay county on the shores of Lake Victoria.

*Uzazi Salama* seeks to reach 200,000 community members in Homabay, including 50,000 women of reproductive age and 40,000 children under age 5 over the next two years (2021–2023). The project is anchored in existing county and community structures for community ownership, long-term sustainability, and scale-up.

**Questions?** Contact [Pamela Onduso](#); Advocacy Manager for East and Southern Africa.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people’s sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

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