



# **Annual Report on the Activities and Achievements of the Rona Foundation:**

**Period: 2020- 2021**

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## Message from Roseline Orwa, Founder and Director of Rona Foundation

### Dear Partners & Friends of Rona,

2021 was a difficult, and most challenging year in our fight for the human rights for widows in Kenya. As a reader of this report, you are part of our struggle and for your contribution, in whatever form, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Amidst lockdowns, covid19 deaths and overwhelming needs, we made impactful and sustainable progress and formed new partnerships in 2021. We saw an unprecedented increase of teen pregnancy and gender violence, loss of livelihoods, with some break-through in our activities to support and empower marginalized rural widows and orphans. Our greatest achievement was sharing out the widows charter a policy tool to outlaw harmful cultural (widowhood) practices to the community and also presenting a memo to the county assembly of Siaya to [adopt the charter](#) for widow aware legislation.

We achieved measurable milestones in awareness and advocacy by getting coverage on mass media outlets across Radio, TV and through online platforms reaching millions of people locally & globally. Of note, was BBC World Wide Service. In 2021 we also published a report in collaboration with [Oxfam UK - Emergent Agency research](#) project in a time of covid19 aimed to gather and analyze case studies and experiences of rural widows and their collective agency, looking for patterns and opportunities.

But our greatest win, after a decade of Rona leading in lobbying for a **widows fund** – our government created and launched [Thamini Loan](#) – an interest-free loan – targeting widows in Kenya. A great milestone for the Kenyan Widows! We celebrate this win!

Lastly, we took an important step into further professionalizing and growing our organizational structures, to employ skilled staff and continue capacity building for the existing ones. We now have 22 staff, this has enabled us to sustain and impact our target group more.

With this momentum I am looking on 2022 with the goal of achieving even more. We have immediate and long-term needs ranging from continued orphan education, completing the construction of three class rooms and to continue our widow economic empowerment programs. We are counting on your support!

Thank you for standing with me and thousands of vulnerable women and for spreading your love and kindness through the covid19 pandemic! Your invaluable support, messages and calls kept on our vision – caring for widows and orphans a practical reality!

We are honored to serve with you and welcome to visit when things open up!

Blessings Roseline Orwa

## Empower Marginalized and Destitute Widows

**Objective: Achieve widow-empowerment through paralegal trainings, widow's rights education and capacity building to widow self-help groups.**



### Rona empowered & structured 32 widow groups in 2021,

- **Widows economic empowerment:** In March 2021, we launched a widow's economic empowerment program (WEEP) with \$2000 from Modern Widows Club, targeting 15 widow groups and now commands a monthly micro credit turnover of \$5115 and impacts 375 rural widows, with clear monitoring and evaluation tools in place for weekly, bi-monthly reporting.
- **Building back from covid19:** In December 2021, Rona improved micro- financing to directly fund resilient widow owned business to build back from covid19. We piloted a 3month project that supplements capital (from \$50-\$250) to 16 widow-owned businesses dubbed **Inua Mjane** (offer a lifting hand) in Siaya county supported by Segal Family Foundation. To allow us to learn, develop structures and tools for scaling. We are documenting and seeking partners to scale it up.
- **Establishment of community action teams in partnership with Policare Siaya:** The 72 member - community action team comprising of trained widow leaders, male champions and the gender desk police officers from the 6 sub counties of Siaya. Each sub county has a Community Action Team comprising of 6 members. With a noticeable of 22% increase in cases reported and resolved – showing their timely response. They also created an active WhatsApp group for emergency response and reporting with all the gender desk officers, OCPDs, OCS and the Police County Commandant of the 6 sub counties of Siaya being included. Emergency SGBVs and other widow abuse cases are posted in this group for immediate response. The group is also used to

report progress of cases and improve on gaps in SGBVs prevention and response in Siaya.

- We rewarded 30 most responsive gender desk police officers with certificates and tokens.
- **Rona Widows Festival:** In the spirit of 'leave no one behind', we conducted Siaya Widows Festival at Rona Centre, Wagoma Village - Bondo. It was the public participation forum for the participants to contribute to the widow's charter and memo signing. The activity brought together widows, male champions and stakeholders from the 6 sub counties of Siaya who had participated in our advocacy project dubbed Mjane Kwanza (*widows first*). The widow theatre groups comprised of male champions performed skits, dance and plays to demystify widow sexual cleansing and educate on widow rights.
- **Establishment of Community Action Teams:** We established 72 member community action team comprising of widow leaders, male champions, gender police officers and key stakeholder to improve prevention and response to gender violence and as an alternative dispute resolving mechanism for widow cases i.e land rights. The cases are documented through the 'Haki' forms during their home or group visits for action or referral to relevant authorities. The widow group meetings is also documented on our M&E monitoring template through our key leaders and field officers. This has help Rona measure our overall impact in Siaya County. This tool is enabling us to gauge what programs are impactful, data, challenges and periodic review of lessons learnt.



## Objective: Create Awareness and Advocacy for Widow Human Rights

### Changing community attitudes and behavior around SGBV and widow cleansing!

- In May 2021, we transitioned from creating awareness to policy advocacy to outlaw and criminalize regressive and harmful traditional widowhood practices. From a large evidence of documented widow stories, interrogating and reviewing policy gaps by legal consultants and partners – we drafted and adapted the widows charter as a policy advocacy tool to advance widow rights. We further issued a Memo to the County Assembly of Siaya with the three demands below: -
  - To adapt into law and implement the widows charter to legislate a Widow's Protection Bill that will make the violation of widows rights unlawful.
  - To facilitate the establishment of the Office of Widowed Persons within the department of Gender & social protection to address policies, strategies, and implementation mechanisms including frameworks and formulated schemes to enable widows access resources and support.
  - To establish a Gender Committee within the Siaya County Assembly within three months of this Memo.
- In December, we conducted a joint activity with FPFK widows Programs bringing together over 100 widows from the entire Siaya County – aimed to share project learnings.

### Because culture is difficult to change, we are advancing the policy work in 2022.

In September, we [published a report in collaboration](#) with Oxfam UK - [Emergent Agency](#) research project in a time of covid19 aimed to gather and analyze case studies and experiences of **rural widows** and their collective agency, looking for patterns and opportunities.

### **BIG WIN!**

In July 2021, after a decade of Rona leading in lobbying for a **widows fund** – our government created and launched [Thamini Loan](#) – an interest-free loan – targeting widows in Kenya. A great milestone for the Kenyan Widows! We celebrate this milestone!

### Protecting young girls from becoming vulnerable amidst covid19!

- We continue to offer primary and secondary education to less 8 fortunate rural girls.
- To protect the next generation, we held mentorship sessions for more than 100 girls from Orengo and Uhendo villages to talk to the girls about reproductive health, healthy relationship dynamics and support them with dignity packs – that included sanitary towels, tissue paper, and panties.

- **Technical Education:** Currently enrolled and provided scholarship to 16 high potential young women to pursue technical education at **Vitech Technical College**.



**Media outreach: Changing cultural perceptions and raising the female human rights issue**

**Significant media outreach was achieved in 2021/2022**

- **16 Days of Activism:** Rona conducted an online campaign to amplify the widow voices during the 16 days of activism. The aim was to increase knowledge and improving community participation on widow matters. We posted 16 videos with 234% reach, 681% post engagements, and 300% increase of new page likes on Face book, Instagram had 43% reach, 42% post engagements, and 35 new followers; with 16 tweets, making 3504 impressions and 48 mentions and 534 profile visits.



The campaign involved an individual recording and sharing a one-minute video to Celebrate, Advocate and Encourage a widow. This campaign lobbied and engaged community members – both men and women to take action to be a safe space for widows of all ages. We realized the shame of speaking and being associated with widow matters has not been overcome, and a number of our huge close contacts declined to record such a video.

- **Mainstream Media:** We published 20peds and 4 blogs. From local broadcast such as Radio Mayienga, Ramogi, Lolwe, Mikai, Capital FM, (VOA), Maisha Magic East, KBC Tv, Hope radio, Milele FM, Voice of America, K24 Tv, reached more than **10,000 listeners on each show** together with **over 3 million listeners** across the country both online and offline. On social media **6 articles and 34 short videos were posted** to further increase awareness beyond the project geographical reach with over **2000 views and 600** engagements.

The constant online and offline media engagement with audiences/listeners remain impactful and extends - increased awareness beyond our project location.



Here are a few links to our media programs: -

1. Covid and HIV: Which virus is going to kill us?  
<https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/covid-and-hiv-which-virus-is-going-to-kill-us--3373018>
2. (Have you written your will in case of your untimely death?)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= aLAY6NT6MU>,
3. Switch Tv,(Loss and grief) <https://www.switchtv.ke/watchshow/6875-Real-TalkLoss-and-grief>,
4. BBC world Service (What's it like to be a young widow in Kenya?)  
<https://twitter.com/bbcworldservice/status/1407628816986562563?s=19>
5. BBC Swahili, (Waridi wa BBC: Mahari yangu ilirejeshwa kutokana na utasa)[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa7ReH2AkOE&list=RDCMUCoerKKIKIMIDYaVFSTIsWGw&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa7ReH2AkOE&list=RDCMUCoerKKIKIMIDYaVFSTIsWGw&start_radio=1)
6. [COVID19: WIDOWHOOD 'AGENCY', EXPOSED BURDENS, CULTURE & GENDER ALLIES](#) in Oxfam UK: Views-Voices by Roseline Orwa and Valentine Linet.
7. [COVID-19: WIDOWS SPEAK ON DEAD JOBS, VIRTUAL FUNERALS & THE NEW NORMAL IN SIAYA](#) in Oxfam UK: Views-Voices by Roseline Orwa and Valentine Linet.
8. [During this year's 16 Days of Activism themed: 'Orange the world: End violence against women now!' Rona aims to amplify the widows' voices through an online campaign in Widows for Peace for Democracy](#)

### Partnerships & Networking:

**Our new partners:** We formed and **signed agreements with 7 new partners**. 1 funder, 3 academic institutions, and 2 gender networks, namely:-

- We formed a partnership with POLICARE Siaya county and rolled a gender prevention and response program that covers community outreach, awareness, an established response team with a network of 15 paralegals that improved

response to SGBV.

- We joined the **Segal Family Foundation** in 2021 for a one year seed grant, and partnered with **Oxfam UK** and **North Western University** for the first time on participatory research. Oxfam UK published our 2 blogs for a wider reach.



- Rona signed an agreement with **IWPG, a Korean INGO** for the realization of world peace and human prosperity to jointly advocate for peace initiatives and empower our widow leaders.
- Rona also partnered with **ESD Global** an organization that empowers women, girls and vulnerable populations, on various strategy for domestic violence prevention.
- Rona has partnered with **Vitech College** to support needy students for college scholarship for skills development training.

### **The Rona Centre: Providing basic-care to marginalized communities**

A resource mobilization strategy has been laid down dependent on collaborations, adaptations, local resource mobilization strategies for future sustainability for both beneficiary impacts, and the organization in 2022. Education, Health, Agriculture and economic empowerment remains is our focus areas for the next three years.

#### **Education**

- Rona supports 29 resident vulnerable children at Rona Centre. 1 child in university, 16 children in Secondary school, 13 in primary school; and over 150 OVCs others by tailoring and donating uniforms, weekend feeding, deworming and providing other basic health needs.
- We also offered 20 scholarships to Vitech College to needy students for skills development training.



- We acquired land to expand and improved our Rona Academic Institute to class 1,2&3, with the aim of building a full private primary school in 2021/22.

### **Agriculture:**

Further the center execute Agriculture Programs for income generation, and a model as a social enterprise like sheep rearing, poultry and duck farming in 2021.

- Our Orchard project with over 30 assorted fruit trees, papaya, mangoes, oranges, lemons, bananas has had continuous harvests for consumption. The orchard will be expanded as we aim to create sustainable income from the harvests.
- In 2021 the Farm cooperative provides food security for 50 widows and over 27 resident orphans at Rona Centre, and over 150 OVCs in the community, many of which are HIV positive and require special diet.

### **Eco-tourism:**

- Rona has vision to having for **local and mission tourism** to host workshops, teams and local partners by 2022. We welcome team bookings for 2021/2022.
- We aim to complete our pair of cottages in 2023. These will be used for host groups and mission teams to supplement our incomes for project sustainability.

### **Rona Clinic expansion plans**

**Rona Clinic continues to** provide basic health treatments to the community.

- We **provided over 480 HIV impacted women, men and orphans** annually with urgently needed health care services.
- We acquired an **extra acre piece of land** aimed towards expanding our clinic to a full dispensary/hospital at Rona Centre. Subject to availability of resources, we aim to expand Rona clinic by 2022, and further provide urgently needed comprehensive health services to the local community, and the surrounding islands as a social enterprise.

### **In 2021- We provided 2 basic widow houses to destitute widows**

- Most rural widows live in undignified housing structures in abject poverty. Over the last 8 years we build over 56 widow houses and fundraising for more widow houses.
- Due to our lean approach where the community comes together to build as much as possible by themselves a dignified house costs around 650 USD.

### **Activities planned for 2022:**

- **Economic Empowerment: To Support Widows with capital through existing structures through the Segal Foundation Funding, aim to: -**
  - Train & increase entrepreneurship knowledge & financial literacy to 140 widow widows by November 2022
  - Offer matching fund to improve their income generating activities to 140 widow widows by November 2022.

- **Education – Expand the Scholarship program & Rona Academic Institute and Rona Tailoring School.**
  - Increase no. of children joining secondary school by 30% by November 2022
  - Increase no. of young women trained through tvets by 50% by November 2020
  - Complete the construction of 3 classrooms by December 2022.
- **Health - To expand Rona Medical Clinic and improve medical services.**
  - Employ one qualified nurse and improve our medical services by May 2022.
  - To acquire land for the expansion of the Rona Medical Clinic and construct Staff quarters.
- **Widow Groups:** Conduct Widow groups assessment (MEAL) to identify their challenges and capacity in Siaya by 2022.
- **Establishment of a widow technical committee (Siaya) on and offline:** The platform has two purposes. One, allow women to contact a widow leader in their region that will assist with the case of abuse and connect them to help, e.g., police, the church or local community leaders. Secondly, we seek to gain currently missing data on the frequency and exact nature of widow abuse in Kenya and its regional forms in order to lobby more effectively and improve GBV prevention and response. Launch planned for November 2022 subject to availability of resources.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Subject funding Partnerships, Rona aims to implement a 2year project “Nina Haki”, (loosely translated means I have a Right). The project is set to continue lobbying for outlawing of harmful cultural (widowhood) practices in Siaya County for creation widows aware and friendly policies by 2023.
- **Awareness:** Conduct a widows walk in Siaya on International Widows Day on 23rd June 2022.



## Immediate and long term needs

For our work we rely for over 45% on private donations. We count on your support to sustain and progress our work for transformative and impactful change. Share, link us to possible partners within your network. Donate/Paypal: <http://www.ronafoundation.co.ke/donate/>

**I am counting on your continued support.** Thank you for making 2021 survivable through your emails, phone and social media connections.

God bless you and keep you safe!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roseline Orwa', with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Roseline Orwa  
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