



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

Period: 2024- 2025

www.ronafoundation.co.ke

Message from Roseline Orwa, Founder and Director of Rona Foundation

Dear Partners & Friends of Rona,

We are grateful to God for another impactful year of advocating for widows and orphans. Your continued support has enabled us to achieve significant milestones, and we are pleased to share our progress.

This year, we made great strides in pushing for widow-aware laws, climate change advocacy, and structural transformation. Strengthening our networks through collaborations and alliance-building remains a priority. We also secured our first-ever seed grant for a creative youth and children's project at Samata Collective.

A major highlight was the successful administration of the first national exams (KPSEA) for 10 students at Rona School of Excellence. Congratulations to our young scholars!

We submitted a joint petition to the Siaya County Assembly addressing illegal and irregular gold mining in Bondo. Partnering with seven members of the Inclusive Futures Coalition (IFC), including Lok Lwasi CBO, FEDWEN, and others, our widows played a key role in this advocacy. As a result, enforcement actions around gold mining sites near the lake have improved.

To address underfunding, we engaged a global network of potential partners. We are pleased that three previous funders have renewed their support for 2025/26, focusing on policy advocacy, education, and climate change programs.

Looking ahead, we prioritize the completion of Rona Level III Hospital and improving education infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Siaya Widows Protection Policy (2024) is under review for tabling in early 2025.

Thank you for standing with us. And looking forward to an impactful and transformative 2025 for our widows with your support.

Love and Blessings,
Roseline Orwa, Founder & ED, Rona Foundation
www.ronafoundation.co.ke

Report on the Activities and Achievement of the Rona Foundation 2024-2025

1. Empower Marginalized and Destitute Widows

Objective 1: Achieve widow-empowerment & improve laws and policies that advance widow rights through policy education, activism and capacity building to widow self-help groups & networks.



■ Policy Advocacy for Widows Protection and Gender Equality

The **Siaya Widows Protection Bill (2024)**—10th version—has been adopted by the **Siaya County Cabinet** and is now at the **Committee stage**. South East Alego MCA, a widow legislator, is championing it in the Assembly.

Siaya County, under **Governor James Orengo**, was **recognized by the Senate as a best practice model** among Kenya's 47 counties for advancing gender equality through widow-aware legislation.

This milestone reflects persistent advocacy, partnerships, and grassroots efforts. We remain committed to ensuring its enactment and implementation, setting a precedent for other counties to protect and empower widows.



- **Rona empowered & structured 245 widow groups in 2024**

- **Widows Caffe:** 230 Widow leaders (ToTs) educated 15 new -established groups – **impacting 1775 widows** - on the use of personal stories as a tool for advocacy to drive their own change. They also shared experiences and widow hood challenges with the aim of building a collective movement with a stronger voice to increase public support to promote the enactment of the Siaya Widows Protections Bill (2024).

- **Humanitarian support and emergency response to widows in Crisis**

Building of basic widow houses: 2 **dignity widow houses** were built, out of 6 requests received in 2024, making the total 69 widow houses built by 2022, one to a child headed household in Bondo. Also, 60 metres plastic rolls were procured and distributed to 30 widows whose houses were affected by floods in Bondo.

Objective 2: Increase women's, mostly widows participation on climate change actions and discourse in Siaya County.



- **Trained & increased Climate Actions and knowledge to widow groups:**

We empowered 3,731 widows through climate-smart actions and alternative livelihoods.



A total of 150 widow leaders from 65 groups were trained in smart farming techniques. We engaged 120 church heads, 550 congregants, 59 youth climate change champions, and 3,000 community members across five sites in Siaya County.

A joint memo advocating for mining guidelines led to improved enforcement actions, and a documentary underway. We

planted over 18,000 trees and conducted six clean-up campaigns in three markets across Siaya County.

Our "Love a Seed" initiative engaged 360 widows and 22 staff, with 120 participants exchanging fruit trees. Environmental justice efforts were strengthened in Wichlum and Mbaga Hills. We collaborated with 18 CSOs, four learning institutions, and 10 government agencies to support the gazettement of Mbaga Hill and improve environmental governance through 26 co-management committee members.

- **Reported Climate Change Risks and Impacts on Activities**

Also floods caused significant damage to our widow homes and destroyed our banana plantation with over 50 varieties when Lake Victoria broke its banks.



Objective 3: Strengthened Community Action Teams to prevent and respond to VAWG, including widow sexual Cleansing in Siaya County

- **Widow Leaders as Human Rights Defenders:** 30 widows and 5 male champions were trained as **Paralegal Officers** by two legal experts, successfully handling 65 cases in 2024. Of these, 15 were referred to the judicial process, achieving an 82% success rate in mediation or court proceedings. To enhance access to justice, we are developing a referral pathway tool for distribution across our widows' networks in Siaya County.

Objective 4: Increased public support to promote widow rights through awareness and advocacy for Systems and structures Transformation.



- **23rd June, Widows Day:** We supported **5 members of the African Widows Support Network (AWSN)**, a coalition we convene for widow-led organizations across 13 African countries, to participate in the inaugural African Widows Summit in Zanzibar. The summit, hosted by the President of Tanzania and attended by delegates from **19 African nations**, **led to key recommendations submitted to the African Union Commission**. Additionally, participating countries committed to integrating widow-centered programming into national policies and driving systemic change. This milestone **strengthened regional advocacy** for widow rights, ensuring greater recognition and action on legal, social, and economic reforms to improve the lives of widows across Africa.
- **Improving laws and policies that advance widow rights in Siaya County**

We **strengthened public support and awareness** of the Siaya Widows Protection Bill (2024) through strategic engagement with key stakeholders. With the backing of duty bearers, including the CEC Gender and the Director, the Bill successfully progressed to the Cabinet and was forwarded to the relevant committees for further review.



- ✓ Facilitated the formation of new widow groups and empowered widow leaders to engage established channels, including media outlets, to advocate for the enactment of widow protection laws.
- ✓ Secured increased support from key influencers and duty bearers, including widow legislators, who successfully influenced policymakers—primarily male Members of the County Assembly (MCAs)—to back the Bill at the committee level.
- ✓ Expanded the network of male champions, particularly youth influencers, actively campaigning for the enactment of the Siaya Widows Protection Bill (2024).
- **Board Appointments:** Our founder and director, Roseline Orwa, was appointed to the Board of the Criterion Institute, a U.S.-based think tank dedicated to transforming finance to better serve inadequately served populations (ISPs). Her appointment marks a significant step in ensuring widow-led and grassroots initiatives are **represented in global financial decision-making**. As a widow leader, her presence in these spaces is crucial for advancing gender-lens investing and promoting economic equity. This milestone reinforces our commitment to amplifying the voices of underserved communities and influencing inclusive economic policies that drive systemic change.



Objective 5: Job Creation and Empowering the rural youth and OVCs from becoming vulnerable!

Education support to children and young women affected by Widowhood.

- Provided partial scholarships (50%) and educational materials to 107 students across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.
 - Constructed two additional classrooms, completing an eight-classroom full primary school at Rona School.
 - Built a three-door toilet to enhance sanitation and dignity for students.
 - Installed two water tanks for rainwater harvesting and access to clean drinking water.
 - Engaged Haviz Security Firm – employing 3 guards to safeguard Rona Centre, ensuring a secure learning environment.
- **Technical Education:** Registered as **NITA Accredited Trade Centre** and established 3 courses, dress making, Beauty and Hair Dressing; Also employed 2 tutors.



- To **strengthen safeguarding measures**, we trained our staff on safeguarding policies and appointed seven safeguarding officers responsible for disciplinary matters, cleanliness, value enforcement, and reporting. This initiative enhances accountability, improves service delivery, and ensures a safe and supportive environment.

Objective 7: Improving Health Access to communities in Remote rural villages in Siaya County

Despite funding challenges for expansion and equipment procurement, the Rona Clinic remained committed to providing essential healthcare services. In 2022, we treated 240 patients—160 women, 40 men, and 40 children—and referred 96 individuals with urgent medical needs to nearby public health facilities. Additionally, we laid the foundation for **Rona Level 3 Hospital**, with its design drawn and approved by the hospital committee, pending government approval and registration, subject to resource availability.



- **Significant media outreach was achieved in 2024**
 - We engaged 7 radio stations – 3 national, and 4 community radios with a reach of 3 million listeners per show 6 times. Also 2 podcasts, youtube, facebook and other online platforms were also reached to increase awareness beyond the project geographical reach with about **2500 views and 750 engagements on all platforms**. Our [Facebook](#) has increased page likes 3% from 1726 to 1797 in this Quarter. [Youtube](#) channel has 15 advocacy and 8 capacity building videos posted getting a total of 500 views with 29 subscribers – 51% increase. We published 9 Opeds and 8 blogs in 2022.
 - **16 Days of Activism:** Our "Count on Me" campaign mobilized support for the Siaya Widows Protection Bill 2024 through social media and partner networks. It reached 6,234 people digitally, with 720 post engagements. On Facebook, six posts gained 588 impressions, while Twitter content reached audiences six times. On Instagram, we engaged 132 accounts—102 followers and 30 non-followers—within 16 days. Partner participation expanded our reach beyond the project location, strengthening advocacy efforts. This campaign effectively

engaged duty bearers and the public, increasing awareness and support for widow rights and legislative action to promote the bill's enactment.

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

Links to reports, publications, newsletters, products about Rona Foundation in 2024

- Widows for peace with Margaret Owen OBE-FiLiA
<https://podcast.filia.org.uk/1983918/14212760-widows-for-peace-with-margaret-owen-obe>
- Mzee Joshua Owino, retired teacher and elder from Asembo, applauds the timely and well-intentioned law aimed at protecting widows. Let's prioritize order and ensure the safety of our widows", Daily Nation
<https://nation.africa/kenya/counties/siaya/saving-siaya-widows-from-the-shackles-of-culture--4608540>
- Roseline Orwa's opinion piece published by the guardian on need for long-term flexible funding to address widow issues
<https://theguardian.com/global-development/2024/apr/03/widow-kenya-east-africa-widows>
- Veronica Atieno -our widow leader's success in smart farming and climate change adaptation
<https://www.facebook.com/p/kababa-fm-100064299510919/>
- Wichlum's Progress in Sanitation and Economic Renewal through the Voice
<https://www.ronafoundation.co.ke/news/wichlums-progress/>
- Our E.D Roseline Orwa shares her personal story as a tool for social justice change International Women's Day at the Nairobi Arboretum hosted by Forumciv
<https://www.youtube.com/live/Dhg3Qn0fU9A?si=ATPLMRzSSM5mZiij>
- Climate Change: Hope for Women and Concerns around Mining Safety in Siaya
<https://www.ronafoundation.co.ke/news/climate-change-hope-for-women-and-concerns-around-mining-safety-in-siaya-county/>
- Siaya county government supports bill to protect Women from harmful cultural norms
<https://youtu.be/gGROiz8egTM?si=AcgA9ICHWt13Fs3> by Nation Africa
- Roseline Orwa's opinion piece published by **All Africa** on Widows' Rights in Africa - **No Woman Should Lose Her Rights When She Loses Her Husband**:
<https://allafrica.com/stories/202408090355.html>
- From Garden to Community**, Brian Onyango, a climate change champion story is our latest blog: <https://www.ronafoundation.co.ke/news/from-garden-to-community-brian-onyangos-journey-of-transformative-climate-leadership-in-siaya-county/>
- Rona Foundation, along with Dr. Sara M. Selig from Brigham and Women's Hospital, co-authored a case study titled "Comprehensive Healthcare in Remote Areas: A Case Study of Rona Foundation." : <https://www.ronafoundation.co.ke/news/comprehensive-healthcare-in-remote-areas/>
- Roseline Orwa. LISTEN to our founder, Roseline on this @Criterion's podcast:

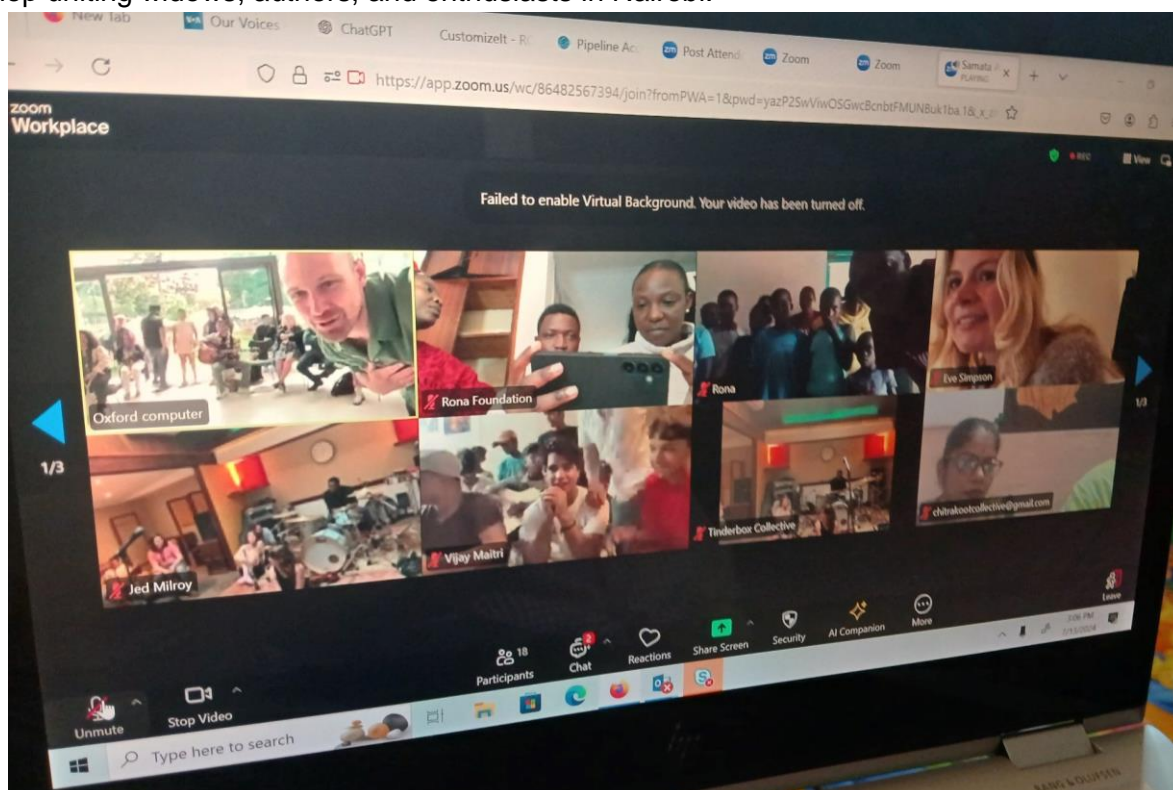


<https://www.criterioninstitute.org/podcasts/podcast-episode-37>

- Roseline was featured by QuotethisWoman: Link: <https://createsend.com/t/d-9A2AE833F0FD41472540EF23F30FEDED>
- Roseline Story featured by the Moth on radio stations across the United States. Here's a link to the full episode/her story dubbed "Bridging Dreams": <https://exchange.prx.org/pieces/550106-2403-outside-the-box-11-12-2024>

Objective 7: Partnerships & Networking:

We strengthened partnerships and expanded collaborations, notably with The Atlantic Institute Fellows at the London School of Economics (LSE), enhancing our capacity to support underserved communities. And **secured a research grant for creative project addressing digital inequalities** for rural youth and children. Our inaugural performance attracted **over 100 attendees from 35 countries**. We are proudly partnered with Tinderbox (Scotland), Jagriti Theatre (India), and Project Elimu (Kibera). Additionally, we engaged with Nyanam Widows and Clean Start, both Segal Foundation Partners, to learn best practices in advocacy. We also hosted Atlantic Institute Fellows for our inaugural story circle, a storytelling workshop uniting widows, authors, and enthusiasts in Nairobi.



Objective 8: The Rona Centre: Progressing Sustainability Projects for % Project Contribution

We developed and implemented robust Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) tools at the Rona Centre to effectively track income-generating activities across all sections. With a dedicated **team of 26 staff**, we have **strengthened our operational capacity** by appointing a Development Director and a Program Officer to oversee daily activities. Our key achievements include improved record-keeping and enhanced financial systems, ensuring greater transparency and efficiency. These advancements support our strategic focus on education, health, agriculture, and climate justice, reinforcing our commitment to sustainable impact and organizational growth.

Focus on 2025

- Advocate for the enactment and implementation of Siaya Widows Protection Bill (2024)
- Complete the construction of Rona Level III Hospital.
- Improve our educations programs and infrastructure.
- Offer non-financial support i.e learning and hospital equipment

For our work, 90% rely on grants and private donations. We are counting on your continued support to sustain and progress. 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!



Roseline Orwa
Founder | Director, Rona Foundation
www.ronafoundation.co.ke

