



RADICAL REFLECTIONS AND REVOLUTIONS

Defying Boundaries and
Redefining Futures

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Voice | Choice | Agency

About Zamara FOUNDATION



Zamara Foundation is a feminist homegrown organization founded in 2016 and registered in Kenya in 2019. Zamara Foundation is anchored on radical, bold perspectives on bodily autonomy and integrity, intersectional feminist transformational leadership within the young women and a strong voice that speaks to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young women, girls and those that are differently challenged. Zamara Foundation focus counties are Nairobi, Kwale and Kilifi. Zamara Foundation's core values are deeply rooted on African feminist principles.

VISION

Zamara Foundation envisions a society in which the leadership and sexual reproductive rights and justice of adolescent girls and young women in all their diversities is recognized, respected and protected.

MISSION

Zamara Foundation's mission is to strengthen the voice, choice and agency of adolescent girls and young women in marginalized communities to challenge and transform the status quo.

OUR MANIFESTOS/AFFIRMATION

Zamara is where we can dare to dream.



Where we feel seen. And heard. And loved. And cared for.



Zamara is a place where we leave enriched. But also a place we enrich.



A space of mutual respect – one that acknowledges what we come with.



A place that gathers us all, that builds solidarity.



Zamara is where those at the margins are centered.



A place that reminds us of our power, our strength, especially when we come together.



Zamara is where we become, and unbecome.



Zamara is where we can be.



WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Hello friends and siblings,

Welcome, and allow me to take you through our work in 2023. This was a year in which the organisation was bolder and braver in challenging the status quo. I wanted to come up with a theme for the year 2023, and I felt that "Unyielding Voices, Unstoppable Movements: Pioneering Feminist Futures" really speaks to me and our work. This theme embodies the spirit of 2023 and highlights the tenacious spirit and unwavering will of feminists struggle in Kenya and across East Africa, where ZamaraFdn works. It celebrates the courage to challenge and transform oppressive systems, raise political consciousness and highlight the power of collective action and solidarity in shaping a more fair and just society. The focus is on the bold steps we took, the boundaries we defied, and the futures redefined through radical feminist movement building, the creation of bold and brave spaces, intersectional feminist training and development and advocacy.

2023 was a transformative period for the Zamara Foundation, marked by our unwavering commitment to building a radical feminist movement and championing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all, especially adolescent girls and young women in all their diversities. As we reflect on this dynamic year, we celebrate the bold steps taken, the challenges surmounted, and the profound impact of our collective efforts in advancing reproductive justice and gender equality in Kenya and beyond. Every year, I am still amazed at how Zamara Foundation has continued to cement her work and impact the lives of adolescent girls and young women in all their diversities. It is in the change that we see that the organisation's mission continues to be that of amplifying the voices, choices, and agency of all adolescent girls and young women, particularly those who face structural exclusion.

Zamara Foundation saw herself influencing county, national, regional and global legislative processes and policies. This saw us organising consultations on the EAC SRH Bill, where we were part of the steering committee organising the consultation with the new EALA members of parliament, to working closely with the Ministry of Health calling for meaningful participation of young, especially adolescents and young women in all their diversities in policy-making processes. We launched stories of change of young women who chose to have abortions and made a case on the importance of access to safe abortion for all persons who can get pregnant, especially young women. Zamara Foundation held safe and bold spaces for adolescent girls in all their diversities, as well as young female sex workers, and trained young women on intersectional feminist leadership transformation. During this year, the Zamara Foundation took a firm stance against a sociopolitical environment that was becoming increasingly hostile. We increased the intensity of our advocacy efforts in reaction to regressive legislation, false narratives on reproductive justice and an increase in anti-choice, anti-rights rhetoric. Despite these challenges, our organisation flourished due to radical solidarity, siblinghood, grassroots mobilisation, and an unwavering commitment to building a reproductive justice movement and constituents of adolescent girls, young women, and structurally excluded persons who have voice, choice and agency.

As we share our work with you, we acknowledge that realising gender equality, challenging patriarchy, and bringing political consciousness is done collectively, and our work contributes to this collective action. We thank all partners who worked with us in 2023 and funders who believe in our work. We thank you and welcome you to these radical reflections of our work in 2023.

In Solidarity and Sisterhood,
Esther Kimani
Executive Director - Zamara Foundation



To strengthen the intersectional feminist leadership capacities of young women and girls to advance reproductive justice in Kenya.

This year, Zamara Foundation held the second cohort of the Zamara Foundation's Intersectional Feminist Leadership Institute (ZAFLI) from June 26th to June 30th, 2023, and welcomed a dynamic cohort of 21 exceptional feminists. Hailing from Nairobi, Kilifi, and Kwale counties, these individuals represented diverse organizations and affiliations within the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) sphere, all sharing a profound dedication to advancing women's rights. The curriculum encompassed exploring the intricacies of sex, sexuality, and gender, examining SRHR through a feminist lens, delving into feminist theory and intersectionality, evaluating the state of SRHR in Kenya, scrutinizing the legal and policy landscape of SRHR in Africa, gaining insights into SRHR advocacy, and honing social media and communications strategies. These intensive discussions leveraged the lived experiences and knowledge of the participants, fostering profound engagement. The program encouraged them to embrace a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning, shedding light on their conscious and unconscious biases. Collaborative group activities and post-session adventures facilitated bonds and networking, culminating in the forming of a powerful sisterhood, evident in the heartwarming feedback received.



Young Feminist during the Zamara Foundation Intersectional Leadership Institute



Young Feminist posing after a session



Influencing Policies and legislation on SRHRJ in Kenya and East Africa Region

Watering the EAC SRH Bill's advocacy through traditional media

We continued to influence the ongoing advocacy efforts in relation to the East Africa Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill 2021 and have heavily participated in the planning for the induction session of the new EAC parliamentarians in Kigali in November 2023. ZamaraFdn is part of the steering committee and partners to revamp the EAC SRH Bill discussions with the new EALA house. Unfortunately, the Bill couldn't be passed during the 4th parliament. The Bill's sponsor, Hon. Kennedy Mukulia, successfully moved a motion to defer the bill for consideration in the 5th Parliament in May 2023. This decision to save the bill for the 5th parliament is a positive sign that the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) recognizes the importance of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) as a regional priority that warrants comprehensive legislation. Notably, significant changes occurred within EALA with the conclusion of the 4th parliament. This year, we increased our campaign to increase awareness among different stakeholders at the local and regional levels of the importance of passing and supporting the EAC SRH Bill. One of our tactics was using the radio to pass our message. We hosted six sessions to build consensus with a wide range of stakeholders on the EAC SRH Bill, including the local communities. Additionally, we used the opportunity to amplify the voices of minoritised groups of women by bringing their perspectives and recommendations into the EAC SRH Bill conversation. Listen to all episodes [here](#).

"The growth I have experienced is a growth to the organization and the Rebirth of a Queen, I would recommend this training to any young woman who is ready to unlearn and learn." - Participant

"I have a whole new perspective to the whole African Feminism space. The session on African Feminist theories will go along way in building my thesis paper on 'construction of gender stereotypes' Before attending this training, I wasn't sure if to use African Feminist theories in my paper- it was such a conviction." - Participant



The Adolescent and Young People Reproductive Health Policy Consultation

This period was also mered with challenges in influencing SRHR policy reforms and working with the government, specifically the Ministry of Health. Even as the MoH allowed civil society organisations to participate in SRHR technical working groups to share their commitments in advancing SRHR policies at the national level the infiltration of opposition made this task impossible. MoH canceled the validation of Adolescents and Young Persons Reproductive Health (AYPRH) Policy indefinitely citing directives from the Cabinet Secretary. The AYPRH policy is now in limbo as the engagements of young people especially young women was not included. In order to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing review of the Adolescent and Young People Reproductive Health Policy (AYPRHP) in Kenya, we joined partners Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (SRHR Alliance), Network for Adolescent and Youth of Africa (NAYA), and Center for the Study of Adolescence (CSA) in a consultative process convened by Youth Changers Kenya (YCK). These consultations resulted in identifying gaps in the AYPRHP and developing a memorandum with recommendations that was submitted to the Ministry of Health.



Esther Kimani the Executive Director making a submission during the EAC SRH Bill consultations in Kigali



Young women attending a radio session at KOCH FM



Young women attending a radio session at Pamoja FM





Raising political consciousness through convening bold and brave safe spaces

Safe spaces play an important role in addressing the pressing reproductive health needs of young mothers and adolescent girls in all their diversities. In our dedicated efforts to foster positive narrative shifts and meaningful discussions among adolescent girls, we created safe spaces for them to share their experiences, challenges candidly and collectively come up with solutions and a way forward. Through four impactful conversations in Kwale and Kilifi, we engaged with over 100 girls, sparking vital discussions on how to contribute to crafting and implementing solutions collectively. Despite facing challenges in school engagements due to government restrictions on civil society involvement, these continuous safe spaces have played a crucial role in elevating girls' political consciousness regarding their sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice and providing comprehensive sexuality education.



Safe space session with adolescents girls in Ngamani Primary



Zamara Foundation during the joint side event at the Women Deliver Conference



In Ukunda Msambweni sub-county in Kenya, there are safe shelters that provide a safe and supportive environment for teen mothers to live, stay in school, complete their education, and become self-sufficient. This year, we convened safe spaces in Kwale, where we partnered with the Hijabi Mentorship Program to speak to young mothers about power dynamics and social norms that hinder consent and decision making among young mothers and their effect on SRHR outcomes. In addition, we hosted the adolescent girls in the Kilifi community to understand the importance of the right to bodily autonomy, share their experiences, learn from one another, and develop the necessary skills in decision making. We are inspired by how they use this knowledge to assert their rights, set boundaries, and navigate societal expectations with confidence and agency.



Community Forum with sex workers in Mombasa

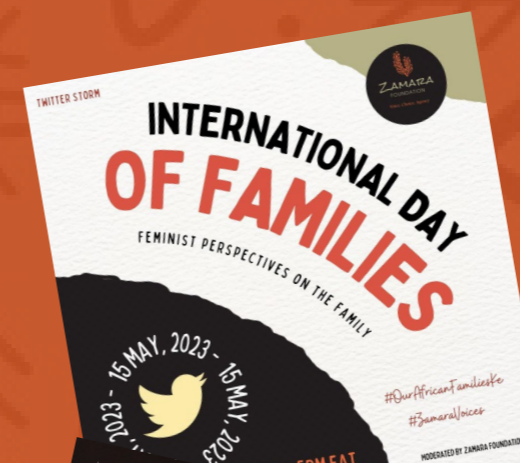
As Kenya's efforts to stop and deal with trafficking in persons receive more attention and resources, there is a push for solutions that involve more prisons. Unfortunately, these conversations have led society and the community to confuse adults who voluntarily do sex work with people who do it because they are forced, tricked, or deceived. This has led to young women sex workers facing severe challenges in incarceration and accessing essential health services due to societal stigma, harmful narratives, and pervasive misinformation. We hosted feminist dialogues with young women sex workers in Mombasa, where they openly discussed issues, challenges and solutions in their work. The created space fostered conversation on dismantling oppressive narratives, reducing stigma, fostering a supportive community and challenging social, economic, and cultural barriers that hinder young female sex workers from accessing the services they deserve.

LEVERAGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA TO INFLUENCE POSITIVE PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON GENDER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

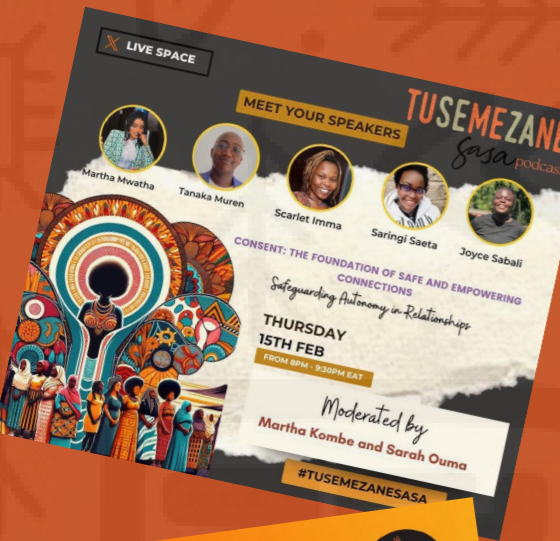
This year, We have seen morality and religion used to judge young women and girls in all their diversities and rolled back constitutional gains made over the years, hindering them from accessing essential health services and information and also excluding them from the developmental agenda. We have leveraged the power of our digital media and hosted 16 audacious conversations to influence discourse and challenge these negative attitudes. The persisting stigma and false narratives about abortion in the public domain and criminal justice systems have put the lives of more Kenyan women and girls on the line. With over 33 million reach on all our platforms, these conversations challenged false narratives, misinformation and anti-gender rhetoric on SRHJ and gender equality

We hosted a virtual side event dubbed the use of technology in the realisation of sexual and reproductive health rights and justice, especially on comprehensive sexuality education at the 67th Commission on Status of Women (CSW). The event increased understanding of the importance of CSE and the role of technology in addressing challenges and developing strategies for utilizing technology to promote CSE and improve access to sexual and reproductive health services in Kenya. We also joined other spaces during the CSW to advocate globally for the realisation of SRHR in East Africa.

We held 2 virtual Brown bags discussions on SRHRJ. In these conversations, we exposed the government's failings and the brutal reality of unsafe abortions caused by restrictive laws and stigma. These discussions were a call to action, urging the use of digital media to ignite conversations and build a groundswell of support for safe, legal abortions. Our fearless panelists unpacked powerful strategies: raising awareness, forging strong coalitions, and amplifying the voices of women and girls, most in all, their diversities. We reclaimed our identity as a force to be reckoned with, championing a multi-pronged approach led by those directly impacted - the girls and young women themselves!



LEVERAGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA TO INFLUENCE POSITIVE PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON GENDER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



Our collective voice was heard through the TusemeZane Sasa" (Let's Talk Now) Podcast. It was a space for all of us – girls, young women, and anyone who questions gender norms – to break the silence on sexuality and sexual health. We'll leave empowered and enriched, challenging misinformation and dismantling the shame surrounding periods, sex education, and reproductive rights. We had fun while sparking 7 bold conversations and igniting change! This feminist space tackled the real vulnerabilities women face due to lack of access to reproductive healthcare and fought stigma to rewrite the narrative around bodily autonomy and sexual rights.

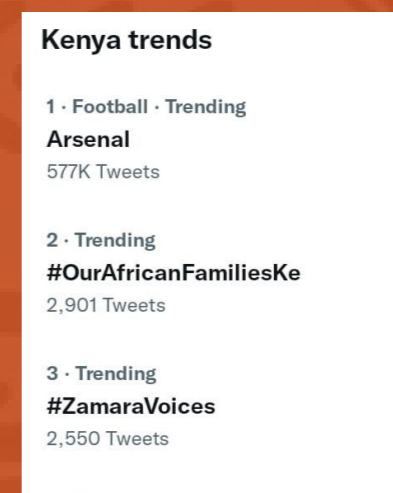


Tactics by the opposition to roll back hard-won rights have consistently blocked access to crucial healthcare and sidelined women from development efforts. But we refused to be silenced! We wielded the power of digital media, hosting 13 fierce conversations with an impact of over 33 million people and reaching over 1.5 Million people to challenge these harmful narratives. The persistent stigma and lies surrounding abortion endanger Kenyan women's lives. Girls are afraid to seek safe and legal options, even after rape, due to the threat of prosecution. Through digital campaigns, we exposed how abortion stigma violates fundamental rights to health, emotional support, and freedom from cruelty. These critical issues fueled our fight. We maximized digital tools to rewrite the narrative on bodily autonomy and safe abortion access. Standing alongside our sisters, we challenged these attacks head-on. We issued solidarity statements, debunked myths on Twitter Spaces, and mobilized online support for Petition 422. We won't back down in our fight for women's sexual Reproductive Health Rights Justice!

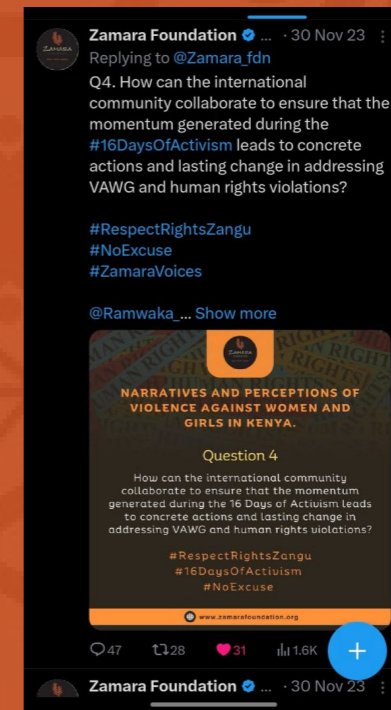


RECLAIMING OUR BODIES WITH RADICAL HASHTAGS

TRENDS



ENGAGEMENTS





ESTHER KIMANI

Esther is the founder of Zamara Foundation. She has started a podcast dubbed *TusemeZane Sasa* with the goal of providing a platform for life-changing conversations about sexual and reproductive health for women and girls. Esther is also a founding member of the African Young Women and Advocacy Alliance, a network of young women leaders who are keen on influencing policy processes at regional and national levels. She is also a trained psychologist

1 .When did Zamara Foundation start and how did this result in the creation of a podcast? How long has it been running, and what is your favourite episode so far?

I started it in 2016 and had it registered in 2019. Zamara Foundation is a feminist organisation whose mission is to strengthen the voice, choice and agency of adolescent girls and young women in marginalised communities, and to encourage them to challenge and transform the status quo. While working with adolescent girls and young women, we realised there exist a lot of myths and misconceptions about sexual and reproductive health rights and justice. While Kenya continues to grapple with high teenage pregnancy rates, femicides, and deaths due to unsafe abortion, there exists so much misinformation about these issues. That's why we came up with the podcast.

TusemeZane is a Swahili word that translates to 'let us have a conversation'. It is a

platform that allows girls and young women of all backgrounds to speak up about their problems and propose solutions. It also seeks to elevate women's voices through sharing real-life stories and experiences.

2 .Considering that our society is quite religious, I know it is not easy to talk about things like sexual and reproductive healthcare. Have you faced any stigma for it, if so, how do you protect yourself from the vitriol?

First, we fully recognise the environment in which we work. Not speaking about these issues won't make them stop happening. Having said that, I understand that being audacious and outspoken about these issues puts me, as a feminist, and

my staff, at risk. We have received many emails and calls cursing us and our work. We had to set up institutional cyber security systems.

3 .Some people think that feminism is a bad, unprintable word. How do you counter these arguments, especially in the face of this new narrative that glorifies toxic masculinity?

Feminism is being challenged because it challenges patriarchy, systemic oppression, and inequalities at all levels of society. Everything that shakes the status quo is usually deemed bad. From our experience, most girls and young women who hold this notion do not really understand what feminism is and why it is

important.

So, we try to raise their political consciousness so they can deeply understand feminism, its values and principles. Thankfully, we have started seeing a shift where young women fearlessly brand themselves as feminists and continue championing change. It is only once we dispel existing myths and misconceptions that we can challenge negative narratives. With increased awareness, we can win the battle.

4 .What made you choose podcasting as a medium? Where can we find it?

Zamara Foundation has consistently used digital media, including public pieces, and our venture into podcasts was to ensure that the content is accessible anywhere and at any time, including when someone is cooking, exercising or doing their daily chores. The podcasts can be found on all podcast streaming platforms including Spotify, Anchor and Google Podcasts.

5 .You are a psychologist. Does this assist your work? And can you break down what the Young African Women and Advocacy Alliance does, and why it is so important for women and girls to be involved in advocacy?

My background in psychology does help me understand people, their behaviour, and who they are. This has helped in the work I do. I am a co-founding member of the Young African Women and Advocacy Alliance. It is a collective of younger women from all sub-regions committed to upholding and advancing gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights in Africa through policy influencing and social accountability for progressive and inclusive policies and framework on the continent. It was created to ensure that young feminists really influence policies at the regional and global level. Policy making processes are often far off from the lived realities of adolescent girls and young women. Having the representation of young African feminists ensures that sexual and reproductive health and rights are given priority



PUBLICATIONS

My Reality - TALES OF AFRIKAN YOUNG WOMEN WHO CHOSE ABORTION

No single story could sufficiently capture the real tragedy of existing as a girl or woman in Kenya and what it takes to access basic SRHR information and services. This anthology sheds some light on women's experiences in Kenya and Africa. Each story is a rare glimpse into the complexity of what it means to be a girl or woman daily confronting intersecting barriers, disadvantages and forms of discrimination in the realisation of SRHR.



Forced Motherhood

The production of our short documentary on "Forced Motherhood" represents a conscientious effort to delve into the intricate and often overlooked aspects of the experiences of teen mothers. By focusing on the resilience of these young women, the film aims to showcase the stark realities they confront and the remarkable courage with which they embrace the responsibilities of motherhood at an age when societal support is lacking. In doing so, the documentary seeks to underline the failure of society to provide the necessary infrastructure and understanding for these teens, who, despite facing adversity, have chosen to navigate the challenging terrain of motherhood. One crucial dimension explored in the documentary is the dearth of accessible information and comprehensive sexuality education. This deficiency plays a pivotal role in the lives of these young mothers, as it leaves them ill-equipped to make informed decisions about their sexual health.

SOLIDARITY IN SPACES

We believe in the power that lies within young women and girls in all their diversities. They are experts in their own rights and can be able to shape policies designed for them. Strengthening their capacities to be able to participate meaningfully in decision and policy-making processes has gone a long way in shaping our agenda for adoption by the duty bearers. Discover the spaces and alliances Zamara Foundation forged in 2023. We attended the Women Deliver Conference, CSW 67, #ShiftThePower Summit, The SDG Summit, and the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD). We are excited about the relationships we established in these spaces and look forward to organising collectively to advance reproductive and sexual justice in Kenya.



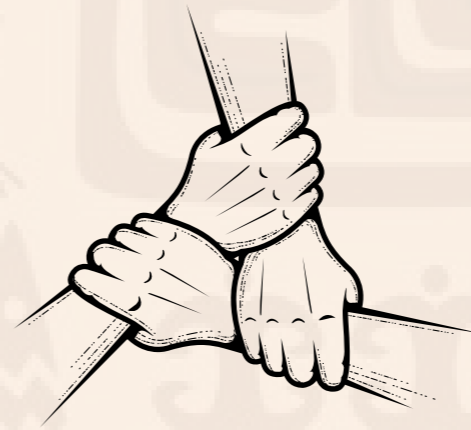
Zamara Foundation with partners at the CSW67 in New York



Zamara Foundation during the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali

COLLABORATION AND MOVEMENT BUILDING

In continuing to strengthen our collaborations in 2023, we welcomed a new partnership, the productive Health and Rights Alliance (RHRA), a national alliance comprising 7 partners from across the country and formed under Planned Parenthood Global. The alliance's goal is to influence positive public discourse on abortion rights and their intersectionality. We are also part of the SHE SOARS program as part of the Centre for Reproductive Rights WROs partner, which seeks to unpack the intricate issue on school re-entry and retention of Teen mothers and pregnant Learners which aligns with our mandate to ensuring that girls and young women in all their diversities fully enjoy their rights amidst Reproductive Health challenges.



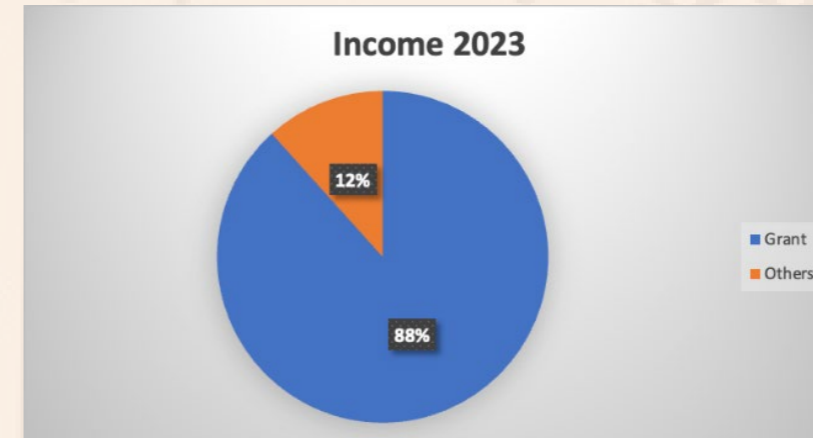
We continue to play critical roles in the Rapid Response Taskforce, whose mandate is to monitor opposition and anti-gender movements. Our niche in this task force is to raise consciousness and challenge misinformation through digital media. We have also engaged with the Advocacy and Accountability Collaborative (TAAC) Hub in Kenya, a task force curated by Jhpiego and UNFPA championing contraceptive access in the country. Our work is to ensure that the strategy of ensuring access to contraceptives is inclusive, particularly focusing on the needs of young women and adolescent girls in all their diversities, in addition to ensuring that the FP2020 goal of reaching 120 million is achieved globally.





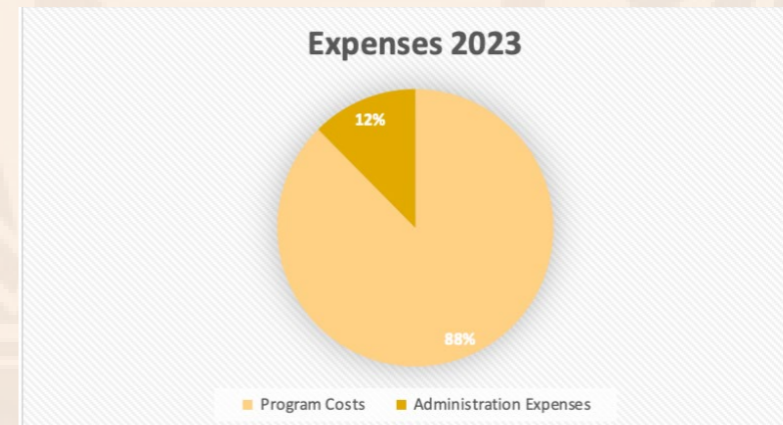
OUR FINANCIALS

We thank our partners, especially funders who have consistently supported our work. In the fiscal year 2023, we onboarded one new partner and nurtured the existing relationships with 6 funders. These relationships saw the organization manage to increase its income to a total of Kenya Shillings 31,310, 733.51



Income

Grant	27,652,581.02
Others	3,658,152.49
Total	31,310,733.51



Expenses

Program Costs	27,417,576
Administration Expenses	3,893,158
Total	31,310,734



OUR GROWTH 2023

In 2023, Zamara Foundation moved from being hosted at African Women Communication and Development Networks (FEMNET) to our offices, where staff can be comfortable working and partners can visit. This was one of the biggest institutional milestones.

In human resources, the organisation successfully recruited a finance officer and has a finance intern actively supporting streamlining financial operations. We also onboarded an office assistant who is supporting the office's management. To strengthen finance systems, we are now actively implementing QuickBooks Online, strengthening our internal controls.



OUR FUNDERS

Wellsprings
Philanthropic
Fund

Women's
Global
Network for
Reproductive
Rights

Planned
Parenthood
Global

William and
Flora Hewlett
Foundation

Lancet
Commision on
Global Health

OUR STAFF

Esther Wambui- Executive Director
Lydia Ngina - Finance Officer
Lucy Kombe - Program Coordinator
Nancy Baraza - Program Assistant
Ann Muigai - Finance Intern
Faith Njeri - Office Assistants

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Nebila Abdulmelik
Everlyne Kaliti
Stella Nderitu- Proposed and not confirmed yet



OUR MILESTONES

6 RADIO DIALOGUES HOSTED BY 8 YOUNG WOMEN

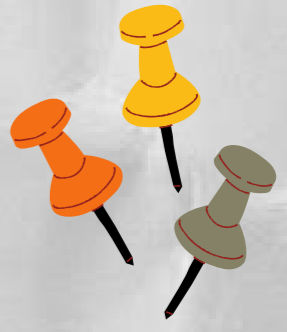
4 SAFE SPACES 100 GIRLS REACHED

COHORT 2 OF THE ZAMARA FOUNDATION INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE - 21 YOUNG WOMEN

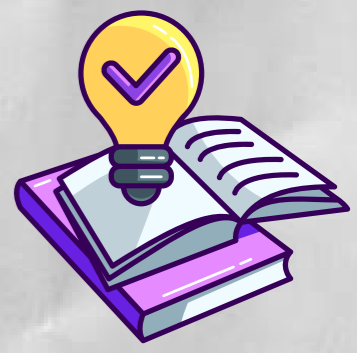
DIGITAL MEDIA- (VIRTUAL BROWN BAG) 2 HIGH LEVEL BROWN BAGS WITH 112 PARTICIPANTS

TWITTER CONVERSATIONS- WE HOSTED 6 TWITTER CONVERSATIONS WITH AN IMPACT OF 33,995,278 AND REACH OF 1,657,801

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND LESSONS

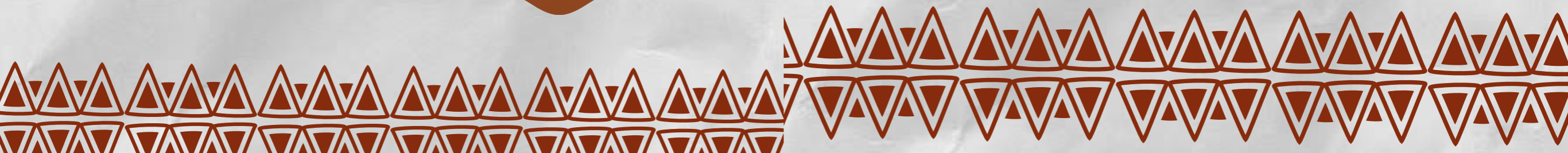


During this project period, we have learned our consistent online communication has resulted in nurturing a vibrant online presence through digital platforms including the [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). This is very critical because it provides an alternative form of mobilizing young feminists and girls to build the movement and influence decision-making processes such as the budgeting processes. By meaningfully engaging with influencers, we have been able to challenge the norm in different spaces and continuously raise consciousness on bodily autonomy, choice and integrity among other sexual reproductive health issues.



We have also realised the importance of prioritising institutional development, and stimulating institutional growth through streamlined strategic plans, frameworks, and human resources. As an organisation, we plan to be intentional on this because we intend to apply for many grants that may require us to be at a certain level of development. We also recognize how important it is to secure core funding which is critical as the projects cannot be carried out without a strong institution, paid staff, office space and paid utilities, including electricity and internet access.

We have learned the power of coalitions and partnerships, which are very critical especially in countering opposition. In partnerships, we realised that the risk is shared which makes it hard for the opposition to navigate the space. This has also broadened our reach and widened the movement.





ZAMARA
FOUNDATION

Voice. Choice. Agency

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