



**HEALTH AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
ORGANIZATION**

*Promoting Healthy & Economically
Developed Community*



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**FEBRUARY
NEWSLETTER**

www.hedso.org

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



CARLOVE OYOLA

Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the February edition of HEDSO Chronicles! This month has been a testament to our unwavering commitment to community empowerment, as we expanded our mentorship programs, deepened partnerships, and championed inclusion in all aspects of our work.

In this issue, we spotlight our impactful school mentorship programs, the expansion of our disability-inclusive demo farm, and our continued efforts to create a healthier work environment for our team. We also highlight our strategic collaborations and digital advocacy campaigns that continue to shape conversations around economic empowerment, gender equality, and youth leadership.

At HEDSO, we believe that true empowerment happens when we work together. Let's keep striving for a world where every individual—regardless of gender, age, or ability—has the opportunity to thrive.

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VISION

A healthy and economically empowered generation of adolescent girls, young women, youth, and PWDs, free from socio-economic and environmental injustices.

MISSION

Promoting integrated health and well-being, HIV/AIDS prevention and control, skills and knowledge development, human rights advocacy and protection, climate change action, and economic empowerment among adolescent girls, young women, PWDs, teenage mothers, and marginalized youth through strategic partnerships.

BACKGROUND

HEDSO began in February 2017 as a small youth group in Muhoroni Sub-County, driven by a simple yet powerful vision: to break the cycle of injustice and poverty holding back underserved most vulnerable adolescent girls, young women especially teenage mothers, young widows and youth. What started as a grassroots effort soon grew into a movement. By August 2021, HEDSO transitioned into a community-based organization, amplifying its reach and impact. On January 14, 2025, HEDSO achieved a major milestone officially registering as a National NGO. This expansion allows us to serve even more communities across western Kenya, particularly in the rural Lake Victoria fishing communities, sugar belt areas and slums, where young women and girls face systemic barriers to health and economic empowerment.





Message from the Executive Director

At HEDSO, we believe in the power of collective action to create meaningful and lasting change. Over the past months, our team has worked tirelessly to drive impactful programs that address critical issues affecting adolescents, young women, and vulnerable communities. From economic empowerment initiatives to health awareness campaigns and school outreach programs, we remain committed to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our partnerships with organizations such as CAP YEI, Hope Rekindled Initiative, Mega Motive, Tinada, and Kivulini Jamii Initiative have strengthened our reach and effectiveness, allowing us to expand opportunities for the communities we serve. Additionally, our commitment to inclusivity in agriculture is taking shape through the Demo Farm initiative, which promotes PWD inclusion in climate-smart farming proving that disability is not inability.

As we continue our journey, I extend my gratitude to our dedicated team, partners, and stakeholders who believe in our vision. Together, we are shaping a future where every individual has the resources, knowledge, and support to thrive.

JOSEPH OJUKI

Executive Director HEDSO



Message from the Human Resource



Collins Charles Odiwuor

Human Resources Department, HEDSO

At HEDSO, our team is our greatest asset. We believe that a motivated, well-supported, and continuously growing workforce is key to achieving our mission. Over the past months, we have focused on fostering a positive work environment through ****weekly wellness sessions****, staff capacity-building initiatives, and open communication to ensure that every team member feels valued and empowered.

Investing in our people is investing in impact. Through capacity-building sessions, we are equipping our staff with the skills and knowledge they need to effectively implement programs and adapt to the evolving needs of the communities we serve. Our weekly wellness sessions continue to be a space for staff to recharge, reflect, and share experiences, reinforcing a culture of mental well-being and collective growth.

As we move forward, we remain committed to enhancing staff development, strengthening teamwork, and promoting a work culture that prioritizes both professional and personal well-being. Together, we will continue to build a resilient and dynamic workforce that drives change and makes a lasting impact.

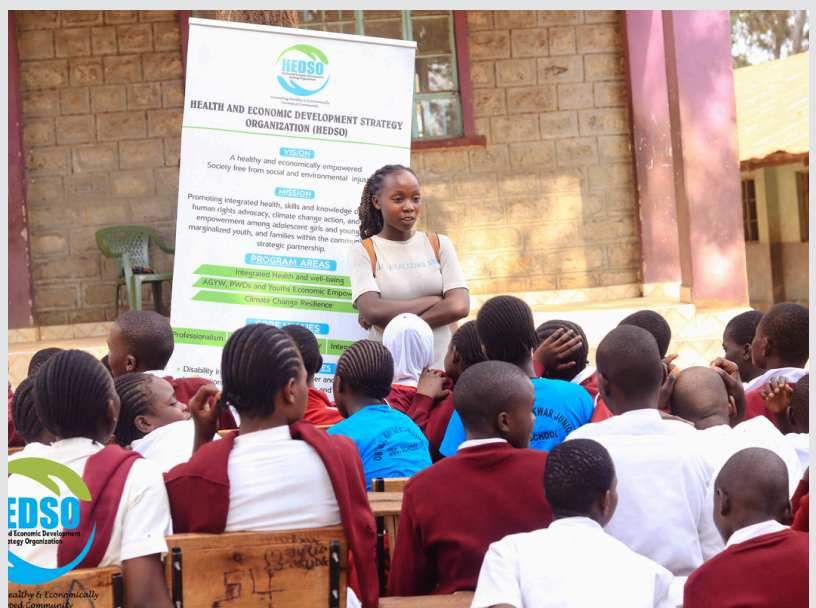
SPOTLIGHT STORIES

School Mentorships & Outreaches

At HEDSO, school outreaches are a primary focus, ensuring that students receive essential knowledge and support to make informed life choices. Through these engagements, we provided mentorship, health education, and empowerment sessions to adolescents and young people in secondary schools, vocational training institutions, and colleges.

Our core areas include sexual and reproductive health (SRH), HIV prevention, menstrual hygiene management, mental health awareness, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, and economic empowerment.

We established a consistent outreach schedule, conducting sessions every Thursday at Obinju Primary, every Friday at CAP YEI College, and regularly at Lela Secondary.



These sessions incorporated interactive discussions, mentorship programs, sports activities, and creative arts to make learning engaging and impactful.

Additionally, HEDSO partnered with organizations such as CAP YEI and Homeless OF Kisumu to strengthen our reach and impact.

By equipping students with the right knowledge and skills, HEDSO is fostering a generation of informed, empowered, and resilient young people who can make positive life decisions and contribute to building healthier communities.



HEDSO DEMO FARM: ADVANCING INCLUSIVE SMART AGRICULTURE



At HEDSO, we are championing inclusive smart agriculture, ensuring that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are not just beneficiaries but active participants in shaping the future of farming.

Through our Demo Farm Initiative, we are pioneering adaptive, climate-smart, and technology-driven agricultural solutions that break barriers and create opportunities for PWDs, youth, and marginalized groups.

Agriculture is evolving, and inclusion must be at its core. The HEDSO Demo Farm serves as a practical learning space where individuals, including PWDs, gain hands-on experience in modern farming techniques, assistive agricultural tools, and digital farming platforms. Our approach integrates:



WHY THE HEDSO DEMO FARM MATTERS



Capacity Building & Skills Development– Through training programs, we equip PWDs and other participants with skills in organic farming, hydroponics, permaculture, and agribusiness** to promote self-reliance and financial independence.



Accessible Farm Infrastructure – Our demo farm is designed with PWD-friendly pathways, raised garden beds, and wheelchair-accessible greenhouses, making farming accessible to everyone.



Climate-Smart Agriculture – We promote sustainable farming practices such as rainwater harvesting, soil conservation, and organic pest control to enhance food security while mitigating climate change effects.

Economic Empowerment Through Agribusiness– We support PWD-led agribusiness ventures, linking farmers to markets, value addition opportunities, and cooperative farming networks.



At HEDSO, we are breaking stereotypes and proving that disability is not inability. By fostering an inclusive agricultural ecosystem, we are creating pathways for economic empowerment, food security, and community resilience.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

February was a month of collaborations, as we joined forces with key organizations to scale our impact and reach more communities. Our partnerships included:



Kivulini Jamii Initiative (Community Development & Social Justice)

Worked together to address socio-economic disparities, empower marginalized groups, and promote social justice through advocacy and economic empowerment programs.

CAP YEI (Capacity Building & Youth Economic Empowerment)

Focused on equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills, vocational training, and job placement opportunities to foster self-reliance and financial independence.



Mega Motive (Youth Leadership & Digital Advocacy)

Collaborated to enhance youth leadership programs and leverage digital platforms for advocacy, ensuring young people can amplify their voices and drive positive change in their communities.



Hope Rekindled Initiative (Mental Health & Well-being)

Partnered to promote mental health awareness, providing counseling and psychosocial support to young people, particularly those affected by trauma and socio-economic challenges.



TINADA

Strengthened efforts in mental health advocacy, gender-based violence prevention, and access to sexual and reproductive health services, especially in marginalized communities.



These collaborations are paving the way for sustainable solutions in economic empowerment, mental health, gender equality, and youth development. We remain committed to building strong networks that drive meaningful impact in our communities.

WELLNESS AT WORK: FOSTERING A CULTURE OF CARE



At HEDSO, we recognize that a healthy team is a productive team. To promote staff well-being, we have established weekly wellness sessions, providing a dedicated space for relaxation, reflection, and stress management.



These sessions help staff release job-related stress, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and foster resilience in their daily tasks. As an organization committed to holistic development, we encourage open conversations about mental health, self-care, and personal growth.



By making wellness a weekly practice, we create a supportive environment that enhances individual well-being, strengthens teamwork, and improves overall organizational efficiency. At HEDSO, wellness is not just an activity—it's a culture.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY: DRIVING CHANGE DIGITALLY



Through engaging social media content, we highlighted success stories, expert insights, and practical steps that youth can take to turn their talents into sustainable careers. By fostering creativity and entrepreneurship, we aimed to equip young people with the confidence and knowledge needed to thrive in today's competitive world.



At HEDSO, we recognize the power of digital platforms in raising awareness, educating communities, and driving meaningful action. Through strategic online campaigns, we have amplified conversations around sexual and reproductive health, talent development, and menstrual hygiene, ensuring that young people have access to critical information that empowers them to make informed decisions.

One of our key initiatives focused on mentorship in talent development, in collaboration with CAP YEI. This campaign encouraged young people to explore their skills and talents as pathways to economic empowerment.



In our efforts to promote safe sexual practices and HIV prevention, we launched an impactful campaign at AIRADS on the importance of condoms. This initiative used infographics, real-life testimonials, and expert Q&A sessions to educate young people on the role of condoms in preventing sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies. By addressing common myths and misconceptions, the campaign encouraged open and informed discussions on sexual health and responsibility.

LWENY MAR KEDO GI KUTE MAG AYAKI



TYSON OKELLO
Senior Programs
Manager (HEDSO)



DORIS OMUGAH
Programs Officer
HIV Prevention & Response



Another major focus was menstrual hygiene awareness, where we tackled period stigma and the challenges surrounding menstrual health. Through digital storytelling, educational posts, and live discussions, we shed light on the reality of period poverty and advocated for sustainable menstrual health solutions. By amplifying voices and experiences, we emphasized the need for accessible and affordable sanitary products, promoting menstrual dignity for all.



HEDSO was recently invited to Kala TV Talk Show to discuss the impact of Trump’s global health funding ban, which significantly affected sexual and reproductive health programs



in low- and middle-income countries. The policy, also known as the Global Gag Rule, restricted funding to organizations providing or advocating for safe abortion services, family planning, and HIV prevention, leading to reduced access to contraceptives, maternal healthcare, and comprehensive sexual education.



This resulted in increased unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortality rates, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. The discussion also highlighted the broader implications on gender equality, public health systems, and local healthcare infrastructure, as funding cuts weakened efforts to address HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancies, and gender-based violence

HEDSO emphasized the need for sustained advocacy, local resource mobilization, and policy reforms to counter these effects, reaffirming its commitment to reproductive health rights and inclusive healthcare policies.

HUMAN STORY

BEYOND GRIEF

At just 25, Lucy's world collapsed when her husband, a boda boda rider in Kisumu, was killed in a hit-and-run accident. The shock was immediate, but the reality of her new life sank in slowly. With three young children clinging to her, she realized she had nothing—no savings, no land, no one to turn to. The little money she scraped together from well-wishers vanished into hospital bills and funeral costs. Her in-laws, instead of offering comfort, shut their doors, leaving her stranded. Within weeks, she was evicted, left to wander with her children, searching for shelter and food.

Lucy knocked on doors, hoping to find work as a house help, but no one wanted to hire a widow burdened with children. She tried washing clothes for neighbours, but they paid her pennies, barely enough to sustain her and her helpless children. Hunger became a constant torment. Some nights, her children cried themselves to sleep while she sat in the darkness, tears streaming down her own hollow cheeks. She tried seeking help from charitable organizations, but the lines were long, and the aid was limited. At her lowest, she stood by the river, contemplating ending it all. The thought of leaving her children alone in this world, however, held her back.

One day, a neighbour mentioned HEDSO's economic empowerment program. With nothing left to lose, she forced herself to attend a workshop on smart agriculture. There, she learnt about sack farming and urban gardening. "I had never planted anything in my life, but I told myself I had to try," she recalls. Skeptical but desperate, she gathered discarded sacks and soil from the roadside and planted a few vegetables. At first, the crops barely grew, but she persisted. Day by day, she improved her techniques, learning how to maximize her small space.

"I thought my story had ended, but HEDSO helped me write a new chapter," she says with a smile. From the depths of despair, she has built a future of dignity, hope, and resilience.

HEDSO continues to transform lives like Lucy's, proving that with the right support, no one has to remain trapped in hardship.

HEDSO didn't just train her; they provided seedlings, access to better soil, and a small grant to help her expand. Slowly, her shack transformed into a small farm, and she began earning enough to put food on the table. The first time she sold a batch of vegetables at the local market, she wept—not from sorrow, but relief. With each sale, she reinvested in better seeds and farming tools. Soon, her neighbours noticed her fresh produce and started buying from her. She moved her children into a better home and enrolled them in school.



CALL TO ACTION: KNIT HER FUTURE INITIATIVE



**HEALTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY ORGANIZATION (HEDSO)**

KNIT HER FUTURE INITIATIVE

Launch

GOAL: Enhance Socio-economic stability and well-being of AGYW in Kisumu's Sugarbelt areas and beaches.

DONATE NOW



DAIL: *483*57*103484#

PAY BILL: 891300

ACCOUNT: 103484



#KNIT HER FUTURE

#HEDSOEMPOWERS

Join us in empowering adolescent girls through mentorship, education, and resource distribution. With your support, we can break barriers and create opportunities for girls to thrive.



Donate: Every contribution counts.

Volunteer: Offer your time or skills.

Advocate: Spread the word.

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