CANDLELIGHT
FOR EMPOWERMENT CBO

YEAR 2025

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

LATEST INFORMATION AND UPDATES
ABOUT CANDLELIGHT FOR EMPOWERMENT CBO'S 2025 ANNUAL REPORT





A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER

In 2025, Candlelight for Empowerment experienced a year of transition, consolidation and growth, marked by a shift toward a more integrated, scalable and systems-driven approach to community transformation. The organization remained committed to ensuring that every child and young person is safe, empowered, educated and able to reach their full potential.

Key programs in education, sexual and reproductive health, child protection, and youth economic empowerment continued to deliver strong results. Communities showed measurable progress through improved parenting practices, strengthened action against violence and increased access to safe spaces for adolescent girls and Teen mothers.

A major achievement was the successful implementation of prevention of violence against children project , ensuring sustainable community systems and local ownership. Strategic partnerships, particularly with the Issroff Family Foundation and SHOFCO's Youth Voice for Empowerment Cohort 3, enhanced institutional capacity and supported youth-led economic initiatives, including entrepreneurship for teen mothers.

The organization advanced integrated programming across violence prevention education equity, SRHR, and economic empowerment, aligned with national and global development goals. Strengthening community ownership remained central.

Looking ahead, the focus is on scaling women and youth empowerment, deepening safeguarding systems and expanding high-impact, sustainable interventions.

LILIAN MBULA MAMU

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CANDLELIGHT FOR EMPOWERMENT CBO



OUR VISION

At Candlelight for Empowerment, we envision a world where every child and young person is safe, empowered, protected from harm and able to thrive. Our work is rooted in the belief that all children deserve a future filled with opportunity, dignity and hope regardless of their background or circumstance.

OUR VISION FOR A TRANSFORMED FUTURE

We are building a society where:

- Every child accesses inclusive, quality education, unlocking their potential to become confident, capable and globally competent individuals.
- Women and youth are economically empowered, equipped with skills, opportunities and agency to drive sustainable livelihoods and local development.
- Homes, schools and communities are safe, protective and nurturing, where children grow free from violence, abuse and neglect.
- Fathers and caregivers are present, engaged and responsible through strengthening protection, emotional well-being and child development.
- Young people access accurate information and youth-friendly services, enabling informed decisions on health, well-being and life pathways.

OUR CORE VALUES

At Candlelight for Empowerment, we believe every child deserves the chance to thrive. Our work is guided by strong values that shape how we lead, serve and partner with communities.

- Integrity – We act with honesty, transparency and accountability
- Equity – We promote fairness and inclusion for all, regardless of background or ability.
- Collaboration – We work hand-in-hand with communities as equal partners.
- Compassion – We lead with empathy and respect for lived experiences.
- Excellence – We strive for the highest standards in everything we do.

These values drive our mission to empower young people to rise, dream and build better futures.





PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN (PVAC) PROJECT 2025

In 2025, Candlelight for Empowerment deepened the implementation of the PVAC Project as a flagship, integrated program grounded in results-based management. As the project progressed through its second year, it demonstrated a clear alignment between outputs and long-term impact. This period was characterized by a strategic evolution of the CRVPF-funded partnership, moving toward a sustainability-driven, community-owned system that integrates donor support with local institutionalization

Overall goal:

The core mission of the PVAC project is to cultivate safe, protective and nurturing environments within homes, schools and the broader community, thereby fostering the agency and long-term resilience of children and young people across Kanamai and Mtwapa in Kilifi County. By the end of 2025, the initiative achieved a significant milestone in its scale and depth, reaching a cumulative total of over 8025 direct beneficiaries through its integrated thematic pillars.

The project successfully transformed learning environments for students by building the capacity of 68 trained education professionals in safeguarding and positive discipline. This systemic strengthening was mirrored at the domestic level, where parents and caregivers were empowered through intensive positive parenting and economic resilience programs, fundamentally shifting household dynamics toward safety and support. Furthermore, the project catalyzed local economic growth by equipping individuals with market-relevant vocational skills and establishing community-led savings mechanisms that have already generated over KES 60,000, providing a vital financial cushion against the socio-economic drivers of violence.

THEMATIC PILLARS OF IMPACT

1. SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The following narrative strengthens the impact of the school-based interventions by connecting the methodology to the specific outcomes observed in 2025:

The project prioritized the creation of safe and inclusive school environments as a fundamental driver for improved academic outcomes, specifically targeting enhanced enrollment, retention and transition rates. This was achieved by systematically strengthening school-based protection mechanisms through the institutionalization of Child Rights Clubs and the implementation of the Good School Toolkit Through these integrated efforts, the initiative reached a total of 4,068 participants, including learners, general staff members and dedicated focal teachers who were equipped to lead internal safeguarding efforts.

The impact of this institutional capacity building was profound; MEAL findings indicated a measurable reduction in the use of corporal punishment across participating schools. This shift toward positive discipline models has fundamentally transformed the school climate, fostering more supportive and respectful teacher-student relationships. By replacing punitive measures with constructive engagement, the project has successfully reinforced child-friendly learning environments that empower students and encourage consistent school attendance and long-term retention.





2.Adolescent and youth engagement

The project specifically prioritized adolescent and youth engagement by fostering resilience and protective behaviors among out-of-school youth through gender-responsive peer support platforms. By engaging adolescents in structured, peer-led mentorship, the initiative significantly enhanced their capacity to navigate challenging social environments. This intervention resulted in a marked increase in essential life skills, effectively opening new pathways toward sustainable livelihoods and reducing long-term vulnerability.

Parallel to these efforts, the thematic focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) sought to expand access to comprehensive information, thereby reducing risks associated with early pregnancy and infectious diseases. Through targeted education on menstrual health and STI prevention, the project drove a measurable improvement in health-seeking behaviors among young people. These interventions prompted a gradual but vital shift in community attitudes, fostering a more supportive and informed environment that safeguards the well-being of both adolescents and teen mothers.



3. Parenting and caregiver transformation

To enhance parenting competencies and foster more harmonious spousal relationships, the project implemented the Parenting for Respectability (PfR) model to cultivate safer, more supportive home environments. This strategic intervention achieved a significant reach, engaging a total of 4,773 participants, comprising of parents directly enrolled in intensive training and an additional caregivers who subsequently reported positive behavioral changes. The impact of these efforts has been profound, evidenced by a substantial reduction in intimate partner violence (IPV) and a transformative increase in male involvement in domestic caregiving. By addressing the root causes of household conflict and promoting gender-equitable parenting, the project has successfully transitioned traditional domestic dynamics into nurturing and protective spaces that prioritize the well-being of the entire family unit.



4.ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING & HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE (VSLA)

The strategic objective of this pillar was to mitigate vulnerability to financially driven violence by enhancing household economic resilience through targeted entrepreneurial activities.

By the end of 2025, the project successfully engaged 4050 participants, providing individuals with market-relevant vocational skills while integrating active members into Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). This dual approach of skill acquisition and financial inclusion yielded significant impact; households reported a marked improvement in financial stability as collective savings reached KES 60,000.

These bolstered financial cushions served as a critical protective factor, directly alleviating household stress and reducing the incidence of domestic conflict and violence previously triggered by extreme economic hardship.

5. INTEGRATED EMPOWERMENT (TEEN MOTHERS & YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY)

The program specifically targeted the socio-economic participation and caregiving capacity of vulnerable youth and teen mothers, achieving a transformative shift in their daily lives and future prospects. By providing integrated support, the project enabled beneficiaries to transition from periods of idleness into active, gainful employment and self-employment ventures. For teen mothers, the impact was twofold: they demonstrated significantly improved emotional bonding and caregiving practices with their children while simultaneously achieving the economic independence necessary to provide for their households. This dual success has not only bolstered their self-reliance but also positioned them as resilient contributors to the local economy.



6.COMMUNITY SYSTEMS & COORDINATION

The goal centered on community systems and coordination was to strengthen the functionality and responsiveness of community-based structures, with a specific focus on the Kilifi Violence Against Children (VAC) Cluster. By fostering deeper engagement with community leaders, government stakeholders and protection actors, the project effectively streamlined referral systems, which enabled more timely and coordinated responses to cases of violence. A significant outcome of this coordination was the transformation of religious and cultural leaders, who moved from passive observers to active promoters of child protection and positive social norms. Their leadership in discouraging early marriages and promoting protective practices has increased community ownership of these systems, ensuring that child safety is maintained through a sustainable, local ecosystem rather than an external intervention.





SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSITION TO YEAR 3

The ongoing partnership with the Child Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF) has established a robust foundation, allowing the project to evolve from a phase of primary implementation into a strategic period of sustainability and expanded scale. The systems pioneered by the Prevention of Violence Against Children (PVAC) project are now deeply woven into the local community fabric, ensuring that impact is driven from within rather than maintained from the outside. This is evidenced by local facilitators who have taken full ownership of interventions, schools that have permanently institutionalized safeguarding protocols into their daily operations and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) that have matured into self-sustaining economic engines capable of supporting household resilience independently.

As the project transitions into 2026, the strategic focus shifts toward amplifying this impact by expanding reach into new frontiers while maintaining the high-quality standards of implementation that defined the previous years. Central to this next phase is the advancement of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) systems, which will be deepened to capture more nuanced, long-term behavioral shifts and social norm changes. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve total institutionalization, ensuring that all protective mechanisms, from school-based safety to household economic stability, remain fully community-led and resilient, thriving well beyond external funding cycles as a permanent pillar of the Kilifi County child protection landscape.

Conclusion

PVAC stands as a high-impact, evidence-driven model proving that sustainable violence prevention is achieved through integrated systems. In 2025, the project surpassed its quantitative targets, delivering transformative change that ensures children, women and young people in Kilifi County are safe, empowered and resilient.



EDUCATION PROJECT

In the year in review, Candlelight for Empowerment redefined its commitment to educational equity, shifting from traditional aid to a complex, systems-driven model of human capital investment. We recognize that for the marginalized girl child, the classroom is more than a place of study; it is a sanctuary of protection and a springboard for generational transformation. By integrating rigorous academic support with psychosocial resilience and a global perspective, we have moved beyond mere enrollment towards a high-impact strategy of total learner immersion and success.

I. Strategic scholarship and retention

Our primary intervention moves beyond traditional fee-payment models to a holistic retention management system designed to eliminate financial attrition and secure the right to a full cycle of secondary education. In 2025, Candlelight for Empowerment successfully transitioned 154 high-risk learners through the academic year, maintaining a near-perfect persistence rate that defies regional averages.

By neutralizing the economic volatility that serves as the primary driver of institutional attrition, we ensured that 100% of our final-year candidates successfully sat for their national examinations.

This success is anchored in our rigorous MEAL framework, which recorded a 94% consistent attendance rate across our beneficiary cohort, facilitated by over 420 documented home-based follow-ups and real-time academic tracking. Through this comprehensive socio-economic safety net, we have effectively bridged the structural gap between initial enrollment and successful graduation, transforming a fragile educational path into a guaranteed trajectory toward completion.



II. ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT AND TECHNICAL SKILLS INTEGRATION

To bridge the gap between classroom theory and real-world utility, we have institutionalized a robust enrichment and skills development framework aimed at enhancing the quality of learning and equipping beneficiaries with market-aligned competencies for a seamless transition into the modern workforce. This pillar focuses on enhancing core literacy while integrating technical skills, such as digital literacy and vocational modules that foster long-term self-reliance. We do not just aim for academic certificates; we aim for employability and agency. By providing learners with career exposure and office attachments, we equip them with a competitive edge, ensuring that their exit from secondary school is marked by readiness for a global economy.

The true impact of our integrated model is best reflected in the voices of those who have defied the odds. This year, we celebrate the outstanding academic achievements of Juliet and Aisha, whose journeys represent the pinnacle of our mission.

"There was a time when my desk was empty because my future felt uncertain," Aisha recalls. Through the scholarship program, she didn't just return to school, she conquered it. Scoring a B Plain, Aisha has become a beacon of hope in a community where secondary completion was once rare. Similarly, Juliet, through tireless mentorship and academic tracking, secured a B Minus, proving that when structural barriers are removed, brilliance thrives. Their success has resonated far beyond their classrooms, shifting community norms from survival to a culture of high academic achievement.

III. GLOBAL EXCHANGE AND EXPOSURE

The global exchange and exposure initiative is designed to dismantle the poverty of aspiration by connecting learners with global networks of excellence. We break down geographic and psychological barriers by providing our beneficiaries with a platform to engage with international standards and diverse worldviews through virtual exchange programs. This exposure serves as a powerful catalyst for cognitive development, fostering a global mindset. By situating our learners within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education), we allow them to see themselves not as victims of their circumstances, but as active, competitive participants in a globalized community.

IV.TRANSFORMATIVE MENTORSHIP AND LEADERSHIP INCUBATION

At the heart of our sustainability model is the mentorship and leadership development pillar, which serves as the primary engine for character-building and psychosocial resilience. We have moved away from ad-hoc guidance towards a structured, 12-month curriculum that emphasizes leadership ethics, emotional intelligence and civic responsibility. Our mentorship sessions function as safe havens where girls find their voices and reclaim their identities. By nurturing a leader-leader model, we are cultivating a new generation of empowered advocates who are prepared to lead their communities with integrity. This intervention ensures that our graduates do not just succeed individually, but become catalysts for social change on the global stage.

YOUTH AND WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

While the foundations of our economic interventions have long been a core competency of Candlelight for Empowerment, 2025 marked a definitive shift toward a high-impact, systems-driven economic livelihoods engine. We have long maintained that economic vulnerability is the silent architect of exploitation; therefore, our reporting this year reflects the maturation of our strategies for both vulnerable women and out-of-school youth. This pillar serves as the bridge between immediate protection and long-term prosperity.

Supported by the visionary strategic funding of ISSROF Family Foundation, this pillar has evolved into a robust incubation ecosystem. The fund's commitment to African-led Grassroots Innovation perfectly mirrors our objective: to shift the women and youth of Kanamai from a state of economic dependency to a position of market-leading agency. By marrying financial inclusion with technical expertise, we are not just funding micro-enterprises; we are institutionalizing a culture of self-determination that stabilizes entire households.



I. STRATEGIC INCUBATION & MARKET-ALIGNED SKILLING

We are witnessing the birth of a new economic era in Kanamai, where 140 informal groups have evolved into formal micro-enterprises. This transformation was fueled by targeted skilling in high-demand technical sectors, specifically the art of commercial baking, the precision of yogurt making and the creative industry of Tie-and-Dye. By providing the tools for these women and youth to master such specialized crafts, we haven't just provided jobs, we have empowered the community to manufacture its own prosperity, ensuring they are no longer spectators of the market but the creators of it.



II. FINANCIAL INCLUSION & THE VSLA FRAMEWORK

Our economic model is anchored in the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) framework, which we have enhanced to include seed-capital linkages.

Through the strategic backing of The Issrof Family Foundation, we coupled local grit with targeted capital, enabling these ventures to scale with precision.

This surge in financial agency has fundamentally transformed household safety; we recorded that 45 out of every 100 families previously .identified as high-risk are now moving out of the danger zone for exploitation. This proves that a stable income is not just a financial metric, it is the most formidable shield a family can have against harm.

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III. Community transformation

The transformation in Kanamai is both statistical and oratory, it is a shift from the poverty of aspiration to a legacy of agency. Groups like the Mabambani and Barani parents, alongside the Maweni Youths, who once utilized safe spaces purely for psychosocial support, have now leveraged their collective power to master high-value production. Through technical modules in yogurt making and professional baking, these groups have turned safe spaces into profit centers.

"The safe space gave us our voices; the empowerment project gave us our independence," noted a lead facilitator during a recent MEAL review. "Women who once struggled to voice their needs are now leading cooperatives and youths who felt aimless are now managing supply chains." This shift has changed the social fabric of the community. Families are now reinvesting dividends from these enterprises back into their children's tertiary education and household nutrition, creating a protective shield that external shocks cannot easily break.



2026 outlook

As we pivot towards 2026, our partnership with the Issroff Family Foundation, New African Fund and Children Rights and Violence Prevention Fund, Shofco, Just Peoples, Rotary clubs and Candlelight International remains the beacon of strategic optimism. Our roadmap involves moving from incubation to market acceleration. We aim to digitize youths and women-led supply chains, expand our enterprise hubs and deepen our MEAL systems to capture longitudinal shifts in wealth-building.

The success of 2025 has proven that when we marry technical rigor with the heart of community-led advocacy, the results are life-changing. We are not just ending a reporting cycle; we are beginning a decade of self-determined, youths and women-led prosperity in Kilifi County. Together with our partners, we continue to turn the page from survival to sustainable wealth.



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