

# NIGEE NEWS

*A society and a future of self-determining and self-reliant girls and women.*

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## Girl-Led Media

*'Using the power of videography to change societal norms towards girls' education and empowerment'*



## Why NIGEE?

The right to education is a bridge to other rights, and education gives young women choices and the power to decide over their own lives and bodies. Indeed, the cascading benefits of female education to girls, their families and community underscores the imperative of supporting girls' education and secondary education is particularly critical for breaking the cycle of poverty and addressing a host of other indicators of poor health. Yet unfortunately, the majority of children out of school are girls who still face formidable intersecting barriers to education. Nyanza, our initial focus, is leading the nation for all the wrong reasons, posting some of the worst statistics nationally:

- Highest HIV prevalence (15.1% overall; 14-27% in NIGEE target Counties)\*
- Highest teen pregnancy nationally (22.2% in 15-19 year-olds)\*\*
- Median age at first sex: Girls in Nyanza begin sex earliest nationally, at 16.5 years. \*\*
- Second lowest basic immunization coverage (67%) \*\*
- Second highest prevalence of female genital mutilation (32%) \*\*
- Under-5 mortality rate: Out of 1,000 children who are born in Nyanza, 149 die before reaching age 5 years – the highest nationally\*\*
- Third highest physical and sexual violence against women (33.5% in last 12 months)\*\*
- Third highest Total Fertility Rate (4.3 children)\*\*

Refs: \*Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey, 2012);\*\*Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 2014

## Our belief:

Girls' education is a single strategy able to improve these indicators simultaneously. At NIGEE, we are trying to kill the 8 birds with one stone, so to speak – the stone of returning girls who dropped out back to school.

## Our Vision:

A society and a future of self-determining and self-reliant girls and women.

## Our Mission:

To leverage community resources to equip girls with knowledge and skills for productive and fulfilled adult life. The Initiative identifies and taps into community resources to support girls' education and training as a foundation for self-reliance and self-determination in and beyond basic needs.



Photo: Otieno Arnold

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## DREAMS subsidy helped a mother save, boost her business

*“The sponsorship has brought lot of relieve to me as a parent, I have been able to save the little money I used to pay for her school fee and bought another donkey to supplement my business and my profit has been boosted .”*

Pamela Odhiambo is a 35 years old mother of five children from Lwak Village in Rarieda Sub County, Siaya County. Pam, as her neighbours and peers call her, is one of the lucky parents in the area whose daughters are beneficiaries of the DREAMS Education sponsorship programme.

Through the program Pam was able to save some cash which she used to purchase one more donkey. This has boosted her water supply business in turn increasing her profit.

Before her 14 year old daughter, a form 2 student at Memba Mixed Secondary School was absorbed into the program, Pam used to struggle to raise her school fee. The little money she saved from her water vending business is what she could pull to pay school fee for her 3 children in secondary school.

Whenever the business goes down Pam said that her daughter could stay home for as long as a whole month without attending classes before she could raise the money to clear the fee arrears. This made her daughter perform poorly in her academics as she could not catch up with the rest of the class.

“I remember staying with my daughter at home for over 3 weeks when she was sent back home for fee while in Form one.” Said Pam. “The little I had saved from the business she had shared equally with her two brothers who are also in Secondary school and so she had no option but to stay at home.” She added.

Whenever the girl is not in school she would be helping her mother with the business. In a good day Pamela make KES600 and about KES18000 a month. From this they would pay their bills, buy food and save a little for school fee. However, the savings were never enough to support her 3 children in Secondary.



Today things have changed to the better. Her daughter’s schooling is fully covered by NIGEE DREAMS education subsidy. The project pays her school fees, bought her school uniform and personal effects. This has brought much relieve to the mother.

“The sponsorship has brought lot of relieve to me as a parent, I have been able to save the little money I used to pay for her school fee and bought another donkey to supplement my business and my profit has been boosted .” Said Pamela.

Through this Pam was able to save some cash which she used to buy another donkey to supplement his business of vending water by donkeys. She now own four donkeys that she uses to supply water to her client in Lwak Market Centre and its Surrounding, an area that has been hit by water shortage over time.

From the little saving she makes from her business she is using to pay fee for two of her sons in Secondary school. She is also planning to open a grocery at Lwak Market so to generate more income to support her family.

Story By: Otieno Arnold  
Photo: Otieno Arnold



Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-Free Mentored Safe

Photo: Pamela Odhiambo with her donkeys in her home in Lwak village, Rarieda Sub County. Pamela uses the donkeys to supply water to her clients in Lwak Market and its surrounding/ NIGEE Communications/Arnold





Story by: Phinney Asca  
Photo: Otieno Arnold

pointed and bitter with everyone, and especially my dad.”

She then decided to move to Sori Beach in Homabay County with the hope of earning a living. At the beach she would wash and sun-dry dagaa (sardine-like) fish for the fishermen and women and earned about KES 4500 (US\$ 45) a month. While at the Beach, she learnt about NIGEE Girls Empowerment Centre through a friend: “I learnt about NIGEE’s Girls Empowerment Centre through a friend and I got interested in knowing more so I borrowed a phone from a friend and made a call. I was briefed about the courses and requirements for the registration. I got interested in Hair Dressing and Therapy.”

She saved the little she was earning at the beach to help her register and for her upkeep during the training and was enrolled in 2017. She was one of the best students in her Hair-dressing class – a performer both in theory and practical sessions. She was passionate about what she was doing.

After completing her course and graduating with a certificate in Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Vera was placed for attachment at a saloon where her performance was exemplary, and they offered her a job at the saloon. She reported earning KES 500 (US\$ 5) on a good day. She is now an independent woman able to take care of her bills, pay rent and even support her sibling’s education

Quinter plans to save and start her own hairdressing business by opening her own saloon, with a hope to eventually creating job opportunities for other girls like her.



## Empowering Girls to be Self-Reliant

Quinter was once a disappointed and hopeless young girl. She dropped out of school when her parents got separated. However, her life gained a new meaning when she was enrolled in the NIGEE’s Girls Empowerment Centre where she undertook a hairdressing course, completing in 2017. She is now a paid intern and is able to provide for her and her parents’ needs.

Quinter hails from Nyando Sub County in Kisumu County. She used to stay with her parents till the year 2007 when her parents separated and her mother left her and her younger siblings, the last of whom was a toddler, under the care of her father and her step mother.

When her mother left, Quinter was 12 years old and in Primary Grade 4. Despite the young age, she took over the role of her mother. She would leave school early

in order to look for what they would eat, wash her siblings and their clothes. She reports that the father would leave the house in the morning and return back in the evening empty-handed. They would be reminded to look for their mother any time they asked for food.

Despite the struggle and the condition, she managed to sit for her Grade 8 national exams and scored 306 marks out of the possible 500, an equivalent of grade B Plain. With that, she was qualified to be admitted to a good secondary school; however, her step mother did not want to hear any of that and influenced her father to not support her education.

Luckily, through the intervention of community and well-wishers, she joined secondary school with high hopes of securing a better future, but this was not to be as the money donated could not sustain her four years in school. She was sent home for fees so many times she ended up dropping out. Her extended family also declined to help: “I remember trying to seek help from my uncles who turned me away, saying my dad was able to afford my fees but my step mother was adamant. I left home disap-



# Five girls with special need ready for national exams this year.



Adolescent girls and young women living with disability are always a neglected cohort in our society. Many of the African communities believes that whenever a family bear a child with a disability be it blindness, deafness or mental illness that family is marked as a ‘cursed family’. Many communities has no proper information on childhood disability, this leaves a vacuity for germination of stigma around persons living with disability.

Five girls living with deafness from Segga Special School for the Deaf are not except from such harsh community conditions. However, through DREAMS CORE project by Nyanza Initiatives for Girls Education and Empowerment (NIGEE) they have defined all odds. The five namely, Miriam Akinyi, Caroline Awour, Rose Atieno, Lilian Anyango and Mercy Awino are back into class and ready to sit their forthcoming national exams.

The girls were identified by NIGEE mentors during the project recruitment stage. They were later screened and enrolled into the program. What is so unique about these girls is that they are all teenage mothers.

Miriam a partial orphan living with her mum in a small village called Uwala her past life is a tussle she do not want to remember. Her dad passed away when she was barely 5 years. The mother does small businesses to support her. However, the profit from the business is so small that the mother could not afford her education. Miriam stayed home while her age mates goes to quench their thirst for knowledge daily.

At the age of 11 years Miriam had not started schooling. She knew nothing about school. She would just see her peers leave their homes in the morning in uniforms and report back at lunch time. Because her state, she felt neglected and unworthy. Her peers never associated with her much as she cannot speak or hear.

For Caroline Awuor, also a partial orphan chased from her parents’ home and now living with the grandmother gave birth at a tender age of 12 years. She barely saw her menses. Caroline was allegedly raped by her cousin who has since then gone into exile. The pursuit for her justice has always proven to be a turmoil.

After her father died, her mother remarried. The step father chased her away, he never wanted to associate with her. In their village, deafness is treated as a bad

omen. She was forced to go leave with her grandmother. At her grandmother’s home getting meals were by chance. To provide for her 1 year old baby she was forced to fetch for casual work. She was young for such hard jobs. This affected her health, even today Caroline complain of backaches.

Rose Atieno is a total orphan, she stays with her grandparents. The grandparents never cared about her education. She even had no one to guide her back at home. She suffered child labour at home. During the screening, she looked weak and exhausted. She was overworked.

Today Rose and the other girls are in boarding School and only goes home when the school closes. For her the school has been a heaven for them. They have escaped cruelty back at home. When they are in school they forget their past and focus in their academics. They have made new friends, unlike home where they experienced language barrier and stigma from their peers and the

community.

“Being in school is the best thing that has ever happened to us, School has been an heaven for us, it makes us forget the cruelty of people back at home and we are now focused in our academics.” Said Rose Atieno. “Here in school we get free meals plus 10 O’clock porridge, something we never had a privilege to enjoy.” She added. The five are preparing for their national exams this year. With the DETERMINATION and RESILIENCE shown in them only sky is the limit for these wonderful adolescent girls.

**“Being in school is the best thing that has ever happened to us, School has been an heaven for us, it makes us forget the cruelty of people back at home and we are now focused on our academics.”**

With the DREAMS sponsorship the girls are ready to conquer the

academic world. The sponsorship comes with provision of school bags, books, fee and personal effects. The girls are now fully in school and are the pioneers of the Segga Special School for the Deaf in North Ugunja ward, Ugunja Sub County in Siaya County.

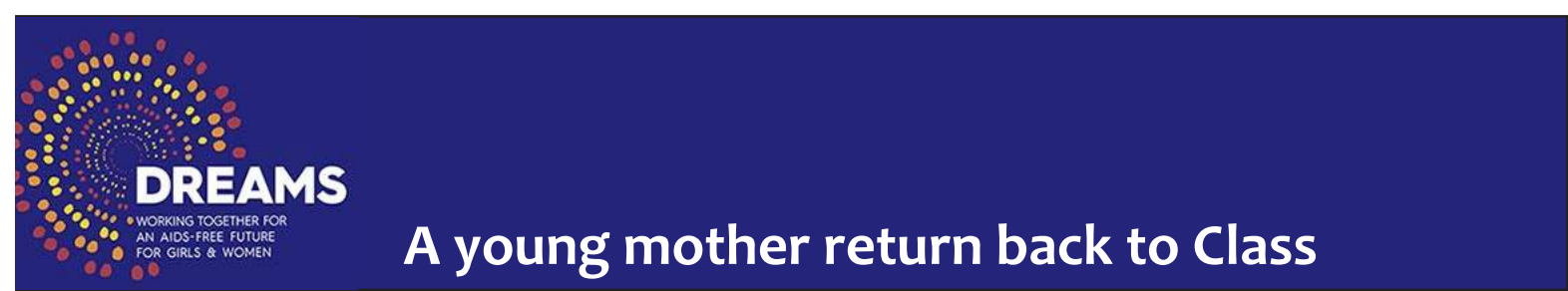
**Story by: Otieno Arnold**  
**Photo: Otieno Arnold**



## PICTORIALS







“My life was never SAFE, every day I feared that my husband would someday kill me.”

Anne Atieno Oyugi knows what it means to thirst for knowledge and a better life. She was in an abusive relationship for a long time till one day she opened her eyes and made a choice of bettering her life. Anne went back to school and is now an outstanding performer with a mean grade of B(Plain) and she still aims higher.

Before joining DREAMS Programme, Anne went through a very challenging time in her life. The hardship back at home prompted her into child marriage. She dropped out of school, went into marriage with a hope of a better life. She was quite young had no much knowledge about safe sex. She had no bargaining power. Her life was at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS or other related diseases like STI’s as she did not even know the HIV status of then her boyfriend.

In her marriage Ann got her first born kid. Things were okay until she got her second born. Her husband started to abusive to her, the scars on her body is a vivid show of how abusive the relationship was. Whenever she sees the scars, she thinks of the dark times she went through. It reached a point where her husband never left her with cash for food and for other basic needs.

Ann’s 3rd delivery was never smooth, she delivered through Caesarean section and she was recovering at home. However, this did not stop her husband from turning her in a punching bag. She preserved this for a little longer till she had the fourth child. On one occasion, her husband lost his mind and cut all her clothes into pieces and went for the knife, ready to stab her. It was at this point that Anne saw her marriage was not worth fighting for and decided to go back and live with her parents.

Her parents welcomed her and while there, she learnt of NIGEE recruiting girls for sponsorship. Coincidentally, Anne used to tell her mum if she could find the opportunity of going back to school, she would grab it. God answered her prayers as the opportunity she dreamt of had presented itself to her.

Ann enrolled at Kagonya safe space in North Ugenya

ward, Ugenya Sub County. She attended the sessions with much DETERMINATION, she knew what she wanted from the opportunity that had just presented itself. She never missed any session and with her mother support and encouragements, she was fired her up for the better. She benefited much from the safe space sessions, she learnt much about life skills including HIV/AIDs prevention.

The mentors facilitating the sessions realized her uniqueness in everything that she does. At the session she will always talk of how she badly wanted to return back to school. She would always share freely her story with fellow girls at the safe space not because she wanted them to feel sympathetic but just to tell them not to fall into such similar trap.

“My life was never SAFE, every day I feared that my husband would someday kill me.” Said Ann, in a distressed mood.

Ann was screened and enrolled in DREAMS CORE programme. She was given an opportunity to choose a school of her choice. Luckily, she got a good boarding school. Her supportive mother promised to care for her four children. She was enrolled in form one.

In her first term, despite having been out of school for more than 7 years, Ann managed to score mean grade of C+ which placed her at position nine in a class of 41 students. She has then moved to position four and now she is position one in her class with a mean grade of B (Plain).

“I want to practice nursing when I finish my education, I remember a nurse saved my life from the jaws of death when I had obstructed labour and went through caesarean section and I am utilizing the opportunity given to realize this DREAM.” Said Ann Oyugi

Anne is grateful for the chance she is given. DREAMS Sponsorship paid school fee for her, bought her reading materials and provided personal effects. This enables her to concentrate in her academics.

Story by: Otieno Arnold



Story by: Phinney Asca  
Photo: Grace Teddora

**Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-Free Mentored Safe**  
**Destined for a bright future despite the stumble**

“The GEC Centre has been an eye opener to me, I knew not that one day I will be earning my own money to support my son and parents.”

Teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS infection and related illnesses, child marriage and poverty are some of the causes of school dropout among Kenyan adolescent girls. Belinda Akeyo, a 22 year old from Nyakach North ward is a survivor of child marriage. She started her schooling in ThurGem Secondary school in 2011. However, while at form 2, she had to drop out of school due to early pregnancy. Because of the pregnancy, her sponsor was disappointed and he decided to withdraw his support. She went into early marriage.

Belinda is a partial orphan in a family of four. When she dropped out of school, her father became abusive to her and didn’t want to be associated with her. She felt depressed and neglected.

She had stayed home for 6 months and later learnt about NIGEE that was enrolling girls into its programmes of returning to school those who had dropped out due to teen pregnancy, early marriage and poverty. Her school principle contacted her and linked her to the NIGEE staff and the results of the talk was she agreed to go back to school.

She was re-enrolled in ThurGem Secondary School and had her school fees paid by NIGEE till she finished her secondary education in 2015. After her form 4, she was called to join the Girls Empowerment Centre (GEC) and learnt of the courses offered at the centre.

She opted to take up computer classes because it was her area of interest. She completed the course within a period of 3 months and was informed about the Employment Bureau that linked her to NIGEE as a paid volunteer for one of its projects.

From the money she gets, she is able to support her child and provide for his needs and part of it goes to helping her parents at home. Through that, she has earned the respect of her father because she is able to support them financially.

“The GEC Centre has been an eye opener to me, I knew not that one day I will be earning my own money to support my son and parents.” Said Belinda.

Belinda now pays school fee for her 6 year old son in Kindergarten and she has also joined a tertiary college where she is un-

dertaking a Diploma course in Community health and Development.

Belinda decided to give back to the organization by contributing part of her monthly salary every month to support NIGEE girls who are still in school. She appreciates the contribution the organization played in her life. Her life took a better turn because she was EMPOWERED and MENTORED. She can make right choices in life.

She is determined to achieve her DREAMS. She is an advocate against Child marriage and Sexual Gender Based Violence. At her free time, she empowers other girls through life skills session and sexual reproductive issues through the use of video and photography. She is also member of the NIGEE girl-Led media team which uses the power of videos and photography to change societal norms towards girls’ education and empowerment.

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