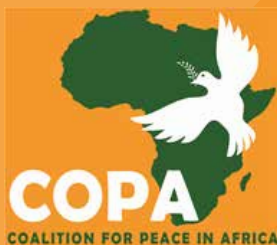


Celebrating grassroots women Human Rights Crusaders

The case of Baringo, Bomet, Trans-Nzoia and Bungoma



Celebrating grassroots women Human Rights Crusaders

The case of Baringo, Bomet, Trans-Nzoia and Bungoma

Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledement</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Background information from the selected counties</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>vi</i>
Janet Chebet Silari	1
Rose Biket Simiyu	4
Cresensia Kelli Wandera	6
Mary Chepkwemoi	8
Sarah Anuna Chelimo	10
Joan Kawira	13
Sela Nyakoa Etenui	16
Jane Jesang Joram	18
Eunice Nabei	21
Eva Akinyi Nyamogo	23
Pamela A Musani	26
Leonorah Anyango Mombo	28
Rose Jumba	34
Margaret Echom	36
Hellen Kisa	38
Phanice Chembaya Matui	40
Alice Naibei	42
Mary C Kiminy	45

Abbreviations

ADC	Agricultural Development Corporation
CBO	Community Based Organization
COPA	Coalition for Peace in Africa
FPFK	Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya
GBV	Gender based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced persons
MYWO	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake organization
SLDF	Sabaot Land Defense Force

Acknowledement

This book would not be possible without the financial support of KIOS, The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human rights. We would also want to thank the women whose stories are presented here. Thank you for taking time to be interviewed and having courage to share your experiences with us and accepting to be part of this book. This book will go a long way in motivating many other women who will come across it.

We want to thank all the organizations the women were drawn from and also all the women from Bomet, Baringo, Mt. Elgon and Kwanza who participated in the trainings and forums. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the women who played an instrumental role in organizing the community forums.

We want to acknowledge Klaudia Brezna who carried out these interviews and compiled them. COPA is really grateful.

Lastly, we acknowledge the contributions of the COPA staff who worked on the project: Martha Ndogoto, Rose Wawuda Ouko, Jeremy Kiprutto, Isaac Wamalwa and Klaudia Brezna.

Background information from the selected counties

Bomet

Bomet County is located in the former rift valley province, in the south rift region of the Republic of Kenya. Bomet County consists of 5 constituencies namely, Bomet east, Bomet central, Chepalungu, Sotik and Konoin. The population is 724,186 of which 51% is women. Poverty levels are at 58.7%. The main economic activities in the County are tea and coffee farming, horticulture and cattle rearing. Effects of the post election violence (PEV) of 2007/2008 are still being felt to date.

Baringo

Baringo County is situated in the northern part of the rift valley. It borders Nakuru, Bomet, Uasin Gishu, Elegyo Marakwet, West Pokot and Turkana Counties. The population is estimated to be over 500,000 and 51% are women. Baringo county hosts a multi ethnic community consisting of the Tugen, Njems, Pokot, Turkana, Kikuyu and Nubian communities. The main economic activities within the County are mixed farming, tourism, beekeeping, livestock rearing and practice nomadic lifestyle.

Historically, women in Baringo county have suffered from retrogressive cultural activities including gender based violence (GBV). The Tugn community culture upholds wife battering as a way of disciplining them and practice female genital mutilation (FGM). Women are there to be seen and not to be heard. The illiteracy level is very high in Baringo County. They (women) are not included in decision making structures hence do not know their rights. For this reasons, women are silently suffering from physical, emotional and psychological torture.

Mount. Elgon in Bungoma

Mt. Elgon is one of the constituencies found in Bungoma County in western Kenya along the border with Uganda. Bungoma county borders Busia, Kakamega and Trans Nzoia Counties. Bungoma county consists of 6 constituencies namely; Mt. Elgon, Webuye, Sirisia, Kimilili, Kanduyi and Bumula. The county has a population of 1,375,063 of which 52% are women and 48% are men. 53% of the population lives below the poverty line.

Mount Elgon has had a share of Conflict that started in 2005 on issues of land. A militia group known as the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) was formed to fight for the rights of the indigenous sabaots but turned out to be a group of people who killed, maimed, raped and destroyed property with impunity. The SLDF killed people indiscriminately and one would wonder whether all those who lost their dear lives were land grabbers. In Mt. Elgon, meeting with people without limbs, ears and mouths is a common feature.

People moved from their homes, people always lived in fear and infact, up to date, many are traumatised badly. There is still need of psycho social support for the residents of Mt. Elgon. COPA has done alot of trauma healing and counseling in Mt. Elgon; but is not enough to have a few people reached. This needs to be a continous process targetting and reaching people who have never been reached before. Trauma Healing is a process that needs to be encouraged even after relative peace has been realised within a country or community.

Kwanza in Trans Nzoia

Kwanza is one of the largest constituencies in Trans Nzoia which is densely populated with over 800,000 people. It is home to many ethnic groups and borders Mt. Elgon to the south. The constituency has the largest 10 ADC farms namely; Olkatongo ADC, Sabwani ADC, Cholim ADC, Katuke ADC, Namandala ADC, Japata ADC, Naifarm ADC, Chepchoina ADC, Suam Orchards ADC and Feed Meal ADC. These farms depend on casual workers who plant and harvest for the farms. Women form the largest percentage of the work force. Most of the women are illiterate and have no permanent jobs. For them to secure the casual work they have to undergo sexual harassment from the male supervisors.

A large number of women working in the area are women who work as laborers. The working conditions are not good, and so women are sexually exploited to be able to earn more money to take care of their children. This has contributed to high levels of gender based violence and HIV/Aids infections. Most of the GBV cases go unreported and so the women end up not getting justice. Poverty levels are also very high.

Due to lack of money and education; these women are forced to engage in unsafe sex in order for them to get jobs from the male supervisors. The women working in the farms as casual workers are in the fore front in brewing and selling sex for livelihood; as most of them are single parents with many children to fend for.

Kwanza is home to six slums namely; Fork land, Khalwenge, Tonyonto, Maridadi, Kambi Makaratasi-Bosnia and Chechnya where the local brew (Changaa and Busaa) making is very high. This is where many of the casual workers reside. Idle youth around the slums engage in ferrying small arms and light weapons to the county which they use to commit crime. The larger community lacks knowledge and skills to engage in income generating activities.

Preface

The issue of women rights remain a hotly debated topic in many parts of the globe and in particular in patriarchal cultures where women are considered to be inferior to the men and as such are not accorded equal opportunities. This rings true in many parts of Kenya especially in areas where social and economic structures of communities have undergone destruction due to cyclic violence. Where this has happened, there have been high competition on the scarce resources and opportunities available and those who have been marginalized the most in terms of access and entitlement are the women.

While it is worth noting that a lot of effort has been made in ensuring that as many women as possible are aware of various instruments that stipulate their rights to participate and engage in meaningful lives, still much ground remains to be covered especially in the conflict prone and marginalized areas to ensure that women do not lag behind in terms of leadership opportunities, economic entitlements, access to information, education and healthcare.

During the implementation of the ‘Enhancing Women understanding of their Rights project’ it was very clear that majority of the women at the grassroot areas of Bungoma, Trans-nzoia and Baringo have limited knowledge of the provisions of the 2010 Constitution, the UNSCR 1325, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Bill of Rights, yet these are instruments that exist to ensure that women are accorded equitable opportunities with men in areas of matrimonial properties, leadership opportunities, health care and educational opportunities.

In the same light, it was also very clear that despite the odds being against them, there is a clique of women in the above areas who have suffered gross violation of their rights but their experiences have not broken them but rather, they have used the knowledge gained to reach out to other womenfolk to give solidarity and encouragement to others who may have gone through similar experiences. It is this calibre of women that we wish to celebrate in this book.

Martha Ndogoto

Programmes Coordinator

Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA)

Janet Chebet Silari

Age: 35 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: FPFK – Peace & Rights programme

Position: Community Advocate



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm 35 years old and I have been working as a volunteer helping my community for a long time. Right now, I'm working as a volunteer at an organisation that addresses peace and human rights issues. I'm married and I have three children, a boy and two girls.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

The conflict that I have witnessed erupted between two different tribe groups during the elections in 2007. Mt Elgon, the area where I come from, was badly affected during this time.

The conflict was between two groups of people, who were fighting over a piece of land that was distributed unfairly. The conflict affected everyone, it wasn't just fighting - people were killing each-other, houses were burnt down, properties destroyed and many people were displaced.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

The main problem that women face in my community is the cultural practices that pin women down. In my culture, woman doesn't have a voice, she cannot access or control resources, she cannot make decisions and most definitely is not recognized in leadership roles. Instead, woman is expected to do domestic work, farm and give birth to children. Woman does all the labor, but when it's the time to make decisions, woman is not there.

Another problem that women face is that they have no say about their reproductive health. It is the husband who has the say in how many children his wife should have and prohibits any kind of birth control. I think these are the two main issues.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I am a woman leader, which is why I need to have the knowledge and the capacity to deal with various issues. I applied for the COPA training because I wanted to be empowered about the women rights and know more on how I can help my community. Hearing about COPA and seeing what they do, I wanted to get the knowledge on matrimonial property, issues of inheritance and the law of succession. Also, I didn't know that much on where I can refer the cases I deal with, so I was hoping to gain skills and useful information that I can disseminate to other women from my community.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

Yes, my expectations were met, I've learnt what I was hoping for. I wanted to know about women empowerment, gender based violence, what to do with women who have been affected and where to take the cases. I definitely got the skills on how to handle these issues, especially on the process of referrals.

The knowledge on 'law of succession' will be also really useful; I know many women who had their property taken away or who had to accept being inherited by their relatives because otherwise they wouldn't have a place to live.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

My plans are to sensitize people through any forum available, not only women, but also the men and other members of our community. I will talk at meetings in churches, women's forums, schools or gatherings organized by the community chief. I want to talk about women's roles, women equality and the sharing of responsibilities.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

The lack of equality and empowerment opportunities is what is eating us women from inside. It is important that women get the chance to participate and contribute in their communities equally and are also economically empowered. Women have been left out for a very long time, their rights have been violated and they do not get any opportunities to make decisions about the development in their communities. Sometimes I feel men have been burdened with far too many responsibilities, which is why we all need to contribute equally towards the development and the economy of our areas, starting from our families, all the way up to the national level.

What would you like to achieve?

Following on from my trainings, I would like to see women tapping into their potential and see them participate in various activities, sit on decision making committees and share resources with men equally. I would like to see empowered women who can help our economy to grow.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

I think my new skills are going to help me greatly. Before the training, I didn't know how to approach many issues efficiently or how to refer cases of women who experienced trauma and do not wish to speak about their ordeals. Right now, I know exactly what I need to do and how to face the reality of the issues that women in my community experience. I feel the skills I've gained here have really helped me already.

Do you think there are enough female role models in your community?

No, I don't think we have enough of female role models in my community. This is because of our culture, where for many generations, girls have not been taken to schools and therefore they were not able to get good positions or roles that required any kind of formal education. But, there were few mothers who were brave enough to send their daughters to schools, so few of them are there. Other mothers have been inspired, so some of our girls are slowly coming up, but I can

strongly say, that unfortunately we haven't got enough of female role models just yet.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Yes, I do have a role model, she is a female pastor and as you can imagine, in my community that is really something. Her name is Jennifer and she is the one who has inspired me ten years ago to take up advocacy and start helping other women in my community. Thanks to her, I feel empowered and can stand on my two own feet. At the beginning, I was a little bit resistant, I didn't know if I wasn't wasting my time, but she has encouraged me to attend workshops and I haven't looked back since. Jennifer opened my heart and continues to inspire me.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I want to see a world full of women who are empowered. I want to see women in leadership roles and I want to see girls from my community getting good jobs so they can help our community to get out of poverty. I want to see women who are able to speak out on any injustices and get out of being marginalized by community, so all of us can come up and have a better life.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My dream is, and I think I've said it many times during this interview, is to see women who are empowered and who know their human rights. I hope women will play as important role in our communities in the future, just like our male counterparts; I want us to go for jobs, be empowered and get out of poverty.

Rose Biket Simiyu

Age: 50 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Kiminini

Organisation: KIDIPO

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm a primary school teacher and a widow. I got married about 30 years ago. I'm a mother of four children, but my oldest girl went missing during the 2007/2008 post election violence and I haven't seen her since.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

It was like this – it was 2008, when the post election clashes went on. My family and my children had not seen something like a gun before, so when the raiders came during the night and started to steal, destroy and burn our house, my children were frightened and ran away. But only three came back, one is missing up till now. I have not seen her since, her name is Brenda.

After the clashes, the family of my husband came back to my house and they took everything that wasn't destroyed. It was all I had left, but they took everything while I remained in the bushes, hiding with my three children. Once I came back and saw what the raiders and my in-laws had done, I decided to move away from my home to town. I rented a small house and stayed there for almost 6 years. I worked hard and managed to save money for a small farm in Kiminini, Trans Nzoia County. That's where I'm staying up to now.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

In my community, when the husband dies, the spouse's relatives don't take care of the family that has been left behind. They actually strip them of any property left behind. Another challenge is that there is a huge issue with inheritance of widows, even when the widow is not willing...

Actually, other women's situation in my community is much worse. They do not have anything, they do not even have a place to sleep. Some of them end up as internally displaced people, living in camps. And that is not easy at all. At least I have a payslip to hold on to and I can support my family, so I am much better.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I wanted to know what COPA is about. I knew the training was about human rights and as a widow who has suffered a lot, I was very keen to know more on what my rights are.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I have gained a lot of information and knowledge on my rights as a woman. Once I leave here, I plan on passing on this information to my fellow women friends at home.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I want to teach my fellow friends. I'll encourage them, I will tell them what they are supposed to do and what their rights as a woman are.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

It is because women in my community have been very oppressed. We are underrated, we are overlooked and men do not consider women as anything. So I want to teach women about their rights and how to stand in front of others and speak and how they can also address others with confidence and esteem.

What would you like to achieve?

I'm expecting other women to also gain knowledge, so they can help themselves and their community.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

It is helping me already, because this training is building me up and it is making me to be comfortable with my fellow women. Now, I feel empowered and I also enjoy being part of a women's COPA group, where women are like-minded and also want to do something with their fellow friends in their communities.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There is not many female role models, because women are not supported in any way. But they are there. They are definitely there. Women don't get this kind of opportunity to grow and some of them are denied to have opportunities. So, there are few, but they are there.

Do you have a role model yourself?

I have lots of female role models - some of them are my friends, some my neighbours and some are my fellow workers. But because nobody has had their stories of courage, they are unknown beyond our village.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I feel like I want to be a woman that can motivate other women.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I want women to open their eyes, to see that they are not supposed to be only labourers in the house. That they should not remain only in the kitchen and that they are not meant to be only domestic workers. Women should do something for themselves. Most women are kept in the home, they graze cattle and they do domestic work all day long. I want women to be empowered, so they gain knowledge, know their rights and rise up to be better than they are.

Cresensia Kelli Wandera

Age: 28 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Central

Organisation: Mitume Development Community Project

Position: Vice-Person



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm a young mother. I became pregnant when I was 19. At that time, I was in college, doing aviation and the guy that was responsible rejected me. As he wasn't responsible enough, I ended up in an early marriage and relocated to Trans Nzoia.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

What I can say is that I haven't been involved in any conflict, but I work a lot in slums where I see young people involved in drugs and promiscuity. Most of the young people drink local brew that is illegal and very cheap. They get very drunk and that is how they become promiscuous. Unfortunately, those girls who are very strict with themselves are drugged by the 'tap tap'. The 'tap tap' is a drug that boys put in the drink of girls and what it does is that the girls become really high and don't remember anything from the night. Unfortunately, some of the girls get pregnant and they end up going to witch doctors to have an abortion. Many of the girls die or can't have children in the future, the methods that are being used are horrific. Sometimes they use knitting needles to abort the baby or they jump on the girl's stomach. Abortions are a huge problem in my community, the girls suffer a lot.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

I live near a slum in Trans Nzoia, where there are many issues and challenges that affect girls and women. For instance there are problems with taking of drugs, teenage pregnancies, early marriages and high levels of school drop outs. Actually, 90% of the people in the slum are illiterate.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

When I heard the training was about how to enhance knowledge on women's rights and peace, I was excited. I knew that it would provide an opportunity for me to gain knowledge that would impact on me as a woman and the community that I come from. I knew I would have something to take back and make a positive impact on others.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to know more on the various rights of women as contained in the different documents. I wanted to know how I can use this information to sensitize my community on women issues. When I talk about sensitising community, for me

it's about going and telling a girl about the rights she has - in terms of her marriage, in terms of her property, in terms of her children and the general life of a woman. My expectations were exceeded.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I've got my action plan ready. I want to get together women and tell them what I've learnt. I want to put my new knowledge into practice and teach them about their rights.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I believe that once a woman is empowered, the whole community, clan, nation is empowered. I know we can't tackle all the problems we experience, but I believe we can reduce a great percentage of them.

What would you like to achieve?

I would really like to see women owning tangible things, coming out of poverty and knowing their rights. Because once a woman knows her duties and her rights, we will see fewer children living on the streets. Once you know what to do, I don't believe you will die poor. Knowledge is power.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Indeed. It will cover a great mileage. At the end of the COPA training, I will get a certificate which I can show back in my the community as a proof that I have gone through this training and what I'm talking about is what I've learnt. It's not something I've just come up with. So, I believe that certificate is something that will support me in the work I want to do.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

I don't think there are enough of female role models. I'm working towards being amongst them. I want some kids to say: "one day, I want to be like Kelli." I wouldn't want young girls suffering from what I went through. It was a bad experience. What I would really want is to see women having their voice and being empowered. Those who are empowered, I admire.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Wangari Maathai¹ – she was bold enough, she was a single mother and she spoke out against oppression and bad governance when most ladies in Kenya were undermined. She stood for women and she stood for the environment. At the end, she won.

What inspires you to make a difference?

My predicament - what I went through. I fell, but I didn't stay on the ground. I stood up, I dusted myself off and moved on. So I believe it's something I need to tell people to do.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I want to see women as leaders. And not just leading by talking. I want women to lead by their actions and their lifestyles. Women who will not divide and rule women, but who will bring all the women together and get man to support women in being empowered.

1 the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004

Mary Chepkwemoi

Age: 43 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt Elgon

Organisation: Kibayenge CBO

Position: Village Elder



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm a widow and a mother of five boys. I am a senior village elder - my role is to help to keep the peace in my community, identify the new people who move into our area and know the people who might be causing trouble or are criminals. I also teach adults in my community how to read and write. This is important for them to know, because if their sons or daughters send them money, they need to know how to operate the machines in banks and also their phones for the money transfer services.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

I've seen a lot of conflict in the area that I'm living. During the post election violence in 2007/ 2008, there was a group of gangsters who broke into several houses and shops. In one of the shops they told the owner to lie down on the bed and lie on his stomach. His pregnant wife had to give them all their money and afterwards she was raped by two of the gangsters. They took her a few kilometres away from her home and left her outside during several cold nights. When she returned home after few days, she couldn't stop bleeding. We wanted to help her, but there was nothing we could have done. During this time, people were very scarred and didn't want to leave their houses.

What kind of challenges do women like yourself experience in your community?

Women in my community still work like donkeys. This means they are treated as beasts of burden. Rising up early in the morning and engaging in hard labour all day long. Their husbands' work is just to go around, stay at the market, play a game and at the end of the day they bring home nothing. The wife struggles at home from morning until the evening, she needs to get food for her children and her husband.

Also, many women in my area are still beaten by their husbands, and if they are widowed, their inheritance from their husband goes to his family. They end up with nothing.

Another big challenge is that the opportunities for women's education are very low. Priority is given to the boys to go to school while the girls remain at home taking care of the homes and their younger siblings.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

As a peacebuilder, when I came across the application, I became very interested. I knew COPA supports women to effectively engage in peacebuilding leadership. I applied so as to learn more. I knew this training would help me to acquire more knowledge and skills.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to raise my self confidence—to be courageous, stand in front of my community and teach them about peace and women's rights. I know I've become a good leader here.

What are you hoping to do after the training in your community?

I would like to facilitate trainings to women and youth about peace. As a village leader, my responsibility is to train them; to educate them, so that they can train others and be better people.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

If I help other women to gain the knowledge on their rights that I have gained through COPA training, it will change the way our community views women as second class citizens.

What would you like to achieve?

My dream is to work with a group of local women, who would become leaders and would further help me to pass on the skills that I have gained here. I would also like to go to schools, so our young girls can learn how to maintain peace, how to keep their virginity and train them how to be good mothers in the future. And that is to promote peace.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Indeed. I'm a changed woman now. I know my rights, I know my position, I know that I am somebody and that I will not allow to be neglected. I know that I am a person who can do something for my community and that I have a power to change things.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are enough of women role models, but they could do better if they would be given opportunities. Despite the fact that I'm a widow, I'm still able to educate my own children because of the opportunities I've had and worked hard for.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My role model was my mum. She also lived a single life, my father passed away and she stood strong as a mother. She educated us. When my husband passed away, she called me and said: "My daughter, your husband has passed away, but you are here. Take care of your children, take care of your community, take care of me. Don't suppress your life and don't say that 'I can't do anything'. Do it and do it with confidence."

What inspires you to make a difference?

When my husband died, I faced a lot of challenges. I was thrown out from my own home that I lived in while I was married. We had nowhere to stay, nothing to eat, I didn't have a partner, I was just alone. I started to work at the local market, selling vegetables, and after 3 years I managed to buy a small land from my business. I took different exams, so I could teach. I've attended many seminars and worked really hard on myself. I know I must stay strong because I have to feed my children and I want to educate them. I must honour my life and I must be somebody.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

Right now, women are the ones who carry a lot of burden at home while their husbands don't care. I hope that all the women will have opportunities to be empowered.

Sarah Anuna Chelimo

Age: 40 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mount Elgon

Organisation: Acheek CBO

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married, I have four children and I have my own business. I do a lot of volunteer work in my community, especially work that addresses issues of gender, human rights and agro-forestry. So, most of the time I do community development or I am a community facilitator to many groups.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

Personally, I have not experienced any conflict, just a few differences at home that are common in every household and I do know how to handle them.

But my family and I are taking care of a small boy who has run away from his home because of the conflict between his parents. One day, I came across this little boy who is a good friend of my last born child, who shared his pain of being between his parents who got separated, remarried and stopped taking care of him. The boy is only 7 years old, but he kept on walking very long distances between these families every day, yet they didn't want to have him around. I didn't want him to suffer anymore, so as a family we've decided that he will stay with us and we will help him. He is doing really well now, he's in school and learning.

In Mt Elgon, you have to understand, there are so many impunities that are concerning women - I've seen women being beaten, a lot of drinking within the families and as a result of this, children are really suffering. There are so many children in my community that are not taken care of.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

One main thing is poverty. Many men do not undertake their responsibilities partly due to alcoholism. So women strain a lot in my community. They don't have any finances, especially because they are not allowed to own property. They do any hard jobs that help them to survive and they get the daily bread for their families. Even after a long day of hard work, many are still beaten up by their husbands. At night, you can hear them crying and we try to intervene, but this behaviour is continuous. It never ends.

The issue of poverty also means that children are not able to go to school, because they have to help with work at home and sell things at the market in order to get a little bit of money for some food.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

When I received the COPA form, I was very interested in the training because there is a big need to deal with peace in my community. In the whole area that I volunteer in, I'm known as 'mama Amani', so I felt if I apply for this training, I will be given knowledge that will help me to further keep peace in Mt Elgon and learn alternative ways on how to resolve conflict. People in my area have suffered a lot and they really need healing, so it was necessary for me to apply.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I have a number of skills, but I wanted to add some more, especially on facilitation and mediation. The training has expanded my knowledge on constitution already, but I need to learn more. Learning is a continuous process.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I hope to go back to my community and transfer this knowledge to other women with whom I work with. My first group will be a church Community Based Organization; I will tell the members what I've learnt, so they can teach the same to other women. This message will spread amongst others and women will be aware of their human and constitutional rights and feel empowered.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

It is important for me to pass this message to other women because we are all having similar problems. Women from all over the world. I now know how to solve some of the problems, so it's important I share the knowledge about women's rights, how they can go about certain situations, how they can be able to care for their children, solve the poverty and so many other challenges that need to be addressed in the marriage institution.

What would you like to achieve?

I want to see women understand the Kenya constitution and their rights. Then they will be able to face the challenges positively and work out how they can sustain the income for their families. Once they will know their rights, they will not be mistreated and that I think, will make me very happy...very very happy.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

The knowledge I've gained in this training will help me in my personal life too, because despite that I'm married and I'm already a mother, I've not legalised my marriage yet. I've agreed I'm going to put a ring on my finger and get a certificate in December. Once I get my own certificate, I shall encourage others to get their own. We need to legalise our marriages, so that we may be able to have the right to claim our matrimonial properties without fear.

Do you think there are enough female role models in your community?

Not very many, but few are there. There should be more, because the young women should learn from those who are mature. Because if the mature ones are not going to be the role models, the society will be doomed. So it's important at least some of us are the role models.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My mother. My own mother is a one tolerant woman; she was a church leader, she has been helping so many women in her community and even us, her daughters, whenever we get problems in our own families, we go to see her. She is a very good advisor in my life, she always tells me what to do. I believe she is my role model.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I am not employed, I have my own business, I'm a farmer. I've planted my own things to sustain my daily bread. When I do volunteer in my community and see that I can help, I feel really good.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I would like women to lead this country in the future. That is my dream. I believe one day, when a woman will be a president of this country, integrity will be maintained and maybe some transparency will be seen. Thought it may not happen tomorrow, I still believe that one day it will happen.

Joan Kawira

Age: 33 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Kwana

Organisation: Community Alliance for Change

Position: Project Manager



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm a mother and I am a project manager for a programme that is addressing conflict and human rights issues in ten districts that are in three counties – Trans Nzoia, Elgeyo Marakwet and Pokot. I am also a member of the Red Cross Kenya.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

I moved to Trans Nzoia in 2006 from a very peaceful and close community. The post-election violence in 2007 shook me quite a bit, seeing all the conflict and atrocities around me has inspired me to do volunteering. One day, on the way to set up a medical camp in Mt Elgon, I was caught up in the clashes. I was beaten up with canes like a small child for about two hours. Luckily, the police was passing by and they intervened, otherwise, I really do not know what would have happened. From that time on, I was even more determined to volunteer in my community and up to date, I've lived up to that promise.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

In Trans Nzoia we have the poor, who even the poor can call poor. Despite the fact that we are in the 'green basket of Kenya', we have a huge problem with malnourishment and poverty. Also, the education level is very low and women do not know their rights. They are just struggling - living each day at a time and are part of silent conflicts amongst their families and big disputes that are unresolved. Their rights to property, education and body integrity are also deeply compromised.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

One week ago I had decided I have to go and assist the women and girls in Chepchoina, an IDP camp located in Trans Nzoia, housing 255 families from Rongai in Nakuru County. These are people who were displaced by the 2007/2008 post election violence and have since been suffering as they do not even know what they are entitled to as IDPs. These girls and women need to know their constitutional rights, because once they know what they are entitled to, it will be much easier for them to lobby and advocate for their rights. We really need to empower them, so the COPA training came just at the right time. I applied, because I realised that there is so much I didn't know. The knowledge and skills from this

training are essential for me and will help me greatly to educate these women and girls on their rights. I really want to help them, something needs to be done.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I was hoping to gain knowledge on women's human rights and on how to lobby and advocate. I'm hoping to get to know my constitution better; I really needed to know what is written inside. I can say now that I am 100% able to help other women efficiently and adequately.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I can't wait to go back to my community, my work plan is already done! I really need to pass on the knowledge that I have gained in this training. First, I want to sensitise my own organisation on what I've been taught. Straight after this training I'm going to attend a networking event – I'm going to team up with few friends who share the same vision with me and as mothers, as women, we can achieve things together. As I have mentioned, I want to help women and girls in the IDP camp in Chepchoina. I'm aware of the problems they experience every day and the resistance they are facing from the local communities who do not want them to be resettled in the area. Apart from the trainings on human rights, I'm hoping to contribute to peaceful coexistence by setting up peace meetings between the IDPs and the host communities. It's a problem that we need to address immediately and it doesn't cost much. It's achievable.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

If we really want to achieve the peace that we are praying for, if we really want people to coexist, then we need to empower women and share the problems that are part of their lives. I think it's a noble cause and I think it's the right thing to do.

What would you like to achieve?

I want to do as much as I can do, because that gives me an inner satisfaction. I was born in a peaceful community, but since I am now married and Trans Nzoia is where my new home is, I want it to be peaceful and my children to grow up in a safe environment. I want to change my community, in every little way that I can. For the sake of my children, for the sake of other women and for the sake of other generations to come.

I want women to be self-reliant. I want women to have ambitions, so they will know what they want and where they want to be... I know nobody wants to be in a conflict in the community, nobody wants to languish in poverty, nobody wants their rights to be violated, so if people really know what they want and if people are self-reliant, I know we can get somewhere. I believe we will be somewhere and that somewhere will be a peaceful place.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Oh yes! The counselling skills I've learnt are applicable even in my house! Also, I'm a person who is married in a different community from my own, so advocacy skills will help me to address people in the right and respectable way. And that's what this training is about, that's what I've learnt.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

Actually, women are there, there are enough of them, but they are not empowered. As a result of social settings, there are so many issues that are pulling the women down. Once the women will be trained on how to resolve their own issues at home, then they will have the potential and the confidence to deal with problems in their communities, do a lot of activism, advocacy and lobbying. They are there, but they are not empowered.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My sisters. I grew up in a family where my mother was absent, my sisters came first, my brothers came in the middle and I came last. What I saw from my sisters, even today, makes me very emotional. They studied up to form 4, they could not continue, because they wanted to assist us, so we can be what we are today. I remember my sister went for a casual labour just so she could save money and make sure we were well fed. To me, my three sisters are my heroes. They've struggled so much with life to be where they are today, but I am so proud to say that now, they are doing quite well. They are amazing women, the greatest loves of my life.

What inspires you to make a difference?

My own life, my own background. Like I've said, I grew up in the absence of my mother, my sisters took care of me and after my marriage, it took me quite some time to get back to school. I don't want people to go through the experience I've gone through, I don't want my children to grow in my absence and I want to take care of my sisters, my neighbours and my friends, the way my sisters took care of me. In short, I want to give back to the community what I've received, because they have made me what I am today, there are the people who have supported me, who have mentored me and actually I feel it's my obligation now more than ever to give back to my society. Because if somebody never did that for me, I don't know where I would be today. I don't know, I just can't imagine where I'd be today.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My dream for women is to take the lead. Not competing with men, but being sure of what they want and where they want to be. And leading a life of self reliance and assisting other people irrespective of gender. Just being women of substance, that's what I want them to be. That's my dream.

Sela Nyakoa Etenui

Age: 43 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Kwanza

Organisation: Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (M.Y.W.O.)

Position: Chairlady



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I am married. Unfortunately, I am a widow, my husband passed in 2008. I do voluntary work- sometimes I work with orphaned children and sometimes I work with my fellow widows in helping to solve problems in our community. I love doing voluntary work, because I'm strong and I manage my home. My family is well, so I like that.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

In Mt Elgon, during the 2007 post election violence, there were many people who were suffering from a lot of conflict. There are many inter- marriages between people of different tribes in my area. The raiders who were burning people's houses, robbing and killing innocent people, were targeting only specific tribes, which meant that at times, they killed only the husband or the wife. This means we have many widows and widowers in my community. The raiders were killing and burning people in their own houses, it was so bad that we even had an IDP camp set up in our county.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

In my community, one big problem is that women are very often raped. We try to help and take them to hospital and even though it's hard to admit, they often confess and tell us what happened. A lot of women do not open up about their rape experiences because they fear stigmatization by their community. However the problem is that even when we follow the person who did it and we manage to get him to the police, he is released later on and comes back to the community. This means, these women live in even bigger fear than before the incident.

Another problem is that we have a lot of poverty. Most of the people in my community are widows, who struggle every day. They wake up early in the morning and work on somebody else's farm or do a hard labour, just so they can feed their children in the evening.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I applied for the COPA training because I deal with peace on the ground all the time. I'm a member of a peace committee in my county and I knew this training is going to help me.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to gain more knowledge on women human rights and on how to keep peace in my community and resolve conflicts. Now, I can go and sit with my community and organise several trainings, even in the churches, women groups

and also youth groups. The knowledge gained at this training will eventually enable women from my community to be able to maintain peace in our area and know about their rights.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

After the training, I am going to contact people in the village called 'Wakasa'. I'm going to call the assistant chief and tell him that I have been trained by COPA and now I know more about peace and women rights. That way, they will be able to contact me whenever they have a meeting and I can help them to maintain the peace.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

It is important for me to start in Wakasa, because it is an area where there is a lot of conflict, not only between husband and wife, but also amongst community members. I want to go there and tell them about peace and how to tackle conflicts, in order for them to live peacefully.

What would you like to achieve?

I am hoping that maybe after three or six months, Kwanza, my County, is going to be different. People will love each-other and the conflicts in my area are going to be significantly reduced.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes, the training is going to help me a lot because I am a mother and a father in my own home. I will start with my own children and tell them about the goodness of peace and respecting of women. That is the only way we are going to live without any conflict.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

Yes, there are women, but they lack knowledge. There is also lack of opportunities to be empowered.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My role model is Martha Karua. She is my strong role model, as she is a politician.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I'm doing voluntary work because I love my people and I want to help. I have got my children, some are in secondary school, I have one that is at University but I manage to pay for them myself. My life is marvellous and I thank God.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I would like to encourage all the women to be peacebuilders. I believe, women can heal our country and even the rest of the world. Why I say so is because we are all mothers and wives and if my husband or son goes and fight, we are the ones who cook for them and the meetings take place in our houses...So, we have to approach them slowly and tell them not to do such things and tell them that we want peace. We are the healers and we can heal the world.

Jane Jesang Joram

Age: 40 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Kapsokwony Kalyeet Widows Group

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I am a widow and a mother of four children. I'm a member of a widow group and I'm currently studying to be a teacher.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

I was a direct victim of the post election violence in 2007, I was really badly affected. During the conflict, my husband was one of those who was killed, in a way that I can't even talk about.

My husband went to help with a funeral of his friend who had been killed by gangsters few days ago and that is where he was caught and killed. We had to bury his body very quickly, it wasn't peaceful at all and then had to run immediately. I escaped with my children to west Pokot, where we stayed until it was safe to return home.

When we returned home, I faced a lot of challenges with my husband's family, especially with my brothers in law. We had a farm, but as soon as my husband died they hired the whole land out without my permission. They also stole all my things from our house, they didn't leave anything behind. It was a real struggle, I didn't have any money and my children couldn't continue their education. The sad thing is that we worked really hard with my husband, I used to work as a teaching assistant as well, so we had things, but they took everything and I was left with nothing. It's been difficult, but I feel like I've recovered and picked up my life again.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

The challenges that women in my community experience are very different. One of the most painful things is that before I was widowed, I lived in peace with all the people in my community. But immediately after I was left alone, it was as if I was disowned by everybody. All my friends run away, none of them wanted to visit me anymore. The parents of my husband didn't even care if and how we were surviving. Nobody actually cared about us in the whole community and I still don't know how they take us. This is something that many women experience and it is very sad.

Also, during the 2007 conflict, lots of women were raped, right in front of their husband's eyes. The husband would be told to lie on the floor, the raiders would step on his head and then he would have to watch his children and wife being raped. Straight away after that, he would be killed.

That is why we decided to form a widows group, so we can take care of each-other and we can try to help to heal the wounds that most of us faced. Although mine was not that bad compared to others.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

When I looked at the COPA application form, I actually liked it, because most of the questions that were asked in the application were concerning women's rights. I felt really excited and happy because I knew that the training would assist me in understanding of what I need to do and what I have the right for. The knowledge would help me and my fellow widows in our lives.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

The skills that I was hoping to gain and got through the training are the ones that will help me and my fellow widows. The law about succession is something very important, I didn't know anything about it. Now I can go home, follow the steps that I have learnt and my children will get the property after me and will be taken care of.

Also, I want to go back and reconcile with and forgive those people who actually didn't do anything wrong to me. I had not even thought of forgiving them before this training and that is how it became difficult for me to interact with them in the community. Once we talk, we can forgive each-other and I may be able to live peacefully in my community.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

As soon as I get back, I will meet with my fellow women who are widows like me and I will train them on what I've learnt here. That way we will be able to assist each-other, teach about peace and human rights together and hopefully will bring peace to our community.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

Because widows find themselves very weak and not valued members within communities. But I've been empowered by this training and no longer feel like I'm a less of a human being. So I want to go and empower others so that I can assist them to live a comfortable life with their children. It is because others helped me to be empowered, I want to go back and help others and give them the same knowledge I've gotten here.

What would you like to achieve?

After teaching women about their rights and the Kenya constitution, what I will actually want them to understand is that we as women, even though we have been left out, we still have our rights and we play an important role in the community.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

I never knew that the death certificate was such an important document. I've just kept it, but I thought it is only the birth certificates of my children that are important. But now I know, so I have learnt something here that is very useful to me.

When the facilitator was telling us about death certificates, I really thought about it and I thought: “where did I put it?” [husband’s death certificate] I almost called my children to check if it is in the place where I think it is.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are very few. It is because women lack courage and because women haven’t had the opportunity to lead other people. The culture that we have in our community is that women should just give birth to children, remain in the kitchen and do some work at home. In fact, they do not allow women to go for jobs and there are very few who have gone to school. So, there are very few.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Yes. My role model is Jennifer Mbatia², in fact, she is the one who brought the COPA forms to me and I see she is really moving far. She is a very good role model, I’m seeing her as a lady who is really pushing ahead.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I believe that women should be empowered so that they can realise that there is something good they can do for themselves and for their village.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My dream for women would be that their families and communities believe in them and allow them to follow their potential. I want women in my community to be respected and treated like those women who are in urban centres of Kenya. Women should not be confined just to the kitchen and to the village they come from. I hope we will be able to bring our daughters in a way that they will be able to go ahead of us and follow their dreams.

² A Gender Advisor to the County’s governor and an alumni of COPA trainings

Eunice Nabei

Age: 47 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Chemses Women Group

Position: Welfare Chairlady



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married and I have five children.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

In 2007, when all the post election violence happened, we had to run away from our home. From then on it was a huge struggle; the farm that used to provide us with food for our children wasn't taken care of while we were on the run, so we had nothing to eat for a long time after we came back.

My husband works in a church as a pastor, but pastors do not earn any money. The only reason why we survived was because of my parents, who assisted us with food from their land and their animals. When my parents died, life became more difficult than I could have imagined. They left me a small piece of land back at home, but my brothers took it because they think that girls have no right to inherit land. I had no legal documents so I tried to take this matter to the village elders, but they couldn't solve anything. We proceeded to court after the village elders failed to recognise the inheritance, but my brothers were ahead of me, they sold all the animals we had at home and used this money to file a case against me. My children are at school and it is very difficult to support them.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

Other women also face difficult life, since the violence, when everything went down, there is nothing that has happened since that would change the conditions that we live in.

I witnessed many women being raped, many had their ears chopped off, other rebels were using needles and thread; if they found out that you spoke anything about them, they took a needle and sewed your mouth together. Those are the kind of challenges that women experienced in my community. You can see women with chopped ears everywhere. The biggest problem that we face right now is poverty.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I wanted to be educated and get skills so I can go and teach other women in my community. Also, I wanted to know how to overcome the situation I have experienced with my brothers and help other women who are experiencing the same problems.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

There are so many skills I have already gained from this training, I wouldn't know where to start. I know now that women have got their rights and also have a position to play in their communities.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

After this training, I will go and review everything that I have been taught here, digest it properly and then organise training for other women to teach them about their rights.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I want to tell other women that they have got rights even if their husbands have left them. They have the right of succession and they have the right to own the property that the husband has left behind.

What would you like to achieve?

After my training, I'm hoping that women will gain an understanding of what they are supposed to do in various situations. I want women to also understand that they can become leaders in their communities and not be oppressed by men. I want to empower them, so they can also do something for themselves.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

It will help me and it will also help those with whom I talk to.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are there, but they are not doing their best. But once I will talk to them, I am hoping that they will do better and that they will be the best role models that they can be. I hope women will be empowered and therefore do better for themselves and our daughters than they are doing now.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My neighbour is my role model.

What inspires you to make a difference?

The education that I have gotten from the COPA training is what is going to inspire me to change things in my community. And of course, my past experiences. If I think of what I have gone through, I know I want to achieve change. I have attended another two seminars, but I have not attended one that has really changed me like this one. COPA training is the best. I am going to work really hard.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I am hoping that after I train the women, they will cooperate and achieve something great.

I hope that all women, not only in my village, but in the whole Mountain Elgon area, will come together and achieve something great. I hope they become leaders and play important roles in their communities.

Eva Akinyi Nyamogo

Age: 40 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Trans Nzoia West

Organisation: Latumu CBO

Position: Chairperson



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married and I have 4 children. I went to school up to form 4, then I went to a college and I did a secretarial course. I worked with World Vision and other INGOs. When my contract ended, I started to do small community work, and that is why I'm here today.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

The situation with elections during 2007 was not so good. I have witnessed many atrocities and worked with women who became IDPs (Internally Displaced People). At that time, I worked with World Vision and we managed to help many people who needed assistance.

Just before the 2013 elections, we could sense some fear in the communities, so we started to work with women and encouraged them to become friends with others and know their neighbours. We were trying to prepare them in case the conflict would return and inform them what they should do, who to report to and who they can trust.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

There are several challenges that women experience in my community. When it comes to family responsibilities, most men try to run away from their families because of the hard economic situation. They just leave their families and leave their wives to take care of the children all by themselves.

Another big problem is domestic violence. Some women are beaten, because their husbands are drunkards. Saying that, and I don't know if it is because of the poverty, but you find many women that are alcoholics too. Their children just walk around begging for food, because there is nobody there to provide for them.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

Initially, I didn't even know about COPA, but I have a friend Anne Mutungi back in Kitale, who recommended me to apply for the training. I like networking with other like-minded women and see what we can do together and how can we help other women.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

My main goal was to gain leadership skills. Now, I know I am able to talk about peace and sensitise other women about the issues that affect them and this will result in peaceful communities. I think that if there is peace in your community, everything else is OK. Without it, communities can't progress and flourish.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

After the training, I'm planning to go and meet up with several women's groups. I will start by our Christian community group, I will train and talk to other women so they can train their own groups on women rights. I am going to work really hard, so I can see a positive change amongst many women groups within Kitale.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

Unfortunately, if I may say so, most of the women in my community didn't go to school. It is important that I inform them about the constitution and the rights they have as women. Some women just sit and let things happen to them, without knowing what their rights are or what to do.

What would you like to achieve?

As I've said, I am going to deliver several trainings, and the outcome that I am hoping for is that the women who have problems will be able to know what to do next and what they have the right for. I want to have some M&E (monitoring and evaluation) in place in order for me to see if we are making any impact on the lives of those, who for example, have been victims of domestic violence or any other issues and didn't know how to solve it. When I see they know what to do, I know I did a good job.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes, this knowledge is definitely going to help me in my personal life. I must say, our facilitator is very good, because she is able to stress on such points that we are all able to understand. I have attended several trainings on constitution and gender equality, but sometimes I found out I would leave the training without any understanding. But here, I feel like I really understood what I'm being taught and I feel confident in being able to explain it to someone else in the future.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

I think there should be more, especially when it comes to women leadership. It is sad to see that women are not in political positions and that they don't feel confident to go for these posts. I think women are the ones who really know what happens on the ground and what our needs are, so we should go for these positions and challenge those who deprive us of our rights. Women need to be leaders as they will be able to articulate and advocate our rights.

Do you have a female role model yourself?

I think my role model is my sister. My sister, her name is Jennifer, took care of us when we were young. My dad passed away when I was only two years old and she was always working very very hard. She takes care of her family and that is why she is my role model. When I look at her, I say to myself that I'm never going to give up, I will also work hard. Also, you shouldn't restrict your work to your children only, you have to work for the benefit of your whole community. That way you will find that if you help a neighbour's child, this child will be able to help another person and that other person will be able to transfer that help to another one. So your help might have helped the whole community.

What inspires you to make a difference?

My children. Because I love my children and I am a woman. I say, I never give up. Some women like to complain – we don't have any money, we don't have this, we don't have that, but we can have the same money just as men if we work hard. I believe women are very tough. Let's say an example – if a man leaves his family because of hard economic situation, the woman is still able to provide for her children, she is still able to go to school and perform, which means she is going to stand firm on her feet. Wherever there is a strong woman, her family is going to grow.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I would like to see women working very hard, that is my dream for women in the whole world.

I would like to see women working, not just sit there and wait for their husbands to bring food. That is not right. I would like to see a country where women are working too. I hope women will be able to wake up and look at 'working' positively. My advice is – no matter how hard the situation is, you wake up the next day, you forget about the past, you pick your pieces and you start fresh. Don't ever give up.

Pamela A Musani

Age: 36 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt Elgon

Organisation: Christian organisation

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married but I am a widow, I have three children - two boys and one girl.

I'm a secretary in a women's group and I am also a church leader. Currently, I'm studying to become a pastor, my graduation ceremony is going to be in November 2013.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

During the post election violence, there were many people who were escaping from rural areas of Chebyuk in Mt. Elgon and coming to Kapsokwony. We were all affected by the conflict, but we-locals, tried to help those who were in the rescue centres and those who needed the support.

During that time, I met a girl that was raped several times and had no one to talk to. She was deeply upset and needed support, which I was able to give her as I was trained in trauma healing. I helped her with her grief and tried to support her the best way I could.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

There are problems that are embedded in our culture – women cannot lead, cannot speak in front of men, there is a huge problem with poverty, girls are not going to school and there are early marriages. As if that wasn't enough, many people in my community are HIV positive and there is a big problem with alcoholism.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I have a vision and I have a burden. My burden is the pain of the women groups that I am part of and this burden is pushing me and inspiring me to gain more knowledge so I can help and teach other women. That is why I applied to COPA.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to know about human rights, because I have experienced hard times and I want to continue to be active in my community. I've been working and studying hard so I have the confidence in training people and this training has given me more useful skills that will make my teachings useful and women will really appreciate.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

First, I'm going to bring together a group of women, with whom I will discuss what I've learned and what I would like to do next. Once we agree on the best place for a training, I will train a group of committed women who will spread the knowledge amongst other women. Yes, I have a clear vision on what I want to do after this training.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I feel it is very important to help other women, because I was neglected, abused and throughout this time, I feel like I don't belong to the community I live in. I am from Kisumu, Nyanza but I got married to a man from Kapsokwony, Mt. Elgon. People from this area have a different culture and different beliefs, so they always take me as an outsider. This is a great burden for me and I really want to help other women who are in the same situation.

What would you like to achieve?

I am hoping to change the community and the people who don't know their value. Or people who don't accept the way they are. I hope that I can help women to be aware of their rights and can be active in their communities just like me. Also, I want women to preach peace everywhere.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes, the knowledge I got during this training will help me greatly. First, I will apply this knowledge in my personal life - there are some things in my life that I didn't know what to do about, but I know exactly what I need to do now. Then, I can help the community.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are not that many women who are doing work for their communities. This is because they are engaged in their own work because of the poverty situations and they have to take care of their businesses. But there are also those who have vision and are committed to making their communities more peaceful and better places. But those are only very few.

Do you have a role model yourself?

I have one strong woman that I look up to in my life – her name is Janet Jebet and she is here with me. She introduced me to this COPA training and I am grateful to her.

What inspires you to make a difference?

My life has been very difficult, I have never really enjoyed it, which is why I want to be a channel of peace, motivate other women and be a good role model. I'm an HIV infected person, and I am happy that I know my status. I live my life to the full and I am challenging my community that I can do anything. Widows are neglected and if we don't have the knowledge about our rights, things that we don't like are happening and we can't protect ourselves. I have peace in my heart and want to help my community and my fellow widows.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I want all women to know their rights, I want them to campaign for their rights, and to preach peace everywhere. I believe women have a great strength.

Leonorah Anyango Mombo

Age: 48 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Saboti

Organisation: Akiriamriam Housing Co-operative

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married and I've got two children. I'm a church leader.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

In 2007/2008, when the conflict started, luckily, my family and I were in Nairobi. Our house and farm was burnt, so we couldn't return home for a while, but I am very grateful that my children and my husband were not harmed. I don't know what would have happened if we stayed at our place...I'm just glad that nobody died.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

One of the main challenges in our community is the lifestyles that families have. Most of the families are very poor. The men drink all the time and the women depend on manual jobs. The women have it really rough, because they work hard during the day to earn a hundred shillings only (equivalent to US\$ 1.3), which is not enough for the whole family. So most of the women end up drinking as well and then the families get into real mess. Poverty is the main challenge in our area, it's really miserable.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

In the COPA application, I first saw the question about the constitution and if I understood it. I knew I wanted to be explained and taught what constitution is really about, so I applied. I was really happy that I was accepted on this training, I want to progress in my life.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

Sincerely speaking, the law of succession and the rights of human beings, including women. I feel I've been empowered.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

Straight after this training, I've been invited to go to a women's seminar in Bungoma region. The seminar is going to be attended by about 40 women. I feel empowered already and I know I will be able to teach my fellow women about their

rights and about the law of succession. After receiving all the materials from the COPA training, I know I am fully prepared and I know exactly what I'm going to teach them.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

Women should know their rights. They should be aware that they have got their own rights. It is important for them to know that, when a husband passes on, she has the right to inherit the husband's property. For those women whose husbands have died and everything was taken away by relatives of the husband, I will train them on law of succession and women human rights. This will help them to open their eyes.

What would you like to achieve?

My goal is that women's lives change. I hope they live by their rights, and have freedom to ask and resolve their problems. I will be there for these women and I hope they will be able to live their lives happily.

Also, I will be doing some monitoring, I want to see how they're getting on. Training them for one day is not enough, I will be in touch with them and I will continue to support them.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Of course! This training has helped me because I now have that courage that I know what to tell people. When a child is born, the child is fed milk. After that, soft food is added. After that, the child is given hard food. Now, I've been trained by COPA for the first time, but then after this, there will be other-different seminars. For the chain not to break, I need to continue to gain knowledge and also help other women grow in my community.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

Right now there isn't enough. But, I think after passing these skills you have empowered me with, at least we'll have more.

Do you have a female role model yourself?

My mum, but she's not there anymore. When I was growing up, she used to tell me what I should be doing in order to be a good woman and I loved it. My mother was my role model.

Also, I like the way Martha Karua stands firm as a woman.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I can't really explain it, but I feel there is something in me, pushing me to do things. I cannot just sit and think, I wake up and I know I want to go and help other women.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I want them to be good role models for each other. They should change and they should also help change others.

Rabecca Ruto

Age: 55 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt Elgon

Organisation: Simba Women Group

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married, I'm blessed with nine children – four boys and five girls.

I married to a community, where women are anxious about development, so we formed a group called Simba Women's Group. I'm the secretary.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

During the 2007/2008 election violence, one of the most affected areas was the neighbouring Kopsiro division. I live in Kapsokwony and many of the IDPs were running our way. We were very scarred but tried to help where we could. We had few in our home, they stayed in our house for several months until the armed forces came to make their place safe and then they went back home.

One thing that really affected me and my family was what happened during this time to my sister. The raiders came to my sister's house, where she was staying with her husband. They had guns and told everybody to be quiet or they would shoot them. The husband was taken and despite pleading with raiders, he was slaughtered, his head was separated from his body. My sister is still deeply affected by her husband's death.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

In my community, most of the women are farmers and they do not realise that education is something very important. They take care of their houses and look after their children, not paying attention to education. If the children are not sent to school, what will the consequences be in the future?

One of the biggest problems in my area is alcoholism. We have many men and women who drink alcohol, they don't care about their children, they don't provide food for their children. We have lost many of our young boys to alcoholism too, who should be at school instead.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I applied because I wanted to have more knowledge. I want to help my community and challenge some traditions and things that people do. Alcoholism is a tradition and I want to help to resolve this issue.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I have learned about women's human rights, I have gained this knowledge. What I have experienced in my community is that most women who have lost their husbands have been staying without knowing that if I do 'this', I can stay comfortably. But right now, I have the knowledge to go and tell them that if their husband dies, it's not the end of their life. They can still survive. I have learned that we have laws in Kenya that really look after women.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I want to go back to my community and create awareness about the laws of Kenya as stipulated in the constitution 2010. I want to train women and tell them about what I've learned.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

It is important that women know which route to take when everything is taken away from them by their relatives after the death of their husbands. I want to tell women that there are laws that are here to help them to save their properties and that they have the right to inherit their husband's properties.

What would you like to achieve?

The result that I hope for, is to train the women. They will know their rights, but also the rights of their children. They will understand that every child has got the right to be educated and that it is not a waste of anybody's time.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

This new knowledge will help me very much. Previously, I didn't know that my husband can write a will. When I get home, I will talk to my husband about what we've learnt about writing a will, so when he or I die, we know our children are taken care of.

Also, this knowledge will help me to train others, because the community I come from needs to be aware of the laws of Kenya, especially the Law of Succession and Matrimonial Property.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

I know that after this training, there will be more. Some of them will be my fellow friends who will be going out and training others and it will change their lives.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I know how things in my house are after having an education, so I want other women to have the same. Other women should have the same knowledge I have. I want other women to do what I do.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My dream for all women in Kenya is to have opportunities for education.

Monika Dudi

Age: 53 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Saboti

Organisation: Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (M.Y.W.O.)

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm a pastor by profession, I'm a widow and I have six children.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

In Trans Nzoia, we were really affected by the post election violence in 2007/2008. It was really terrible because women were being raped, children were being raped and the raiders stole people's belongings and burnt their properties.

My family was affected, but we stayed at home and tried to help people who were in camps. The situation was terrible and you could see how the children were scarred and really panicking. All they could see were people running or being hurt, people carrying their luggage up and down the street or shouting for help. It was really terrible and we were all very badly affected.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

There are so many challenges that women experience in my community. Women are being neglected all the time and everywhere. We have a culture where men are used to saying that women are here to be seen, and not to talk. Women shouldn't go anywhere, they belong in the kitchen. Women are not allowed to participate in their community's development, if women want to go anywhere, we can go to church. Men do not respect women who have their own business. Women most of the time do not have money, they lack resources and therefore can not participate as candidates in case of politics. Men have money and they are elected because they bribe people.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

In 2010, I was trained by COPA in trauma healing and counselling. It felt really good, so I applied, because I want to have more skills and knowledge. Knowledge is power.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I have never been trained in human rights, but because of this training, I have gained a lot. I am a widow and I know my rights now. When my husband died, I was chased from my home like a dog, they refused me and took everything from me. Even my children, but they came back to me.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

My community is going to gain knowledge, just the way I did. I'm going to teach women about their rights, especially those, who were being left like me. I'm going to take this knowledge you've given me here and there are going to be some good changes. Women will know their rights, where to go, where to start and how to end. They will not be like me when my husband died. The constitution of today is very good, what I've learned here about our rights is wonderful.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

We, women, play a big role in our homes, we do everything. Once women know their rights, they will know that man and woman have equal opportunities. Their husbands should start helping them the way they help them, all women know that what men can do, we can do too.

What would you like to achieve?

So many women in my community are going to be healed. Those who are stressed and going to have the answers that they need, they are going to have a better life.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

This training has helped me a lot. I will start at my home, then I'll go to my neighbour and then I will go to my community.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are not enough of women role models, because people do not have the time to observe human rights or preach peace. It is important for us women to teach our children about rights and peace, so they are not like the older generations. If we show the child what human rights are and peace is, that child will become a better person. There are lots of children who have not been counselled because of the pain from losing their parents. We don't want them to think about revenge.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Elizabeth Nyongesa. I want to be like Elizabeth Nyongesa³, because she is a woman who cares.

What inspires you to make a difference?

The reason I started to volunteer is because I feel the pain that others are feeling. The only thing is that we lack resources and despite the fact that you want to help, you also want to make sure your children are taken care of when you leave the house and go to and help others.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My dream for women will be – I want them to be like Monika. I want them to be like me. Because I know how to stay strong, because I know how to preach peace, I know how I can help someone who feels bad, I know how to mediate in conflicts and now I know my rights as a woman.

³ A candidate for the post of Women's representative for the Trans Nzoia County during the 2013 Kenya elections.

Rose Jumba

Age: 49 years old

Area: Trans Nzoia, Saboti

Organisation: Sokoni Community Development Organisation

Position: Project Co-ordinator



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married, I have three children and two grand children. I'm a business woman, my mum had a stall at Kitale market and I ventured into business, so that is where I am right now.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

I'm very lucky, because I am based directly in the centre of town, so during the post election violence, we were not affected as much as those who live outside of town. Kitale is a cosmopolitan town, nearly all the ethnic groups are there. But people living on the outskirts of Kitale and some informal settlements were affected very badly, different tribes were fighting and beating each other, it wasn't good.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

One of the problems is sexual abuse of women, followed by domestic violence. Another big problem is that children are not going to school, because women can't pay the school fees. We have a lot of street children in Kitale whose parents are there.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I wanted to know more about human rights; in fact, it was the first time I have heard of it. I wanted to know more and I can say I have learnt a lot and I am very happy. I've got all the materials from the training, I'm going to use it to create awareness to women in the neighbouring slums within Kitale.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I feel empowered from the knowledge I gained in this training. I can go back to my community and create awareness in the slums on how to reduce conflict and how to reduce domestic violence. I know how to counsel women and empower them with the rights from our Kenya constitution 2010.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I want to go and mobilise women in slums. I will do this through chief barazas⁴ and through church groups. Members of these groups meet once a week and I will attend these meetings and inform them what I've learnt in COPA training.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I want women to know their rights, practice them and also to spread this knowledge to their fellow friends. I think we can reduce domestic violence and also get children to start going to schools. We have a high rate of alcoholism in slums. Even though the president has banned the home made alcohol, I don't see any difference. Women depend on their husbands and instead of having a proper business, they get their money through selling alcohol. They need to get help and should look for other means of securing their livelihoods.

What would you like to achieve?

I'll be striving to change women's lives. I'll be trying to drive them away from that habit of alcoholism and the sexual abuse. Because these issues are there, they are all there.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

This new knowledge will help me very much. I have never been trained on the topic of human rights, I am very grateful to get these skills. The most useful information was the law of succession; I was impressed with that because there are lots of women who do not know their rights and I shall let them know.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There should be more female role models. Because of the circumstances – the poverty, the alcohol, they struggle and can't progress.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Yes, I have. She is called Mrs Elizabeth Nyongesa⁵. She is a very good women, understanding, kind, ready to listen, ready to act. I love her, she is my role model.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I would like to help people to change the way they live, their standards of life. I would like to help them to work harder and reduce poverty levels and alcoholism and at the same time bring our children up in a very good way. In a good environment.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I would like women to be empowered more. I would like women to be considered for political roles, which would be great. I believe that women know what the problems are in communities more than men. I want women to be empowered and be involved in decision making tables at all levels and have political roles.

⁴ Meetings organized by government village administrator at the village level

⁵ A candidate for the post of Women's representative for the Trans Nzoia County during the 2013 Kenya elections.

Margaret Echom

Age: 49 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Tumaini Upishi Self Help Group

Position: Chairperson



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married and I have four children.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

During the election violence in 1997, I ran with my family to a place called Malaba. I remember that the whole conflict started just because of some rumours, it started as a joke, but soon the violence began and many people died. At that time, my husband was working with a company away and three of my children were away, so I had only one child to take care of and therefore was able to run away to my parents in law's who live in Malaba, a border town in Kenya. There were lorries full of people leaving my place, I saw a lot of violence while we were running. The raiders would come in the morning and those who didn't run, they just got slaughtered like hens. When the raiders came to my house, they stole lots of things, they burnt the house and cut the cattle. If you wanted to be alive, you had to leave everything behind and just run for your life.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

I can say I'm a victim of the problems women experience in my community, because my first born child takes alcohol and bhang (opium). It is a heavy drug, he buys and smokes it everyday. We, mothers are losing our children, they are getting drunk from an early age, they don't work, like my son. When they combine the drug with alcohol, they become really violent. This is a huge problem that women in my community are facing.

Also, many women are brewers. They make local brew, some even sell the bhang, so everybody is affected. These women do not put value on education; they are very reluctant about learning and ignore some great opportunities. Sometimes, it's all about getting married and not about education.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

The reason why I applied for this training is because I was eager to know more, so I can go and influence my fellow women, so they can also come up. Because there are some common things that are affecting us all.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to get knowledge on different topics and I've got it already. I'm very happy because I came here when I didn't know anything, but now I'm going back full. I've learned a lot about Kenya constitution 2010.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

What I'm hoping to do is to get my friends together and share with them what I learnt from this training. When I reach home, first of all I'm going to communicate to them that I've taken part in this training. Before I came here, I told my pastor that I was coming to Nakuru to be trained, so people know already. I am going to train women from my community and educate them, so they can also be empowered.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

They need to know their rights and they need to be aware of what other women are doing outside.

What would you like to achieve?

After talking to my fellow friends, I am hoping that we can achieve better life for us. When you have an education on something, then automatically you start practising it, which means you will achieve something new in your life.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes. It has helped me, because I have learnt about the law of succession. I will follow the right channel, I will talk to my siblings, tell them what we can do and we can help our mother.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

There are there. Some of them are just business women, some of them are just house wives like me, some of them are teachers. But they do their bit for the community.

Do you have a role model yourself?

I have so many friends that I sometimes admire the way they cope with life.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I want to have many achievements in my life.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

One day, every woman in my community will become active and we can change together how the world is.

Hellen Kisa

Age: 37 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Mwanga CBO

Position: Member



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married and I'm a mother of two boys. I do farming and have my own business.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

The violence and conflict during the 2007/2008 elections was really bad. Lots of people from Kopsiro, Mt. Elgon ran away from their homes to our area in Kapsokwony, they had many children with them but no food to eat.

We all saw a lot of violence in front of our eyes. For example, the raiders made sixty years old people to sing in their Ethnic language, then, while they sang, the raiders then accused the elderly of abusing them; the raiders then beat the elderly people badly using sticks.

One morning the raiders came to my home and got hold of my husband. They told him to walk ahead and not look back, or they will shoot him. When I saw him leaving the house, I thought this was the last time I would see him alive. Luckily, they only beat him up and he wasn't killed.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

Lots of women in my area were raped in the past.

Today, especially in my community, women do not know that when men beat them, it is a form of violence. They are so used to it, that they think it's normal and that they believe they are being disciplined just like when they were in school. Some of them are beaten and harmed so badly, but they don't know that it is their right to live in a safe environment.

Also, education is of a very low standard. We have very few families where both father and mother are working, these are the only ones who are able to send their children to school. The rest are drunkards and their children are not able to get any education.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

When I read the form for the COPA training, I did not understand the constitution of Kenya properly. I knew I wanted to gain more knowledge, maybe, one day in the future, I could follow my dream of becoming a county representative of my area.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to know more about my rights and the bill of rights. Now, I've gained this knowledge and I'm very happy about it.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

When I go back, I want to teach my fellow women about their rights and the constitution 2010. In my community, women do not know anything about the importance of a will or the marital status. I want to teach them about the rights they have for inheritance and some other important things that will change their lives.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

Some women who are at home, don't know that their husbands have what we call 'mpango wa kando' (meaning having an extra marital affair and a child is born out of this affair). In this training, I have learnt that if the husband pays the school fees for this child and the other woman has the documents to prove it, then wife of the husband is obligated to continue paying the fees if the husband dies. Lots of women do not know this and I think they already have enough problems to support their own children.

Other women are drunkards, they don't want to live their lives properly and do not take care of their children. I want to go and teach them, give them the knowledge that will help them to be stronger and know what to do next in case of situations as mentioned earlier.

What would you like to achieve?

The women in my community are really desperate; they do not know what to do, so they just cry. I want to go and teach them, help them get the strength so they can make the right decisions and send their children back to school. Once our children are educated, they will become citizens who are able and will benefit the entire community.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

This training has already helped me. I know exactly what I need to change in my own house in order to be protected and taken care of in the future. I've got a plan already which I will share with my husband.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

We have some female role models. Mostly, they are the wives of the pastors.

Do you have a role model yourself?

I like one female politician in my community. Her name is Jane Kamwanja. She is now the councillor or the county representative as they call them in our constitution 2010.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I think I have courage. I like women and I want women to excel. Although I don't have any daughters, I would like to help our young women so they can achieve what they desire.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I think women work very hard to develop their communities. My wish is for the women to rise up and have opportunities to be able to be equal to our men.

Phanice Chembaya Matui

Age: 35 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: YYC youth group

Position: Community Councillor Trainer



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I am married and I have one daughter called Faith.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced in your life?

After I got married, I had experienced many hardships in my marriage, because I had miscarried six times. Having not given birth to a child for 10 years caused me a lot of abuse and beatings from my husband and his family; they have really caused me a lot of pain over the years. My marriage ended when they sent me away from my marital home. I ended up going back to my father's home. But little did my husband and his family know, when they chased me away, I was already 3 months pregnant. I went to see a doctor who told me I should rest for the next 6 months because of a few complications I had with the pregnancy previously. My daughter Faith was born very healthy and she is five years old now. My husband remarried immediately after he chased me away, he completely forgot about me and never assisted me in any way. But, I'm still pushing through with my life and I hope that one day I shall find a good husband. .

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

Women do not know their rights. Men keep getting married to several women, leaving the older ones behind with children without any support or assistance. These women left behind by their husbands with children; are subjected to providing food for children and other needs like buying clothes and paying school fees for their children. The men do not take any responsibility for their families, so the women really struggle to bring their families up single handed.

Also, there are many couples in my community that are HIV positive, when the man finds out his status, he runs away and again, the woman is left to struggle alone. Women need to know their rights so they can help themselves to get out of these hard situations.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

I really like the meaning of COPA. When I found out it stands for Coalition for Peace in Africa, I knew it was the right training for me. I want to bring peace into my community, especially to families that are broken down. There is a lot of conflict between communities who fight between each other, I want to know how to mobilise people and teach them how to keep peace.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I wanted to learn how to educate and mobilise people about peace. I wanted to learn about women's rights and I'm happy, because I have gained this knowledge and I'm ready to take it back to my community.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I want to go back to my community and teach women about their rights. I want to show them, that there are ways to go forward and there is no need for women to struggle the way they have been so far. Especially those single mothers, who suffer and experience hardship because they were sent away from their homes without any possession, without anything at all. They need to know their rights and show them that anything is possible.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

As mentioned before, it is important for women to know their rights, because once one has knowledge, there is no going back. These women need to know that they have the right to inherit what belongs to them, they need to be educated.

What would you like to achieve?

I hope that once the women are educated about their rights, their lives will change and they will be self dependant. Their independence will help them and the economy of the community will be at last uplifted.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes of course! I've gotten here the knowledge on how to follow up about my husband's property and about my rights. I suffered and struggled a lot in my matrimonial home. All the possessions which we got thanks to my dowry and 10 years of building our home, I lost immediately when my husband threw me out. I spent ten years with him and didn't get even one shilling from my home. I have gained the knowledge about my rights and I am going to follow up with my husband. I am doing this because of my child's rights too.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

Yes they are there, but only a few. Most of them are business women, but I hope one day in the future we will have more.

Do you have a role model yourself?

Yes, she is called Eunice Ndiema and she is my friend. She works very hard, she is also a single mother who didn't give up on her life. Her husband abandoned her, but despite that fact, she struggled very much and became a successful business woman and she has managed to buy her own land and house.

What inspires you to make a difference?

I'm interested in helping people because I feel it is in me. People are living in poverty because they lack knowledge, but I have gained something special here and I am going to teach them what they can do in order to move forward.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I hope that women will work hard in their lives independently, so they don't have to rely on men. I hope women are provided with opportunities that will help them to gain knowledge and empower them.

Alice Naibei

Age: 42 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Say Say Women Group

Position: Secretary



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I'm married, I've been blessed with six children.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced or witnessed in your life?

The post election violence in 2007/2008 affected me, because many of my relatives were displaced or killed. The raiders were targeting mostly men, so at the moment, we have many single women and orphans not only in my family, but also in my community.

I have witnessed many atrocities in front of my eyes, for example a girl being raped by militia men. We haven't received any help from the administration, but luckily, there was a peace and rights programme that started counselling and trauma healing. Those who were affected at least felt supported and could accept what happened to them.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

One of the biggest issues that women experience is discrimination. Discrimination of women is very much rooted in our culture, so women are never valued and when it comes down to any decision making at meetings, they are present just to offer services like preparing and serving food to the men. Women are not given opportunities to contribute to discussions or voice their opinions.

The second big issue in my community is gender based violence. So many women are violated in one way or another. When it comes down to inheritance, if a woman loses her husband, the property and everything that she's been investing into over the years goes to the husband's family. This means widows are left with nothing and go back to zero and struggle to take care of their children single handed.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

A friend of mine introduced me to the training, she told me how COPA trains and empowers women and how much she enjoyed the human rights training that she attended in the past. Once I learnt that COPA supports women and teaches them about their rights, trauma healing and how to deal with all those negative life experiences many women undergo, I developed a big interest. I applied because I wanted to know if I could be given a chance to attend, be trained and try help and heal my community.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I was hoping to gain knowledge on Kenya's constitution, especially on the 'bill of rights'. My dream came true, I have learned that women have their rights and that Chapter 4 of constitution 2010 talks about bill of rights. I have also learned about the 'gender based violence', which I found very interesting. Many women in my community undergo abuse and we take it as normal. But what I've learned here is that it is a violation of a woman's right and I have got the skills now that will help me to address it.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I've already prepared a work plan. First, I'm going to give myself a week so I can prepare everything I need to know properly. The following week, I'm going to train women from my organisation, we meet twice a month. I want to teach them about their rights, so they know what to do according to the Kenya Supreme Law. After that, I will encourage them to go and train other women from the villages that are unable to attend our meetings. I will tell them, that each of them needs to train at least five other women and that these five women need to go and train at least another five. I will train 14 women. They will then be able to train 70 other women. Then those will reach another 350...I'm sure the message will spread, that is what I plan to do.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I think it is important for women to be aware of what they are entitled to, because it will build their confidence, develop consciousness and give them freedom. Once women have the knowledge, they will work hard to achieve their goals and that will put them into a better place in life. I'm very sure that after training my fellow women, my community will economically grow.

Another reason why it is important for me to train the women is because there aren't many children who go to school. In the community I come from, many people don't let their children to attend school, instead, they involve them in child labour and don't see any advantages in getting education.

I hope, that after my training, we will have more children who attend schools and parents who support them in getting their education.

What would you like to achieve?

After the trainings, I am hoping for a developed, peaceful and educated community. I will make sure I will achieve those three.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

The knowledge I've gained will help me too, because now I know that part of my matrimonial property is automatically mine. I didn't know that, but I'm aware of it now. As an individual, I'm going to bring my children up in a way that they will know their rights as they grow. Second thing I want to do is to let my husband know what our rights are and I want us to write a will. I want to have all these things in place for the sake of our children and family as a whole.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

According to me, there are very few women role models in my community. This is because the strong role models that we could have, don't stay at home. Once they get their knowledge and skills, they move out to cities and follow their careers. So no, we have very few.

Do you have a role model yourself?

My role model is Graca Machel. I've read about her in a magazine, she is a politician and a very strong lady. I am very motivated by her ambition; this is why she is my role model.

What inspires you to make a difference?

What inspires me to go and work at the community level is that I like seeing people in a peaceful state. I don't like seeing people who are withdrawn and who struggle, I'm never comfortable with that. I like seeing people that are happy, busy working and achieving their goals.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

My wish for all the women in the world, not only my community, or Kenya, is that they will all know their rights and know what they should do in life.

Mary C Kiminy

Age: 49 years old

Area: Bungoma, Mt. Elgon

Organisation: Chamtaet Women Group

Position: Member



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I am married and I am a mother of five children, two boys and three girls.

Could you give me an example of a conflict that you have experienced in your life?

During the 2007/2008 post election violence, two of my brothers were killed. We don't know where they met their deaths; until now we have not seen their bodies. This affected my whole family, luckily, the rest of us were all safe.

One thing that I can't forget is that during this time, we saw many women from Kopsiro division walking all the way to Kapsokwony, they walked day and night without sleeping or eating anything. Women from Kopsiro are known to giving birth every year, you find mothers who are 30 years old who have already nine to ten children. At that time, these women were really suffering, you could see a mother carrying one baby on her back, another one on her front, third one on a side and this was while she was heavily pregnant again.

What kind of challenges women like yourself experience in your community?

The women who suffer the most are the ones who lost their husbands. They do not have their homes anymore, they stay in rental houses and take any kind of job just so their children can eat. Because of the poverty, they can't afford to pay the school fees, so their children do not go to school and can't continue with their education.

Another big problem in my community is alcoholism.

Why did you apply for the COPA's training?

The reason why I applied for the COPA training is because there are many people who are suffering in my community. I wanted to come and gain knowledge, so I can go back and teach people in my area how to survive. This is the first time I've attended a seminar like this, I feel like I have the knowledge and the courage to go and teach some women in my area.

We've come to the end of the training. Could you tell me what skills or knowledge you were expecting to gain and if your expectations were met?

I've gained knowledge on Kenya constitution and on women's rights.

What are you hoping to do after this training in your community?

I can't wait to go back home. I will start teaching my fellow women about their rights straight away. Once they get to know their rights, and move on, I hope they will send their children back to school.

Why do you think this issue/s is important to address?

I think it is very important for women to know their rights, so they do not suffer and struggle anymore. Women need to be trained, so they gain courage to do things in their communities and teach other fellow women.

What would you like to achieve?

I am hoping to see some positive changes in my community. Like I've said, I hope children will go back to schools, women will know their rights and this will help those single ones or those who are staying with their husbands.

Do you think that the skills gained from this training will help you in your personal life? If so, how?

Yes, the training has helped me a lot. Before I came, I didn't have knowledge on women human rights, but now, I have courage and skills that I will help me to talk to people with confidence. I can go back, take care of my family and teach my children about their rights and how to talk to people.

Do you think there are enough of female role models in your community?

No. This is because women haven't got any knowledge, they haven't been trained like me. One of the problems is that many women in my area never went to school. So one thing I shall do is to talk to them in our local language. That way they will understand and they will know what is going on around them.

Do you have a role model yourself?

I want to be like Martha Karua, because she stands firm and she tells the truth.

What inspires you to make a difference?

If you see so many women suffering a lot, you want to help them. I want to teach them how to sustain themselves by giving them knowledge that will change their life.

What would be your dream for the women in your community?

I want women to gain courage and be open hearted people. I want women to share their problems with other women, not to hide it.



Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA)

Dhanjay Apartments, 3rd Floor, Room 301

Valley Arcade, Lavington, Nairobi

Tele/Fax/ +254 020 3866686

Office Mobile: +254 02 717 912151

Email: copa@copafrica.org

Website: www.copafrica.org