

The story of the Chandani Women's Group in the Kiunga Marine National Reserve (KMNR), Kenya

With the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other public and private sponsors, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – Kiunga Marine National Reserve (KMNR) Conservation and Development Project collaborates with the Kenyan Ministry of Health (MoH) and numerous community groups to improve the health and quality of life of the local Bajuni community. The community's well-being directly contributes to the conservation of the KMNR's marine resources. One such endeavor has been to improve access to and informed use of family planning.

The project facilitates the expansion of MoH outreach services to communities living far from the limited health facilities within and adjacent to the KMNR. WWF – KMNR Conservation and Development Project has worked with health partners to train community based distribution (CBD) agents of contraceptives and MoH nurses in modern family planning methods and reproductive health promotion. Through mobile clinics and CBDs, the project provides access to pills, DepoProvera, and male condoms, while also delivering information about integrated reproductive, maternal and child health and conservation.

Already, the project has led to significant improvements in the livelihoods of women living in the KMNR, and particularly those living far from health facilities. Rukia Hajji is one of the project's beneficiaries. A mother of 7 children, she does not know her age. Her youngest two children are 2 and 7 years old. "I like the space between these two children. I managed to space them because I took up family planning from the outreach clinics. I am not planning to get another child. I need enough time to do my household chores since I don't have someone to help me at home. I also have enough time to actively participate in making flip flop arts for sale" she says.

Mwanaisha Mzee a 40 year old woman living in Chandani, a village within the KMNR, is a mother of 10 children. Her last child is 4 years old. She says that her children were very closely spaced making her tired and weak. "I am very happy I can prevent pregnancy. I don't want any more children. It is very difficult to take care of the 11 of us". She first learned about family planning during an outreach clinic and since then her life has been transformed. "I would wait for the doctors from Kiunga Health Centre to come and give me an injection and sometimes I took pills. If they didn't come and my return date is due, I would walk to Kiwaiyu Dispensary, 1 hour away for the service. I am now happy that WWF helped train my neighbour Khadija Mohammed who now supplies the pills to us from her home. Khadija visits us at home to remind us our return dates when we forget".

Zahra Mohammed, a 23 year old mother of a 5 month old baby, also a resident of Chandani, says she has already started taking contraceptive pills because she wants to regain her health before she becomes pregnant again. "I am happy I am able to choose when to get my next child. I will wait until my baby is big enough and not in need of my constant care."



40 year-old Mwanaisha Mzee and her 2 youngest sons (the older boy is wearing a bracelet made from flip-flops)

Khadija Mohammed, the CBD in Chandani, is 25 years old and is a mother of 2 children. She has had 3 miscarriages. “I would be pregnant again after my last miscarriage 4 months ago. I need a break because I suspect they were because my body was very weak to carry baby to term. I had miscarried 5 months before my last pregnancy. Flip-flop work is hard and tires the back and shoulders. This can be very difficult for women weakened from many deliveries,” she says.

The 4 women are all members of the local women's group involved in WWF's livelihood initiative—an eco-friendly handicraft project where women make arts for sale from flip flops washed ashore. During the months of February and March 2007, this group earned K.Sh 45,000 (US\$ 642) from flip flops. Apart from earning cash for this very poor community, the project also ensures clean nesting beaches for the endangered marine turtles. Flip-flops hamper the movement of emergent hatchlings as they make their way to the sea thus increasing threats from predation. If there is too much debris on the beach, female adult turtles are discouraged from coming to nest and in marine areas. Such obstacles are leading to the rapid decline of marine turtle species in many parts of the Indian Ocean and globally. Marine turtles usually return to the beaches where they were born to build their own nests. The WWF- KMNR Conservation and Development Project noted 13 nests on the 3-4km Chandani beach between March–December 2006--a positive nesting trend for this beach.



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