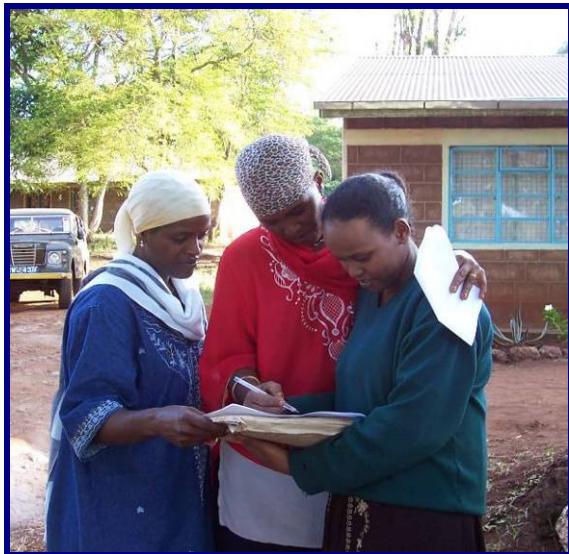




Support to Child Mothers - Kenya

Within the pastoralist communities of East Africa, there is a large variation in the attitudes toward sexual relations among unwed youth and toward pregnant girls. Within Northern Kenya, several ethnic groups maintain very conservative responses to pregnancy in young girls, who are powerless to negotiate sexual relations. Despite the fact that most pregnancies result from rape or other forms of sexual exploitation, a pregnant girl is often cast out of the community, facing abandonment from friends and even family. In shame, these girls usually run away to larger town centers in hopes of finding refuge and means of support. They may beg from acquaintances or work as poorly-paid laborers, and often, have no other choice but to exchange sex for money. If they marry, it will be to someone who does not respect them. They and their child carry a stigma for life, and are among the most vulnerable to poverty, HIV/AIDS, and poor health.

Sauti Moja assists child mothers in Kenya to regain self-esteem and a sense of hope by providing psycho-social support, helping rebuild family relationships, and supporting their return school or start a small business.



Martha and Clara, two public health nurses who volunteer for Sauti Moja, support a child mother, Grace (right). Grace was impregnated by her school teacher when she was 14 years old. When her pregnancy was discovered, she was chased from home and forced to reside in Marsabit town. She suffered a terrible pregnancy, and nearly lost her life due to not only pregnancy complications, but also depression and hopelessness. Fortunately, the life of her baby was preserved, and she continues to support and care for her child. Grace's dream was to return to school, so our Sauti Moja volunteers set out to make it happen. At first, there was no opportunity, as the schools said she was "a bad example to the other girls". However, with perseverance, they got her into a good secondary school. Grace has worked hard, becoming #4 in her class! She's doing incredibly well and breaking new ground for other child mothers, who have a similar history of abandonment, abuse, and hopelessness.

"Through this opportunity I can become healthy again and support myself. It will allow me to care for my daughter and provide her opportunities"

Nasibo (standing to the left) was only 13 when she was sexually assaulted, became pregnant, and had to leave school. Due to her tiny physique, she required a caesarean section, but the sub-standard medical care led to her child's death and nearly her own. She has fought infections and struggled to recuperate from physical and psychological trauma over the past two years. Sauti Moja became aware of her plight in March, and since then, our volunteers have been providing psychological support and determining the best way to empower her. In June, Sauti Moja invited Nasibo to participate in a micro-business training workshop, and then provided her with a small grant to start a business. Recently, Nasibo proudly showed us the small shop she started with Sauti Moja's grant and excitedly recounted the profit that she had already earned.

