

GROOTS Kenya



GROOTS Kenya is one of Kenya's most significant grassroots women's movements: a network of over 5,000 women-led community groups and self-help organizations across 30 counties.

Founded in 1995 following the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, the movement emerged in response to the exclusion of grassroots women from development processes and decision-making spaces that affect their lives and communities.

GROOTS Kenya operates through its distinctive "champions' model", a community-led approach in which grassroots women identify problems, design solutions, implement interventions, and track change in their communities. The model centers the knowledge and leadership of grassroots women themselves, recognizing them as the agents best placed to drive sustainable development and social transformation.

For three decades, the movement has been grounded in a simple conviction: that the women most affected by inequality are best positioned to lead change. Through community organizing, evidence generation, and collective advocacy, GROOTS Kenya works to ensure that grassroots women's voices are visible, credible, and influential in shaping policies and development agendas at local, national, and global levels.

GROOTS joined the Equal Measures 2030 coalition in 2017. What began as access to a globally credible SDG framework has grown into a transformation of GROOTS's identity: from data consumer to nationally and internationally recognized data producer, standard-setter, and movement infrastructure builder.

5000+

women-led community groups across 30 counties

821

GBV survivors supported by trained data advocates

12

data dialogue forums for government, CSOs & media

230M

social media impressions, #SDGGenderIndex trending #3

THE JOURNEY

From data consumers to data producers

When GROOTS joined Equal Measures in 2017, the SDG Gender Index gave it a framework for situating Kenya's gender equality gaps within international accountability commitments. But the deeper transformation was what happened to GROOTS's own data identity.

GROOTS had already begun training grassroots women to collect community data via mobile tools, running household surveys on land rights, unpaid care work, and clean energy access. The Equal Measures partnership sharpened this into a complete data-driven advocacy methodology. Before Equal Measures, GROOTS was already organized but used data reactively. After joining the partnership, staff and champions could walk into government technical meetings as recognized experts, not petitioners.

The results were concrete. In Kitui County, community data on unclean cooking, finding that over two-thirds of families relied on the three-stone method, provided the evidence base for an 800 million KSh (approximately USD 7.9 million) clean energy commitment in the County Integrated Development Plan. Kiambu and Kilifi counties used GROOTSmart, GROOTS's Gender Data Dashboard, an online tool tracking 11 gender equality indicators from national to county level, to develop county energy policies and bills to develop county energy policies and bills. Kitui went further: it formally requested GROOTS to place a grassroots data advocate within county planning processes.

In Muranga County, GROOTS's data-driven advocacy contributed to a USD 1 million county investment in a gender-responsive WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) strategy, a direct line from community evidence to budget allocation. The grassroots-generated data revealed severe gender inequality in group ranch registration. Advocacy resulted in women being registered in community ranches, two out of thirteen achieving the constitutional two-thirds gender rule, and the remaining ranches nominating women for upcoming leadership elections, accelerating progress toward the Community Land Act.

GBV data collection became another significant application. GROOTS trained 75 grassroots advocates in data collection, visualization, and use. During COVID-19, 60 of these trained advocates applied their skills in real time: they tracked and responded to GBV trends, mobilized county officials and media, and advocated for budget allocations for shelters and services. Across Kakamega, Tana River, and Kiambu counties, 821 survivors of GBV were supported through this combination of data documentation and direct advocacy. One advocate was selected to join the national GBV working group — a grassroots woman from the community now at the national policy table.



“Data and evidence help us to overcome bias because they provide the statistics. We do not have to waste a lot of time arguing. We can influence resource allocation. I see data as a very strong enabler and GROOTS has a very interesting relationship with data because we are not just data consumers but data producers.”

- Fridah Githuku, former Executive Director, GROOTS Kenya

THE COALITION EFFECT

The SDG Gender Index gave GROOTS scale beyond its own networks. Index data was disseminated to gender directors across all 47 Kenyan counties. GROOTS held 12 data dialogue forums bringing together 80 county government staff, 80 CSO representatives, and 80 journalists to inform the 3rd generation of County Integrated Development Plans. GROOTS also responded to 50+ direct data requests from government agencies, CSOs, media houses, private companies, and development partners. On social media, a GROOTS-led campaign using SDG Gender Index and Women Count data generated 230 million impressions and drove #SDGGenderIndex to trend at number three in Kenya.

GROOTS also served as the Kenya national partner for the inaugural 2021 Equal Measures and Tableau Foundation Data Journalism Fellowship, the first cohort of which was drawn entirely from Kenya and India. Eight Kenyan journalists worked with GROOTS's staff and data tools to produce gender data stories for local and national audiences, building journalist capacity to translate community-level evidence into public accountability. The fellowship created a new channel for GROOTS's data to reach Kenyan media extending its influence from government technical meetings into newsrooms.

“The confidence, reach, and profile of the project team has exploded to a level where GROOTS Kenya's data work is often referenced, and the staff called upon to train and support other CSOs and professionals. Because of Equal Measures, GROOTS Kenya has received recognition by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UN Women, the World Bank, the media, CSOs and the private sector for investing in gender data.”

- Fridah Githuku, former Executive Director, GROOTS Kenya

That recognition became institutional. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) invited GROOTS to join the Inter-Agency Committee on Gender Statistics — a formal acknowledgment that community-generated data belonged in Kenya’s official statistical ecosystem. GROOTS contributed to the Women’s Empowerment Index, County Poverty Profiles, the Gender Sector Statistical Plan, and national guidelines on citizen-generated data. It became involved in Kenya’s first national Time-Use Survey on women’s unpaid care work. GROOTS also signed an MoU with Kenyatta University’s School of Applied Economics to co-design leadership and financial literacy training for grassroots advocates — embedding the data methodology in academic infrastructure. The GROOTS Executive Director was appointed to the World Bank Advisory Group on Gender Data and was a keynote speaker at the UN Data Forum (Bern) and the Gender Statistics Imperatives in Africa Convention.

At the center of this data infrastructure sits GROOTSmart — GROOTS’s Gender Data Dashboard, an online visualization tool built with Equal Measures support. It covers 11 gender equality indicators, from women’s political representation and land rights to family planning, education, energy access, and unpaid care work — breaking data down from national to county level. Used by both grassroots advocates and county-level policymakers, GROOTSmart is one of the most durable institutional products to emerge from any Equal Measures coalition partnership. KNBS itself praised the dashboard for making data more understandable, an acknowledgment that GROOTS had solved a problem the national statistical system had not.



Investing in the invisible infrastructure

→ **Global platforms for grassroots voices.** Being part of the Equal Measures coalition gave GROOTS access to COP27, CSW, the UN World Data Forum, the Open Government Partnership Global Summit, and Women Deliver spaces where women from Kitui and Laikipia spoke directly to global decision-makers. Working alongside FEMNET, GROOTS contributed to the Africa Major Group’s call for official recognition of citizen-generated data.

→ **Strengthening the backbone of the Movement.** One of the most important aspects of Equal Measures 2030’s partnership with GROOTS has been support for the movement’s core infrastructure — the often unseen systems that sustain grassroots organising over time. Rather than focusing only on project outputs, flexible, trust-based funding enabled GROOTS to strengthen the internal architecture that supports advocacy, leadership development, and collective action across generations.



LOOKING AHEAD

GROOTS is using the Index data to deepen county-level influence, push for unpaid care work to be formally counted in Kenya’s economic framework, and advance its climate justice advocacy. The Beijing+30 findings are being used in county and national advocacy. The mentorship pipeline is building the next generation of champions. [Read more: The power of community-generated data to drive progress on gender equality](#)

Learn more about GROOTS Kenya’s work: