

# EMPOWERMENT ECHO



**Quarterly Newsletter**



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# Table Of Contents



**01**

EDCA Signs Three-Year Agreement to  
Manage Emali Water Supply Scheme



**02**

20 Years of Sponsorship, a Lifetime of  
Impact




**03**

Breaking Barriers: Strengthening Health  
Through Multi-Sectoral Collaboration



**04**

Access to Clean Water Transforms  
Education and Hygiene for Itaava  
School



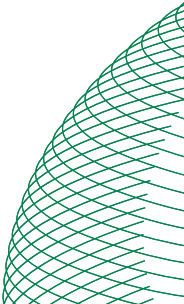
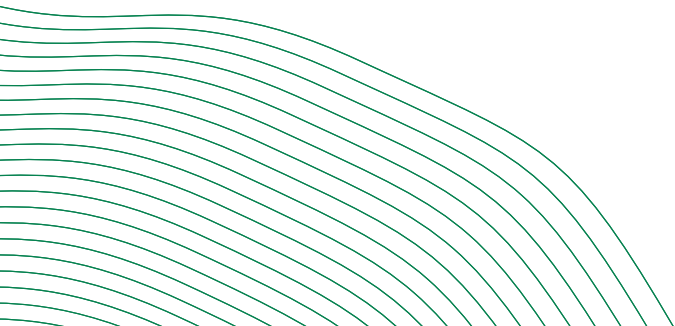
**05**

Adopt A Tree; The Environmental Club  
at Uthangathi Primary School



**06**

Building Climate Resilience in Emali: A  
Community-Led Approach to Sustainable  
Agriculture and livestock management





## From the CEO

Dear Friends and Partners,  
Greetings from Emali Dedicated Children's Agency!

We are excited to share with you the January–March 2025 edition of Empowerment Echo. Together, we have made incredible progress toward sustainable, community-driven development that transforming lives in our communities.

This quarter has been particularly remarkable. Our water projects continue to ensure access to clean and safe water across our communities. We are excited to announce new water agreements that further solidify our commitment to addressing this vital need. We have also participated in an impactful health conference, reinforcing our dedication in addressing health disparities through collaborations to ensure no one is left behind and a platform to share inspiring success stories on the impact of nutrition-sensitive interventions in improving child health.

Our continued efforts in pasture production and dairy farming programs have empowered local farmers to build stronger, more resilient economies. Through the our sponsorship programs, we are witnessing firsthand impact as children continue to thrive and our advocacy initiatives are amplifying voices and driving positive change across our areas through environmental conservation.

As you read through this edition, I hope you'll be inspired by the strides we've made together. None of this would be possible without your unwavering support and partnership. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring safe and empowered children in a community with sustainable livelihoods.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Victor Aduda



# EDCA SIGNS THREE-YEAR AGREEMENT TO MANAGE EMALI WATER SUPPLY SCHEME

On 5th February 2025, EDCA signed a three-year agreement with the Department of Water, Sanitation & Irrigation (Government of Makueni County) and the Makueni Rural Water Board (MARUWAB) for the management of the Emali Water Supply Scheme in Emali/Mulala Ward.

This agreement is a significant step towards ensuring reliable and uninterrupted access to clean and safe water for residents of Emali/Mulala Ward. It acknowledges the importance of sustainable water projects and the need for strong multi-stakeholder partnerships in addressing persistent water challenges.

Access to clean, safe, and reliable water remains a challenge for many communities leading to poor health, reduced school attendance, and limited livelihood opportunities in Emali/Mulala Ward and across Makueni County. Over recent years, EDCA has successfully developed and rehabilitated various water infrastructure projects, enabling over 10,000 community members and school children to access clean and safe water.

These efforts have reduced the burden of water collection, particularly for women and girls. However, significant gaps remain, requiring coordinated efforts between government agencies, development partners, and the community to ensure sustainable solutions.

This partnership establishes a clear framework for effective water management. EDCA will provide oversight and advisory support for the successful implementation of water projects by planning, operating, and maintaining water and sanitation infrastructure, managing daily operations, ensuring compliance with regulations, and preparing and submitting reports and financial statements. The Government of Makueni County and MARUWAB will hold ownership and regulatory responsibilities over water and sanitation investments/assets within their jurisdiction. They will also ensure policy alignment, monitor compliance, and provide necessary support for long-term sustainability.

We remain committed to strengthening water governance and expanding infrastructure to achieve sustainable and equitable access to water in Makueni County.



# 20 YEARS OF SPONSORSHIP, A LIFETIME OF IMPACT

Many children are born into simple and often difficult circumstances, where families struggle to provide even the basics: food, clean water, shelter, and education. For many of us, dreams of a better future can feel far away, hidden behind the daily struggles of survival.

This was my story growing up in eastern Kenya. My mother worked hard selling food by the roadside to support us. My father wasn't present in our lives, so my mother did everything she could to provide for me and my siblings. But life was hard. Most days, even getting enough to eat or paying school fees felt impossible.

Everything changed when I was enrolled in ChildFund's sponsorship program through Emali Dedicated Children's Agency. A kind sponsor from New Zealand chose to support me. Every month, their contribution helped raise our family's standard of living and gave me the opportunity to go to school. Over time, the same sponsor began to support my siblings too, so we could all stay in school.



I had the same sponsor for twenty years. They supported me from my earliest school days all the way to university. That kind of consistency, from someone I had never met, meant the world to me. It gave me a reason to believe in myself, and the courage to dream beyond my circumstances.

I felt a deep sense of responsibility to make the most of the opportunity I'd been given. I studied hard, knowing that someone somewhere believed in me.

Today, I serve as the Director of the Savanna Water Project—an initiative that now brings clean and safe water to over 5,000 people in community. Before the project, families, especially women and children, walked for hours each day to fetch water. Now, most people live within a kilometre of a water kiosk.

What brings me the most joy is seeing real change take root. Access to clean water has improved people's health and helped them start small businesses. People are even planting trees now, creating green spaces and better environments for children to grow up in.

The Savanna Water Project is run by Emali Dedicated Children's Agency, the same organization that once helped me when I was a child.

I often think about what my life might have been like without the chance to go to school. Without my sponsor's support, I may never have discovered my purpose. I might never have found this path of service.



# BREAKING BARRIERS: STRENGTHENING HEALTH THROUGH MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

On 18th to 19th March, EDCA had the privilege of participating in the Regional Health Promotion Conference 2025, where we engaged in invaluable discussions on the importance of collaboration in addressing health disparities to ensure no one is left behind.

A key focus was the need to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships to effectively tackle health inequities, scale up digital innovations to enhance healthcare accessibility, and empower communities to take an active role in their own health. Investing in community engagement and behavioural change strategies was also emphasized to ensure that policies translate into meaningful action.

One of the central discussions explored the link between health and climate change, particularly the intersection of nutrition, climate adaptation, and health systems strengthening for Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

National and county governments were urged to develop climate-sensitive policies, while communities and health advocates were encouraged to promote sustainable diets and nutrition programs in schools and healthcare facilities.

We also had the opportunity to showcase moringa products from the Emuka Moringa Project, a practical example of how climate adaptation approaches intersect with health promotion. By integrating moringa powder into school feeding programs, the project has significantly reduced malnutrition among children in Kajiado and Makueni counties. This platform allowed us to share inspiring success stories on the impact of nutrition-sensitive interventions in improving child health.



# ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER TRANSFORMS EDUCATION AND HYGIENE FOR ITAAVA SCHOOL



At Itaava Primary School, the sight of students burdened with heavy jerricans of water has been replaced with smiles and a renewed focus on learning thanks to the Itaava Water Project.

Muteti, 14, a student at Itaava Primary School, recalls the struggles of fetching water:

“I used to carry a 10-litre jerrican of water daily to school. On days when I forgot, I was sent back home, and the journey took more than an hour. The jerrican was too heavy, and I often missed most morning prep classes.”

This has been the reality for many students in the Itaava community, who had to walk long distances to fetch water for drinking, lunch preparation at school, and classroom cleaning. The burden of carrying water left students exhausted and significantly affected their class.

Safety was a major concern, as students often had to knock on doors after school to borrow water when they were thirsty. This practice posed risks to their well-being and raised concerns about the quality of the water, as its safety could not be guaranteed.

With only a small number of students enrolled, Itaava Primary lacked the resources to afford water bowzers, leaving parents with no choice but to have children bring water from home.

“Our parents couldn’t afford to pay for water bowzers, so students had to carry water from home. After school, most students would beg for water from neighbors, which was risky and exposed them to unsafe drinking conditions,” shares Mr. Malika, the Headteacher.

In partnership with KCDF and ChildFund, we implemented the Itaava Water Project, which has transformed access to clean and safe water in the community. The project now supplies reliable water to Itaava Primary and Secondary Schools with 301 students, while also benefiting over 1,500 people in the community.

The availability of water at school has significantly improved student attendance and retention. Students no longer arrive late or miss classes because of water-fetching duties. Hygiene practices have also significantly improved.





“I am so happy now that we have water here in school. I no longer get tired from carrying water to school, and I can fully attend the morning prep classes without any hindrance,” says Muteti with a smile.

Teachers have also felt the positive effects, as they no longer need to buy water with their own money. The reduced fatigue among students has created a more focused learning environment.

“Students now come to school carrying just their bags, free from the burden of heavy jerricans. They are punctual and spend more time in class, and hygiene has greatly improved,” notes Mr. Malika.

The presence of water at school has also sparked environmental initiatives. Members of the 4K Club have planted trees throughout the compound, striving to keep the environment green. Plans are also underway to establish a kitchen garden to enhance students’ nutrition and generate income from surplus produce.

I’m a member of the 4K Club, and we’ve planted trees around the school to make the environment greener,” says Muteti proudly.

“We have also started a tree nursery and are planning to grow a kitchen garden to supplement meals. The surplus will be sold to support other school needs. This water is truly changing lives,” adds Mr. Malika.

We are committed to ensuring safe and reliable access to clean water for the community. The Itaava Water Project has not only improved health and education outcomes but also created avenues for environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods.





# ADOPT A TREE; THE ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB AT UTHANGATHI PRIMARY SCHOOL



***“I am planting trees to ensure that the environment is well conserved and that we can attract rain so that we can have many fruits and shade when it is hot,”***



In the dry, dusty landscapes of Makueni County, where every drop of rain is a blessing, a young boy named Mark and members of the environmental club are planting seeds of hope. When Mark is not playing football, he is busy taking care of the trees he planted at his home. This is in addition to the five trees he has planted at school, which he diligently tends to every day.

Driven by a passion to care for his environment and ensure his family enjoys the shade, fruits, and the rains that come with trees, Mark joined the environmental club at Uthangathi Primary School. “I am planting trees to ensure that the environment is well conserved and that we can attract rain so that we can have many fruits and shade when it is hot,” says Mark with a gleam in his eye.

Makueni County, one of Kenya’s arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL), is characterized by irregular rainfall patterns and frequent droughts.

These climate variations have led to water and food insecurity affecting the overall wellbeing of the population.

Through the PAMOJA project, we have trained and resourced environmental school clubs in the area to plant and grow both indigenous and fruit trees. This is a first step towards ending the harsh effects of climate change. “We were visited by the EDCA team, who trained the students on tree planting; how to set up a seed bed, water them, and even transplant the seedlings,” says Mr. Josephat, the environmental club patron at Uthangathi.

School clubs are the basic units of any school when it comes to grouping children with similar interests. Through this school club, students like Mark, Anastacia, and 54 others are engaged in environmental conservation and climate action advocacy.





“I love planting trees so that I can make my environment clean and beautiful. I have planted two trees so far here in school, and I always look forward to games time so that I can visit my tree and see how it is doing,” says Anastacia, a club member.

Adopt a Tree is a method Mr. Josephat is implementing in the environmental club. He has engaged his learners to each own a tree by identifying a seedling in the seed bed, planting the tree, and taking personal responsibility for its growth. This includes daily watering and mulching, if needed. “I have seen this technique working because even after they finish school, they can identify with the trees they have grown. It’s also a way of ensuring that learners are responsible. My students have shown a lot of responsibility because they began the same at home. It’s the only way we can make the environment green,” adds Mr. Josephat.

The PAMOJA project is supporting child friendly capacity building on environmental conservation, climate change and advocacy for climate action. Through 10 school clubs, students are being resourced to carry out environmental conservation activities that will contribute to growing more than 2000 trees. Tree growing is essential in protection of water resources and catchment. By involving children and youth in tree growing and climate action advocacy, they become agents of change, society can harness their energy, creativity, and passion to build a more resilient and sustainable resources for all.

A thriving planet is something that lasts forever, and just like the students are doing in their school clubs, we too can show love where it truly matters. If you love clean air, plant a tree or better yet in the words of Peter, a club member “I encourage you to plant at least three times every year and take care of them”





# BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN EMALI: A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Pastoralism is more than a way of life in the Maasai community, it's a lifeline. When the drought hit Kajiado County in 2022, it wasn't just the grass that withered, it was the milk, the income, the sense of security. In Kajiado County alone, nearly 40% of animals were wiped out.

Margaret Katatoi remembers it all too well. A dairy farmer and mother of three, she watched helplessly as her cattle weakened and her pastures disappeared. "At the beginning of the drought, I had 50 cows," she says. "Now I only have 15. Milk production dropped, and our main source of income lessened. Even the grass we had stored ran out. We were forced to migrate our animals, just to keep them alive."

John, another farmer from the area, experienced the same blow. "I lost 25 cows," he says. "And the ones that survived were struggling. Some of them died from bad fodder that was sold to us. It was a desperate time. I don't want to go through that again."

Both Margaret and John were part of a community being affected by a changing climate that's making traditional practices

harder and less reliable with each passing year.

In response, a Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) project was launched in their region to enhance the resilience and adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers affected by impacts of climate change. The project introduced climate-smart pasture farming to help communities recover from drought and become more resilient to future ones. Farmers received high-quality pasture seeds along with hands-on training in how to grow, harvest, and preserve fodder. With support from agricultural experts at Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) and International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the training covered everything from pasture banking and silage making to post-harvest handling and soil management.

Margaret's farm was selected as one of five demonstration plots spread across the area. She enclosed her land, planted a variety of high-nutrition pasture, and is open for other farmers in her community to come learn from her farm.



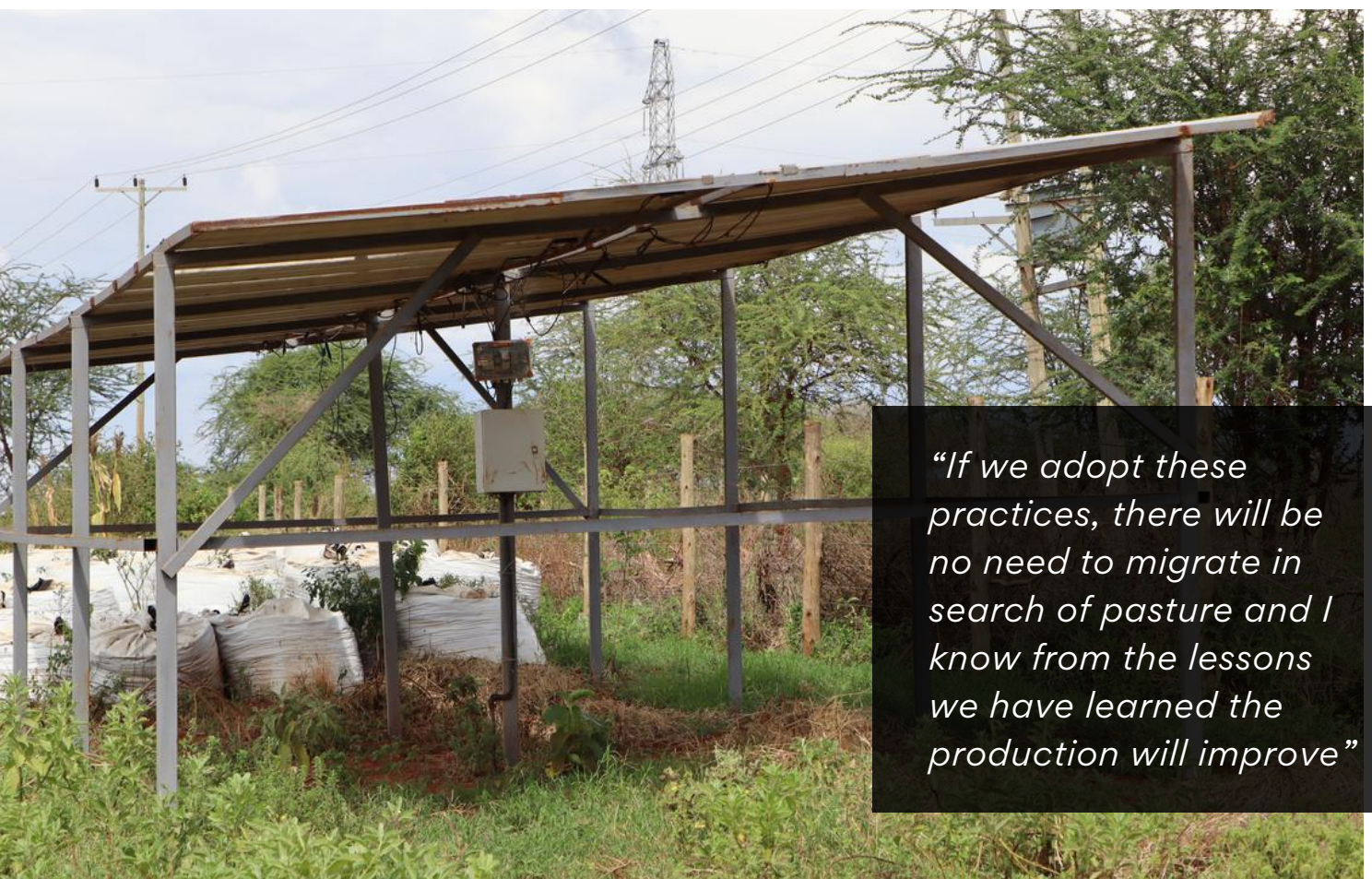


She has since initiated discussions among the women in her community group by promoting the cultivation and preservation of fodder as an initiative to mitigate the impacts of drought on livestock. The women have since welcomed this invitation, and they have been particularly interested in adopting these practices so that they could better protect their livelihood.

“If we adopt these practices, there will be no need to migrate in search of pasture and I know from the lessons we have learned the production will improve,” she says.

John, one of the 100 farmers, is also putting the new knowledge into practice. With access to Boma Rhodes seeds, training, and ongoing support, he has started preparing his land for pasture planting. The seeds are now in the soil, and he’s waiting patiently for them to grow. “It’s a big shift, but I’m hopeful,” he says. “If all goes well, I’ll have better feed for my animals, and I won’t be as vulnerable when the next drought comes.

Change is taking root in Emali. With a new borehole drilled, a model demo farm up and running at Nembuya Farmer Field School, and over 1,300 litres of milk being collected daily through the Samli Dairy Cooperative, the groundwork is in place. Farmers are learning new ways to work with their land not against it through simple, smart solutions like drip irrigation, pasture production, and solar-powered systems. The project is equipping 100 irrigation farmers and 500 dairy farmers with the tools and knowledge to stay productive year-round, even as the climate shifts around them.



*“If we adopt these practices, there will be no need to migrate in search of pasture and I know from the lessons we have learned the production will improve”*





**0725063145**  
**info@emailidca.org**  
**www.emailidca.org**