

# NEWSLETTER

The Monthly Newsletter for the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya.

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In his message for Lent 2024, Pope Francis invited the faithful to “pause” for prayer and to assist their brothers and sisters in need, in order to change their lives and the lives of their communities.

*“When our God reveals Himself, His message is always one of freedom,”* Pope Francis said in the opening of his Message to the faithful for Lent 2024. Recalling the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt, the Holy Father explained that our journey through the desert can be a season of grace – not an abstract journey, but a concrete path that involves seeing the world as it is and hearing the cries of our oppressed brothers and sisters.



**Footsteps in the sands of the desert, for the prophet Hosea, “the place of our first love,” where God guides His people to freedom**

## Lent is a time of conversion and freedom



When our God reveals Himself, His message is always one of freedom.

# TALITHA KUM INTERNATIONAL-KENYA (TKI-K)

## Human Trafficking Awareness by TKI-K

In the sprawling East-Land estates of Nairobi, Kenya, a silent crisis unfolds as Karamajong girls find themselves ensnared in the clutches of a labor syndicate, their dreams crushed beneath the weight of exploitation. Pope Francis' call to be renewed by God's mercy resonates profoundly in this context, urging us to extend love and compassion to those who have been marginalized and oppressed. These young girls, often invisible to society, yearn for a chance to break free from the chains of exploitation and experience the transformative power of love and mercy. It is our moral imperative to become agents of this mercy, actively working to dismantle the structures that perpetuate their suffering.

In response to this crisis, various empowerment programs and meetings have been organized to provide support and opportunities for these vulnerable girls. The Project of Women in Faith Fellowship has orchestrated meetings focusing on motivational and inspirational aspects, empowerment and skills for personal growth, gender empowerment, and action and follow-up. These efforts aim to address the challenges faced by Karamajong girls living in precarious conditions in Nairobi.

Additionally, Talitha Kum Youth Ambassadors have conducted impactful initiatives, engaging more than 65 young participants in Kiambu County, Kenya. These sessions empower youths to navigate their lives with dignity and avoid the dangers of human trafficking, reaching a broader audience through social media with the hashtag *#JourneyWithDignity*. Furthermore, awareness activities have been conduct-

ed in Malindi, targeting 810 students from primary, secondary school and tertiary institutions, educating them on the dangers of human trafficking and empowering them to protect themselves and their peers. The project as well expanded its reach to Dodoma in Tanzania, where the Tanzanian Youth Ambassadors hosted the Africa youth coordinator in an engaging workshop reaching out to 100 participants.

Meanwhile, Talitha Kum International Kenya (TKI-K) has embarked on intensive outreach programs aimed at preventing human trafficking in coastal regions. Institutions such as Loreto School, Star of the Sea Primary School, and Marianist Technical College have been targeted, with sensitization sessions reaching a total of 1060 participants, including students and staff. These efforts have resulted in increased awareness and vigilance among vulnerable populations, with students expressing commitment to becoming ambassadors against trafficking in their communities.



*TKI-K during an Outreach Session on matters Human Trafficking*

At the recent Annual General Meeting of TKI-K, significant progress and achievements were reviewed. Prevention efforts have sensitized over 23 million individuals, with an additional 4,014 receiving training. In terms of protection, 103 survivors were successfully rescued and repatriated, with various forms of support provided to aid in their recovery. TKI-K has also forged partnerships with 13 CSOs to strengthen anti-trafficking advocacy efforts in Kenya, with a notable increase in congregation membership. Overall, these initiatives reflect a concerted effort to combat human trafficking, empower vulnerable pop-

ulations, and promote a culture of compassion and dignity. Through education, awareness, and advocacy, these organizations and individuals are working tirelessly to protect the rights and dignity of those affected by human trafficking in Kenya.



Written by Mr. Wilson Kyalo

## JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION (AOSK-JPIC)

### Legal Office

### Law and the Status of women in Kenya

Girls and women in Kenya hold unlimited potential. The barriers that particularly constrain women and girls are multifaceted. Gender-based violence remains pervasive and women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels. Women and girls still spend long hours collecting water and firewood. Household chores limit school attendance and work options. They have less access to and control over the benefits from land tenure, education, and employment opportunities. There is a dire need to promote the participation of men, women, girls, boys, and girls in every aspect of Kenya's development.

Kenya's constitution 2010, expanded the Bill of Rights including for the first time provisions on economic, social, and cultural rights. One of the most celebrated aspects was the recognition of gender equality and the achievement of gender parity in government, enshrined in the principle stating that no more than two-thirds of the members of an elective or appoint-

ive body shall be of the same gender. However, implementation of the two-thirds gender principle has been an issue for the country as women are still underrepresented in government.

Women's limited participation in the social, economic, and political processes in Kenya is majorly a factor of the historical patriarchal nature of the society. They are therefore faced with both systemic and cultural challenges in their bid to contribute to the Country or National development agenda. Discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes continue to be entertained in both formal and informal institutions thereby hindering progress towards gender equality. A case in point is the unequal participation and representation of women in the political process, which has been informed by biased customs and stereotypes. Women's enjoyment of economic rights is also limited by the unequal distribution of resources, and limited access to factors of production, such as land and financial capital. There has been a positive shift in the



social norms and practices that used to limit women's access to education and their enjoyment of the right to employment and adequate standards of living. The challenge arises when educated girls become women, and their ambitions of participating in leadership positions are blocked even though they are qualified. Social norms that condone violence against women and girls also prevent them from equal participation and full enjoyment of life. These entrenched social norms, practices and structural challenges, at all levels have created an environment of gender inequality that prevents the transformation of gender power relations that is necessary to realize the empowerment and advancement of women and girls.

## The Capstone Project.

The Capstone project implemented by AOSK JPIC through the support of the Hilton Foundation in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has had a great impact especially in Arid and Semi-Arid areas in Kenya. The Human Rights Teachers, Peacemakers and Sisters in the arid Counties teamed up to create awareness among women and Girls on their rights and the setbacks of retrogressive culture that continue to encumber them.



*Sr. Georgina and Sr. Celine creating awareness to the youth at Ntmaru-Migori County*

## The Pax Christi International

Active nonviolence is a way of life, a positive and powerful force for social change, and a means of building a global community committed to the well-being of all. It is a virtue that recognizes the truth of our equal dignity and ultimate unity. It is a process for ending violence without violence or lethal force; for transforming conflict; and for protecting the vulnerable. Active nonviolence is a stand for justice and a method for helping to create it. It pursues this goal, not with passivity or violence, but with creative engagement and determined resistance. Mobilizing courageous and creative people-power, nonviolence does not escape conflict but actively and powerfully engages and transforms it. People throughout the world have used active nonviolence to end injustice and foster reconciliation, to resist war

and build peace, to safeguard the infinite worth of the human person, and to care for creation.

Pax Christi International in collaboration with the Association of Sisterhood in Kenya (AOSK) work together in the implementation of the project '*Empowering Religious Sisters on active non-violence and peacebuilding in Kenya.*' The program is aimed at promoting harmony and peaceful co-existence between persons of the different ethnic and racial communities of Kenya. Pax Christi International and AOSK recognize a common vision, based on the Gospel of Christ, for addressing the underlying causes of injustice, violent conflicts, and all forms of suffering that undermine the dignity of people. The main aim of the project is to improve and support capacity of Religious Sisters through training on active non-violence,

trauma healing. To train Sisters and Youth in active non-violence, peacebuilding, non-violent communication and trauma healing providing them with the tools and skills necessary to become trainers themselves in their own local communities reaching out to youth and members of religious communities, empowering them to be artisans of peace and accompany victims of violence. The sisters and the young people trained in active non-violence and imbued with positive values will become agents of change in their communities and significantly contribute to the restoration of a culture of peace, reconciliation and tolerance, and to the improvement of the living conditions of the whole communities.



*Sr. Damaris Chepkru training the youth on Active Nonviolence*

## Gender Desk

### Lenten Season 2024

**L**ent is a time when we pause to reflect, pray, fast, repent, and be charitable to our Brothers and Sisters. From the KCCB-CJPD, the theme for this year is “**INTEGRITY FOR A JUST NATION**”. In his reflection during the launching of the Lenten Season in Embu. Rev. Bishop Oballa had this to say “*This year’s theme, Integrity for a Just Nation, focuses on using our integrity to build a culture of justice in Kenya. A just nation is only possible if the citizens are people of integrity. The invitation, therefore, is to reflect on our journey of faith as the baptized people of God who should live with integrity to build a just nation. This Lent season places responsibility at our doorstep: conducting ourselves*

*with integrity. As moral beings, we have to go forth and fight for justice for the poor. There are many causes which as Christians we are called to fight for. However, Mother Church says there is only one choice to make over the poor; the preferential option for the poor. Who are the poor we must attend to? In the Old Testament, widows and orphans are often mentioned as vulnerable members of society. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pronounces: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He illustrates the consequences of neglecting the poor in the parable about a rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. Pope Francis, leading as an example in his humility and simplici-*



ty, emphasizes serving the poor and marginalized, aligning his actions with the principles of justice and integrity. Mother Teresa embodied humility through a life dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor, showcasing the impact of a life lived with integrity and justice” The call then for us during this lent season is how will I, WE, make this theme a reality in our lives. Wishing you a fruitful Season led by the five weekly themes, Sovereignty of the people, right to clean safe, and Adequate Water, challenges of High cost of living, Religious extremism, and Emerging threats to the Family. All these will lead to Integrity for a Just Nation, communities, and families.



*Sr. Bernadetta Nzioka DSH, AOSK JPIC receiving the Lenten Booklets from Bishop Oballa Chair of KCCBC-JPD on behalf of AOSK.*

Written by the JPIC Team

## SISTERS LED YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE (AOSK-SLYI)

Youth form 35 percent of the Kenyan population and have the highest unemployment rate at 12.7 percent. This young people enter into the labor market annually without any skills, some having either dropped out of school or completed school and not enrolled in any college. This youth are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, teen marriage, pregnancy, and engaging in risky behaviors. The Sisters Led Youth Empowerment Initiative is committed to giving the young people appropriate opportunities to consolidate their basic knowledge and competencies, and equip them with the relevant skills needed to find a job, set up a business or engage in other productive work. The second phase of implementation targets to empower 1000 vulnerable and disadvantage youths of 15-25 years through skills development, mentorship and provision of seed capital. The AOSK SLYI program is working in partnership with 50 Catholic sponsored technical training insti-

tution in offering technical training for the vulnerable youth.

During the month of February, the AOSK-SLYI team made courtesy visits to the new technical institutions for technical support and met with some beneficiaries.



*The AOSK-SLYI team during a courtesy visit at Kobujoi Technical Training*

Written by Mrs. Caroline Wamiti

## CATHOLIC CARE FOR CHILDREN IN KENYA (AOSK-CCCK)

**K**enya's commitment to the well-being of its children has reached a new milestone with the enactment of the Kenyan Children Act 2022. This ground-breaking legislation places families at the heart of child protection, recognizing their fundamental role in nurturing and supporting their children.

Imagine a world where every child thrives in the warmth and embrace of a loving family. This is the vision the Children Act 2022 strives to realize through its emphasis on family-centered care. It acknowledges that children blossom best in stable, loving environments where they feel secure and supported.

The Act champions the reintegration of children into their families whenever possible. Family bonds provide crucial emotional support and stability, fostering a child's healthy development. However, not all families can care for their children.

In such situations, the Act encourages Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to embrace care reforms that prioritize family-like environments. This ensures children experience the comfort and familiarity of a family setting, even when they are unable to be with their biological families.

Furthermore, the Act acknowledges that each child is unique. It encourages the development of individualized care plans tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of every child. These plans prioritize family reunification when feasible, ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive.

The Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya Catholic Care for Children in Kenya (AOSK-CCCK) is at the forefront of championing these crucial reforms by actively advocating for the real-time implementation of the Children Act 2022 through various initiatives:

**Empowering local communities:** AOSK-CCCK conducts positive parenting workshops and sensitization programs. These initiatives equip families with the knowledge and skills to nurture their children in a healthy and loving environment, strengthening the foundation for family-centered care.

**Encouraging alternative care options:** AOSK-CCCK promotes the exploration of alternative care options that prioritize family-like settings. This ensures children receive the care and support they need within a familiar and secure environment, even when family reunification might not be immediately possible.

This is a call to action for all of us. As members of our community, we can champion the spirit of the Children Act 2022 by Recognizing the critical role families play in the development of children; Supporting CCIs as they adopt family-centered care models and becoming advocates for children's well-being by upholding their rights and best interests.

Together, let's create a future where every child in Kenya experiences the love, care, and support of a family.



*Sisters Under AOSK-CCCK finding joy in taking care of young children in the Society*

Written by Mr. Joseph Wichenje

## AOSK-SCORE ECD

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IN KISUMU AND SIAYA THROUGH SMART COUPLE METHODOLOGY

**D**uring February, the SCORE ECD project held The SMART Couple training at Pinecone hotel in Kisumu. The training aimed at training experienced couples to be Trainers of Facilitators (TOFs) on Smart couple methodology in their respective communities. SMART Couple Approach aims at improving the ECD Program Outcomes. A total of 17 couples were trained as TOFS.

What is then, SMART Couples?: Strengthening Marriages and Relationships through Joint Decision-Making and Action Planning

- SMART Couple is a comprehensive approach to strengthening marriages and relationships through effective communication and careful planning to build strong, united families.
- Strengthen the capacity of the couple to effectively communicate, plan, and make decisions together.
- Based on the AOSK/CRS principle of Integral Human Development
- Train SMART Couples peer mentors who work under the supervision of AOSK/CRS partners to improve program outcomes in areas such as health, agriculture, household economic strengthening, Natural Family Planning (NFP), nutrition, WASH, etc.
- Not a stand-alone activity. It is a facilitating agent (software) that enables the couple's dreams, hopes, and ambitions to be realized through AOSK/CRS program interventions & community resources (hardware).

The SMART Couple approach is based on Various aspects of building a strong and healthy family as broken down by these key elements of a Faithful House:

#### **Foundation**

This concept emphasizes the importance of building strong families rooted in faith and values. The foundation of a family should be firmly grounded in God, and couples were encouraged to prioritize faith in their lives and marriages.

**The Pillars:** Just as a house has pillars to support its structure, marriage has foundational pillars that contribute to its strength. These pillars include love, faithfulness, respect, and communication. Couples were urged to cultivate these qualities in their relationships to ensure stability and nurture their children in an environment of love and respect.

#### **Prayer**

The significance of prayer in marriage was highlighted, including personal prayer, couple prayer, family prayer, and communion prayer. Couples were encouraged to pray together and align their prayers with common goals and values

#### **Values of priority**

Certain values were underscored as priorities in marriage, including development, love, respect, health, job,



spouse, and the culture of marriage. These values serve as guiding principles for couples in making decisions and navigating challenges together.

### **The Door**

In marriage, the door represents authority, accountability, and responsibility. Couples were reminded of their role in regulating what enters and exits their family life, promoting positivity, and avoiding negative influences.

### **The Window**

The window symbolizes forgiveness and the importance of maintaining openness and grace within the family unit. Couples were encouraged to cultivate a culture of forgiveness and teach their children its significance.

### **The Roof:**

The roof represents consciousness, highlighting the importance of discernment and moral awareness in parenting and family life. Couples were reminded of their responsibility to create a nurturing and healthy environment for their children, especially during their formative years.

The seminar provided valuable insights and practical guidance for couples to build and maintain strong, healthy, and faithful marriages. It emphasized the significance of faith, communication, forgiveness, and conscious decision-making in fostering lasting relationships and raising children in a loving and supportive environment. Overall, the seminar was informative and helpful for all the couples.



*Attending sessions at Pinecone Hotel Kisumu*

Written by Sr. Teresa Yator, ASE

## **AOSK-CHEMCHEMI YA UZIMA COLLEGE**

### **Formation of Formators**

**I**t is very important not only to choose the right formators but also to prepare them and help them towards a constant development of their professional capability in such a way that they may better fulfill the work entrusted to them. The Program for the Preparation of Formators offered by AOSK Chemchemi ya Uzima College caters to the needs of formators in this era to prepare them to face the various challenges and complex-

ities of accompanying young women and men in formation in their congregations and dioceses. For many of the participants who go through this Programme, it is a graced moment of transformation. They not only learn many new skills, approaches, and insights, but more importantly, they become self-aware and more fully disposed to embrace their future ministry as formators with enthusiasm, generosity and hope.

The fact that the participants come from different countries, congregations and cultures provides a basis for rich sharing and learning in an international, inter-congregational and intercultural context. This provides opportunities for understanding the challenges inherent in living interculturality and ways to facilitate intercultural living in their houses of for-

mation. Their openness, ability to accept differences, flexibility, and non-judgmental attitude foster growth and bonding in the community they form during the Program.

Chemchemi Formation of Formators Program offers process-oriented learning, which involves reflection, sharing, interaction, and active participation. Some activities for the month of February in which they participated are Regular lectures, the class birthday celebration of the August intake group, the day of the consecrated, participation in the way of the cross, Wednesday evening rosary at the grotto of our Mother Mary, formation trip to "PARADISE LOST", participation on the sports day, February recollection day and community animator's workshop online.



*Aosk Chemchemi ya Uzima formators participating in different activities*

Written by Sr. Catherine Mutuku, OSB



## Creation of awareness for Sabbatical Programs

It has come to the awareness of the sabbatical team that the phrase “**Fish lives inside the water but still feels thirsty**” is very true as a pattern to the sabbatical program. The sabbatical Program is one amongst many programs offered at Chemchemi ya Uzima College which is under the umbrella of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya. Even though the program is situated within a highly religious populated area, most Kenyans including sisters know very little of what the program pertains. This is the reason why the congregations rarely send their sisters to the program or do not send them at all. Because of this, the Sabbatical team felt the need of going out to reach out to the congregations and share the Good News about St. Anselm’s sabbatical program.

Some of the Congregations that were paid a visit included: The Donorianne sisters, The Little Daughters of St. Joseph, the Donumme dei Sisters, and the Nazareth Sisters of the Annunciation. The team received a warm welcome from the congregation members and they shared indepthly about the Sabbatical Program and cleared some of the misconceptions that sisters had heard about the Sabbatical Program. At the end of the day, the Congregations expressed their happiness and promised to send more sisters to Chemchemi ya Uzima to pursue the sabbatical course. The Sabbatical team also shared some of the marketing brochures for Chemchemi ya Uzima Institute to market the other programs that are offered at Chemchemi College.



*Sabbatical Team during their marketing visit to the randomly selected congregations*

Written by Sr. Victorine Nyawade, FSSA



## Progress of the Institute of Integrative Spiritual Counselling (ISC).

As the semester gets into its midmorning, the ISC students are also tightening their ropes and getting into deeper waters of the lectures, term papers, long essays, and preparations for the Final Semester Examinations. ISC began the semester on very soft ground with the Administration making all the necessary preparations and Lecturers getting ready to share their knowledge and prepare future ministers in the counseling arena. ISC is aware of the world in which we are living. Many people are engulfed in various challenges that need skilled ministers and, in this case, religious men, women, priests, and even lay faithful. Humanity is wounded; the family from whom we get the servants of God are wounded, the youth are wounded, and in fact, all at large are wounded. This calls for individual inner healing and then healing of others. The Sisters taking the Integrative Spiritual Counseling (ISC) are advantaged in this area because they are processing their challenges and various situations and at the same time acquiring skills to journey with others who experience the same challenges. The Sisters are doing this through the Practicum Supervision they are undertaking and first-year Students continuing with their lectures and at the same time having their Growth Group Experience and their

One-to-One sessions. The Second Year Students are in the field putting their final touches to the Integrative Spiritual Counseling Course at ChemChemi Ya Uzima College and also having the final lectures. In the Field, the Student Sisters are handling several issues that will open their minds to meet the people of God and help them in their day-to-day challenges, especially the youth who are losing direction due to various circumstances in their lives and families breaking due to different ideologies and poverty.



*A student Sister from ISC during a motivational talk with primary school children*

Written by Sr. Sophia Wanyama, LSMIG

## HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF SISTERHOODS OF KENYA

### Impact of Childhood Traumatic Experiences

HASK has been passionate about non-communicable diseases, creating awareness, screening, treatment, and referral for management. Among the diseases that HASK is screening

is mental health. Though mental health may not cause physical pain directly, it is a disease with long-term effects that can be devastating. Mental illness can be prevented and can be treated. Most mental health

problems can be associated with childhood trauma especially when it is not addressed early.

Children go through a lot in their initial stages of life, both positive and negative which affect and determine how their adulthood life looks like. Childhood trauma refers to events experienced by a child that evoke fear and are often violent, dangerous, or life-threatening. These experiences, also known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), can have significant effects on a child's development and well-being. When children experience trauma, the neural pathways associated with the traumatic event become highly active. Unfortunately, this can reduce the formation of other pathways needed for adaptive behavior as well, disrupting the normal development of neural connections and thus affecting cognitive processes, emotional regulation, and social skills.

Childhood trauma can have a profound impact on mental health. Traumatic experiences during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, or witnessing violence, can lead to a variety of mental health challenges later in life. Some common effects of childhood trauma on mental health include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse. Many researchers have shown how childhood trauma can change the brain affecting development and increasing the risk of mental health disorders. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), over two-thirds of people receiving treatment for substance abuse report a history of childhood trauma.

Some of the experiences include; Physical or sexual abuse, witnessing trauma even on screens or in war zones, ongoing stress in the family, parental divorce, and many others. If after the experience the child receives enough support they are easy to heal and the risk of mental problems is prevented. However, if no response or support is given, the child may develop post-traumatic stress disorder that may be for life.

Symptoms may include acting younger than their real age, trouble causing, increased anxiety, hyper-vigilant, re-experiencing the trauma, depression, and others as per different children. As many as 15% of girls and 6% of boys develop PTSD following trauma

## Interventions

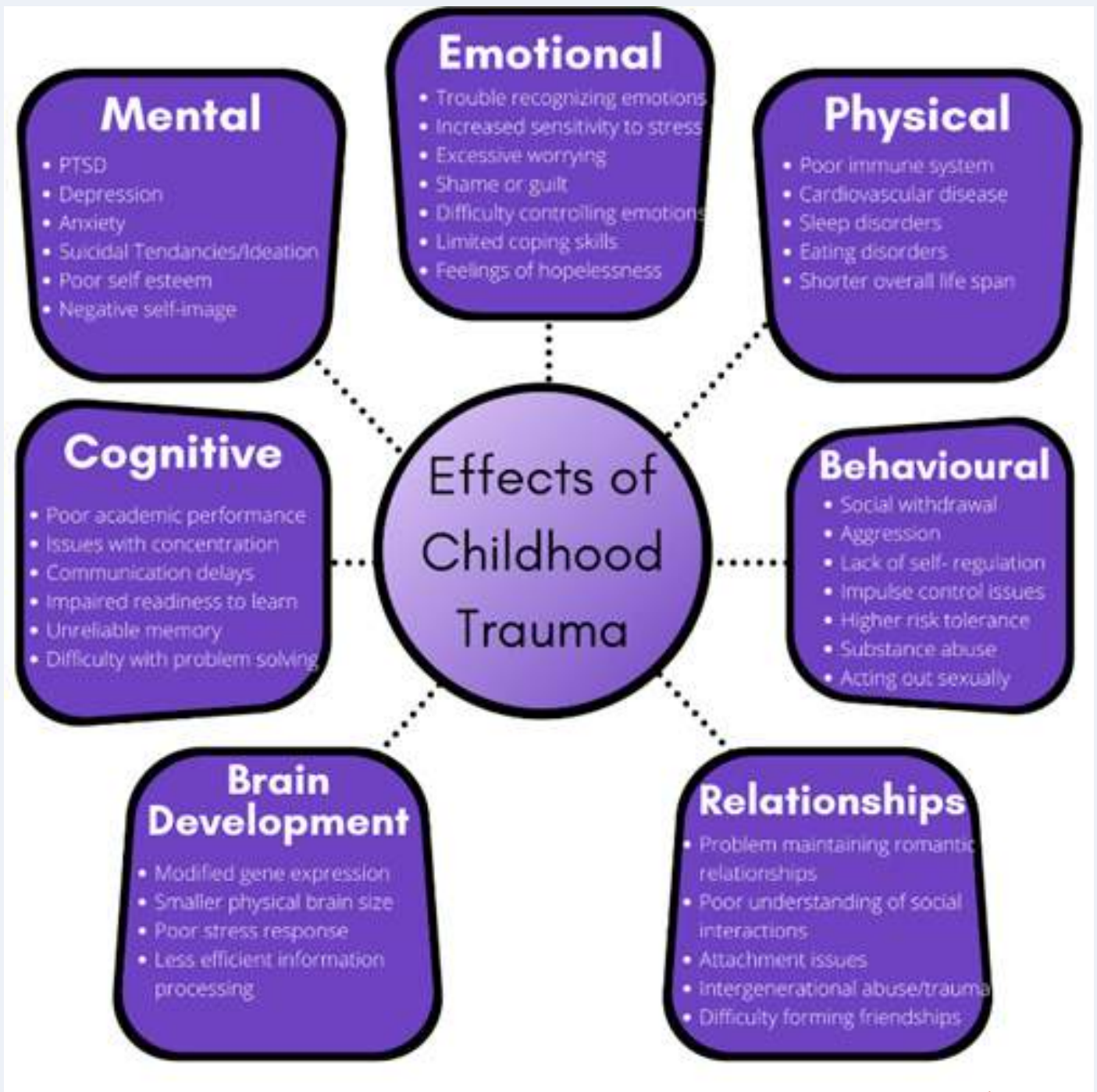
The first and most important intervention is to be supportive. Believe in the child, validate their experience, and offer both psychological and social support. Look for professional help to reduce the risk of long-term effects.

In conclusion, many human illnesses arise from the interaction of individual genes and environmental influences. Traumatic events, especially in childhood, constitute high-risk factors for the emergence of psychiatric illnesses in later life. However, whether early stress leads to a psychiatric disorder depends largely on his or her genetic predisposition

## Effects of Childhood Trauma

The Diagram below shows some of the Impact that Childhood Trauma has got on an individual.





Written by Sr. Regina Nthenya, SSJ

## AOSK INSURANCE AGENCY

### Insurance for Livestock

Since your cattle are your source of revenue, ensuring their safety ought to be your top priority. Aosk Insurance Agency covers the following under their livestock policy

#### 1.) Single Animal Cover

This provides coverage for high-value animals (dairy or beef) that are lost or die due to illness, disease, epidemics, emergency slaughter, or hazards associated with calving. It can be expanded to include benefits for loss of income, theft protection, and transit hazards.



The health status is certified by a trained veterinary doctor or officer, and the basis of cover value is pre-agreed with the farmer. Every covered animal needs to have a bolus served or be tagged. For cattle, the age restriction is 90 days to 10 years, and for shoats, it is 60 days to 5 years.

Benefits include a simple claim procedure, guaranteed stability, loan collateral, affordability, better financial management, and the assurance that there is a safety net in place for unforeseen losses and related expenses.

## 2.) Horse and Bloodstock Insurance

Our bloodstock product provides coverage for accidental injury-related deaths of the insured racing or polo horse as well as medical costs.

**Features:** The coverage can be expanded to include theft and transit risk. The pre-agreed foundation for cover value is the owner's health status certification from a licensed veterinarian or officer.

Written by Mr. Francis Mutuku



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