



Gaming Awareness Society of Kenya

Annual Report 2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT LEAD



Nelson Bwire

FIGHTING GAMBLING HARM TOGETHER

Challenging the status quo is an act of courage—a transformative step that reshapes societies for the better. At Gamawareness254, this belief drives us to envision a Kenya free from the devastating impacts of gambling harm. To achieve this, we've embraced a bold culture: to be courageous, to be different, and to question the norms that enable gambling harm to persist.

Our 2024 journey has been one of disruption and determination. We've challenged the pervasive narrative that gambling and sports must go hand in hand. By addressing this normalisation, we've spotlighted how the association fuels harmful behaviours and targets vulnerable audiences, especially young people who love sports. Through tailored campaigns and open conversations, we've dismantled these myths, fostering a healthier perspective on sports as a source of unity and enjoyment—not exploitation. This shift has empowered communities we work in to embrace sports as a space free from gambling harm and to reclaim its true spirit.

We've also adopted a systems approach to address the structural factors perpetuating gambling harm, such as inadequate regulations, financial illiteracy, and the unchecked rise of predatory digital gambling platforms. From advocating for stronger legislative frameworks at the Senate to working directly with university students, local leaders, and families, we've made significant strides in creating awareness, advocacy and supporting those most affected. We have managed to shift the conversation from boardrooms to the streets and communities. Our work in universities has seen positive results where for instance students are demanding and holding their leaders to account to invest more in gambling harm education and policies. Some students have taken it upon themselves to take these awareness sessions to their communities.

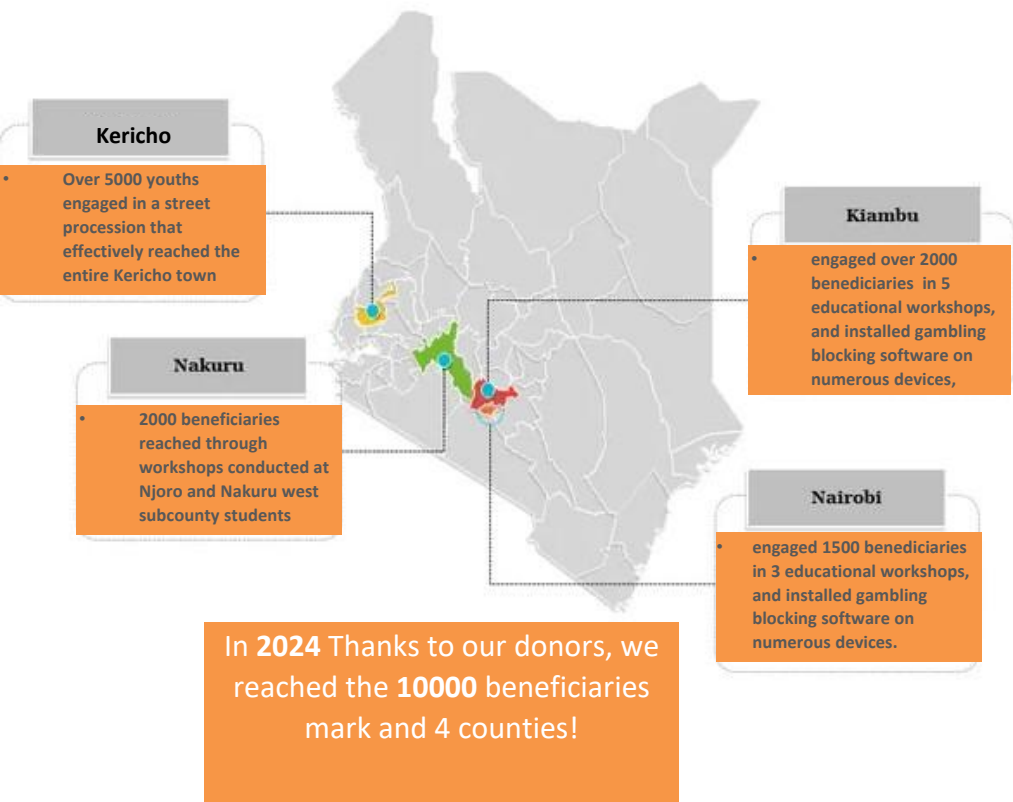
2024 was also a year of collaboration. We partnered with a diverse network of partners and stakeholders— International communities, government agencies, parliamentarians, technology providers, universities, community leaders, football teams and youth organisations. These alliances allowed us to amplify our reach, integrate innovative gambling-blocking tools, and influence policy discussions. We've shown that addressing gambling harm is not just about highlighting risks but also about creating systemic safeguards and empowering individuals with choices.

Yet, our journey was not without challenges. Stigma, resource constraints, and the pervasive normalisation of gambling in our society tested our resolve. We have also had some misses here and there, but we recognise and appreciate the efforts that have gone into the actual work of fighting gambling harm. We've learned that to truly mitigate gambling harm, we must go beyond reacting to symptoms. Upstream solutions, those that address the root causes and systemic issues, are essential. This includes international collaboration for regulatory reforms.

As we move forward into 2025, our focus will remain on inclusion, innovation, and advocacy. We aim to scale our programs, deepen our impact, and ensure every Kenyan, especially our youth, has the opportunity to live free from the harms of gambling.

I invite you to journey through this report, to reflect on the resilience and creativity of our team and partners, and to share your feedback. Most importantly, I urge you to join us in this movement—to be bold, courageous, and transformative.

IMPACT IN 2024



01

Successful University Outreach

We conducted impactful awareness and education programs at Kenyatta University, Egerton University, and Zetech University, reaching over 300 students.

02

Community Engagement

Our collaborative event in Kericho County, in partnership with Flave Media Group, engaged an estimated 500 young people through innovative outreach methods.

03

Sports teams education

We conducted impactful awareness and education programs to various sports teams in Nairobi and Kiambu County.

04

Policy Advocacy:

We actively participated in the public participation process for the National Lottery Bill, advocating for responsible gambling practices.

05

Building Strategic Partnerships:

We forged crucial alliances with government agencies, universities, community organizations, and industry leaders to amplify our impact.

06

Support

We installed gambling blocking software on numerous devices and conducted Counselling sessions in collaboration with our partners



GOAL 1 Amplifying Awareness

Empowering Citizens for Better Futures:

Gambling harm does not diminish on its own; it requires collective vigilance, education, and spaces for communities to voice concerns, push for policy reforms, and hold leaders accountable. The Tahadhari Athari Za Kamari project, spearheaded by the Gaming Awareness Society of Kenya, has been instrumental in empowering citizens in low-income areas and sports communities to demand better practices and transparency from the gambling industry while promoting healthier alternatives.

Awareness in Low-Income Areas:

In the year under review, our focus has been to infiltrate the heart of communities where gambling's repercussions are most felt. We've engaged with residents in Githurai, Kibera, and Shabab, areas characterized by high unemployment, poverty, and limited access to education or recreational alternatives. Here, we've conducted workshops that have not only

educated over **1000** participants on the perils of gambling addiction but also equipped them with preventive tools like gambling blocking software, installed on their devices.

Our approach has been to foster a grassroots movement where community members actively participate in shaping their environment. By holding awareness sessions, we've

seen a commitment from **90%** of attendees to adopt preventive measures, transforming individual actions into a collective force for change.

Policy Advocacy through Football Tournaments:

Football, a unifying force in Kenyan culture, especially in low income and rural areas, became our platform for advocacy. During tournaments in Githurai and Kibera, we've leveraged the passion for sports to discuss the dangers of gambling,

particularly match-fixing. Over **375** young athletes and spectators were engaged in these sessions, where we promoted financial literacy, the value of sports for development, and the availability of support for those battling addiction.

Our presence at these events led to tangible policy advocacy including a Senate petition to ban gambling by registered athletes and officials, aiming to preserve the integrity of sports. This initiative not only sparked dialogue but also planted seeds for legislative reform.

"In Nakuru, gambling is all around us, especially with nothing else to do. The workshop gave us tools to fight back against this addiction. I used to bet away my small income, leaving my family in need. Now, with the support from the group and the strategies we learned, I've started a small business instead." Augustine, Aged 22, Shabab , Nakuru

Community Engagement and Media Impact:

Our media strategy has been dual-focused, targeting both local and international audiences to amplify our message. We've had significant engagements with media outlets like **Al Jazeera, Bloomberg, NTV, and Vybez Radio**, reaching an estimated audience of over **500,000** across East Africa, discussing the socio-economic implications of gambling.

On social media, our campaigns have reached over **100,000** individuals nationwide. The hashtag **#TahadhariAthariZaKamari** has seen thousands of engagements, while our **"No Bet November"** campaign on platforms like TikTok and YouTube has gained traction, with videos becoming instant hits, fostering a new generation's understanding of responsible behavior.

Street Procession in Kericho:

On February 29, 2024, alongside Flave Media Group, we organized a procession that effectively reached the entire town, creating a buzz and fostering direct community interaction.

Branded Materials Distribution:

1,413 pieces of branded materials were distributed, including flyers, posters, and wristbands, enhancing visibility and giving tangible reminders of the campaign's message





GOAL 2: Strengthening Education

Our work recognizes that combating gambling harm requires a strong educational foundation. Our goal is to instill knowledge and awareness among the youth, particularly in higher education institutions, to prevent gambling addiction before it takes root.

Workshops in Universities:

In 2024, our educational outreach extended to key universities like Kenyatta, Egerton and Zetech

Universities, reaching **1023** students through targeted workshops. These events focused on:

Understanding Gambling Addiction: Delving into the psychological and social impacts of gambling, we equip students with knowledge about addiction's warning signs and consequences.

Financial Literacy: Workshops emphasized responsible financial management, contrasting the false promises of gambling with sustainable personal finance practices.

Support Systems: We highlighted the importance of seeking help, detailing available support services, including counseling and peer support groups.

Counselors and Lecturers Leading the Charge:

Our success in universities has been driven by the active involvement of counselors and lecturers. Their participation has been pivotal.

Peer Influence: The involvement of student leaders and peer counselors has fostered a peer-driven approach to advocacy and support, enhancing the impact of our message.

Advocacy for Gambling Policies in Schools:

We advocate for educational institutions to adopt comprehensive gambling policies, akin to existing drug and alcohol policies:

Policy Development: We've pushed for the inclusion of gambling education in the curriculum and the establishment of clear policies that address prevention, intervention, and support.

Awareness Campaigns: By demonstrating the effectiveness of our workshops, we encourage universities to conduct regular awareness sessions, ensuring continuous education on gambling harm.

Support Structures: We've campaigned for universities to provide resources for students affected by gambling, including access to counseling and gambling blocking software.

Impact:

Increased Awareness: Post-event surveys indicated a

95% increase in gambling harm awareness among participants, with a significant commitment to preventive measures.

Behavioral Change: The workshops have sparked a movement among students, with many becoming informal ambassadors for responsible gambling within their peer groups.

Policy Influence: Our advocacy has begun to influence some universities to consider or draft formal policies on gambling, recognizing it as a public health issue that requires institutional response.

“Addiction to gambling often begins innocently, with the thrill of a potential win or the escape from life's pressures. However, this can quickly spiral into a dependency where the individual chases losses in a futile attempt to regain control, driven by the brain's reward system. Over time, what starts as occasional indulgence becomes an all-consuming need, reshaping one's life around the next bet, leading to neglect of responsibilities, strained relationships, and financial ruin” - **Dr. Fabio Ogachi, Kenyatta University.**



Ripple effect

A ripple effect of our campaign at **Kiambu Youth Training College, Mwihoko, Kiambu County.** Steven Obiero , a beneficiary of our program and Chairperson for Kenyatta University peer counsellors, stepped up as one of our Youth Ambassadors. He took the initiative to educate youths. We have been and continue urging our beneficiaries to rise in their capacities and use their voices to spread awareness.



“ Measures with increased effectiveness include enforcing legal age limits, restricting gambling availability and accessibility, prohibiting or substantially limiting advertising, implementing universal and mandatory limits for gambling consumption, and placing controls on gambling product characteristics known to be harmful. ”

Lancet Public Health
Commission 2024



GOAL 3: Advocating for Change

Tahadhari Athari Za Kamari has set its sights on systemic change through advocacy, aiming to alter the landscape of gambling regulation and public policy in Kenya. Our commitment is to ensure that gambling does not undermine the well-being of our communities, especially the youth.

Parliamentary Engagement:

In November 2023, we seized the opportunity to present memoranda to the Departmental Committee on Sports and Culture, advocating for amendments in the National Lottery Bill and the Gambling Control Bill. Our input was acknowledged in the final report, marking a significant step towards legislative reform aimed at protecting consumers from gambling harm.

Senate Petition:

A pivotal moment in our advocacy efforts was the Senate petition led by our legal officer, Weldon Koros, in 2024. This petition sought to ban gambling by match officials and athletes, highlighting the destructive potential of match-fixing and its impact on sports integrity. This has not only garnered media attention but also initiated discussions at the highest legislative levels, potentially leading to new laws.

Relevant government agencies engagement:

We have been engaging various government agencies to tackle gambling harm in their capacities. **Betting Control and Licensing Board, Competition Authority (Consumer Protection department) and Communications Authority of Kenya** have all become Significant Partners. We have been recognized as an **Independent Consumer Body** by CAK under Competition Act No. 12 of 2010 to champion the rights of consumers in the gambling sector

Media as a Tool for Advocacy:

Leveraging media has been crucial:

Bloomberg Feature: A Bloomberg article spotlighted our campaign, increasing our visibility and the urgency for regulatory action.

Upstream On The Hill Interview: In November 2024, our project lead was interviewed on this platform, discussing upstream solutions to gambling harm in Africa, connecting us with Commonwealth entities and international bodies for broader policy influence.

Campaigns and Public Awareness:

No Bet November: This initiative launched across our digital platforms not only raised awareness but also encouraged public action, gaining thousands of engagements across social media.

Social Media Advocacy: The hashtag

#TahadhariAthariZaKamari has become synonymous with the movement, with our TikTok and YouTube channels serving as platforms for advocacy and education.

Impact of Advocacy:

Policy Influence: Our advocacy has directly contributed to policy dialogues, with some of our recommendations being considered in legislative reforms.

Public Engagement: We've mobilized public opinion, making gambling harm a recognized issue that demands regulatory attention.

Cultural Shift: There's a growing cultural understanding of gambling as not just an individual problem but a societal one requiring systemic solutions.

FACT CHECK

Most Africans have placed bets, and Kenya still leads in betting

“ **Kenya** emerges as a standout, with **82.81%** of its respondents having placed bets. South Africa follows closely behind with 73.94%, then Ghana with 73.03%, Uganda with 71.43%, Tanzania with 71.13%, and Nigeria with 65.32%.”

Geopoll Survey 2024



“ Evolution of the gambling industry is at a crucial juncture; decisive action now can prevent or mitigate widespread harm to population health and wellbeing in the future. Thus far, globally, governments have paid too little attention to gambling harms and have not done enough to prevent or mitigate them ”



GOAL 4: Providing Support

At the core of the Tahadhari Athari Za Kamari project is our commitment to providing tangible support to individuals affected by gambling harm. Recognizing that awareness and education alone are not sufficient, we aim to offer direct assistance, resources, and a supportive environment for recovery and prevention.

One-on-One Counseling:

Our workshops across Githurai, Kibera, and Shabab included one-on-one counseling sessions, ensuring that individuals struggling with gambling addiction have immediate access to professional help. This personalized approach has been crucial in addressing the specific needs of each participant, fostering an environment where recovery is possible.

Gambling Blocking Software:

To combat the ease of access to gambling sites, we've provided practical solutions: Installation Events: During our university workshops and football tournaments, we installed gambling blocking software on the devices of over 50 participants, giving them control over their online environment and reducing temptation.

Peer Support and Ambassadors:

Peer Counselors: We've trained and engaged peer counselors from universities like Kenyatta and Egerton, who have become key in providing ongoing support. These individuals not only offer guidance but also serve as relatable figures advocating for a gambling-free lifestyle.

Community Ambassadors: Local groups such as the Githurai Social Justice Center, Kibera Sports Stars, and Shabab Youth Self Help Group have become our ambassadors, extending our support network into the community. They help sustain the message and offer peer support in low-income areas.

Workshops and Educational Sessions:

Our workshops are structured not just to inform but to support:

Interactive Sessions: These sessions delve into the psychology of addiction, financial management, and personal testimonials, creating a supportive learning environment where participants can find both education and empathy. Follow-Up: We've established mechanisms for follow-up support, ensuring that the initial contact at our events leads to continuous engagement through social media, our website, and direct communication channels.

Advocacy for Institutional Support:

University Policies: We advocate for universities to have formal support systems for students affected by gambling, akin to those for drug or alcohol issues. This includes counseling services, support groups, and educational programs.

Government and NGO Collaboration: By working with bodies like the Betting Control and Licensing Board, we're pushing for governmental support in the form of dedicated resources for gambling addiction treatment and prevention.

Impact of Support Initiatives:

Empowerment: Participants have reported feeling more empowered to manage or overcome their gambling habits, with many expressing a commitment to preventive measures.

Community Building: Our support initiatives have fostered a sense of community among those affected, reducing the stigma around gambling addiction and encouraging collective action.

Sustainability: By involving local leaders and institutions, we're building a sustainable support network that continues beyond the life of our immediate campaigns.

Looking Ahead 2025: More Upstream

“ There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in ”

Desmond Tutu

As we step into 2025, our vision is clear: a Kenya where gambling is strictly regulated, and its harms are significantly reduced. We are looking forward to:

Scaling Up: Expanding our footprint across more counties, reaching new demographics, especially those in rural settings where gambling might be a new but rapidly spreading issue.

Policy Breakthroughs: Seeing our advocacy efforts materialize into policy changes that protect rather than exploit.

Community Empowerment: Empowering more communities to take charge of their local gambling environments, fostering a culture of vigilance and care.

The Tahadhari Athari Za Kamari project has made significant strides in addressing the downstream effects of gambling harm in Kenya. Through education, direct support, and advocacy, we've reached countless individuals, fostering awareness and providing tools for recovery and prevention. However, the downstream work, while impactful, is not without its challenges. The resources required for long-term sustainability are stretched thin, and the scale of gambling addiction, particularly among the youth, demands more than what current efforts can achieve alone.

The Need for Upstream Solutions:

We've learned that to truly mitigate gambling harm, we must go beyond reacting to symptoms. Upstream solutions—those that address the root causes and systemic issues—are essential. This includes regulatory reforms, corporate responsibility from gambling operators, and a shift in how gambling is marketed, especially to vulnerable populations.

We have begun this journey and look forward to it making a lasting impact. We humbly ask for your continued support, whether through financial contributions, strategic partnerships, or advocacy. The resources at our disposal are insufficient to match the scale of the problem. Your involvement can help us:

Amplify our Educational Reach: Expand our educational programs to more schools, universities, and community spaces.

Enhance Support Services: Develop comprehensive support systems, including counseling, helplines, and rehabilitation programs.

Strengthen Advocacy: Bolster our efforts in policy advocacy to ensure gambling regulations are robust and protective.

Partners and Donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our current partners and donors. Their support not only validates our mission but also amplifies our capacity to make a tangible difference in the lives of countless Kenyans.



Tahadhari AthariZaKamari

Join us in the fight against gambling addiction. Together, we can raise awareness, provide support, and prevent further tragedies. Let's work towards a society free from gambling harm.

www.gamaware.org



Join the movement
@gamaware254

A nation free from gambling harm

Donate

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- Account No. : 1267894334

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