



REPORT BY: HALIMA DOLIF
COMMUNITY CAMPUS EVENT
SATURDAY 10 June 2023.



COMMUNITY CAMPUS EVENT



Learners from Chania Primary school listening to presentations

1. Introduction

Community-Campus Event Report: Empowering Youth

The community-campus event was held at Chania Primary School in Nyeri on Saturday, 10th June, 2023. It was a collaborative effort between the school, Positive Circles women's group, and university students from The University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. The event aimed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by underprivileged youth, with a particular focus on poverty and mental health discussions. This community event was notable for its ability to unite individuals from various age groups with a shared objective: **improving the future for youth**. The decision to hold the event at a primary school was purposeful, recognizing that values instilled in young learners play a vital role in shaping a more promising and secure future. By providing children and youth with a platform to express their opinions, make choices, and share their ideas, they can actively contribute to driving meaningful change. The teachers from the school, as well as representatives of the Parents Teachers Association were in attendance. Also present were members of Positive Circles, a women's community group that curates positive conversations, experiences and activities. I joined this group about two years ago and I have had the opportunity to witness the amazing work they do for the community through their various initiatives, which put youth, women and girls at the frontline of their work.

The involvement of Positive Circles was crucial for the success of this event. Their expertise in facilitating discussions ensured that sensitive topics like mental health and drug abuse with youth and children were approached with care and respect. Their understanding of the women's perspectives brought valuable insights to the table, addressing the specific needs and concerns of women and girls in the community. Additionally, their presence as role models inspired and empowered the young learners, while their network and resources expanded the support available for the initiatives discussed.

As university students, we collaborated and performed a short play and also put together a poem, this was to make the event lively and also incorporate aspects such as psychodrama therapy, art and music as positive ways of expressing mental health concerns, especially to the younger learners in an age-appropriate way. We had a session after the play where community members and the students pointed out their roles in safeguarding themselves and others from the dangers of drug abuse as well as promote mental wellness.

All in all, I am pleased to provide a positive report on the event, highlighting the substantial turnout and the successful outcomes achieved. This report provides an overview of the event, highlights the key statistics on youth issues, and outlines the significance of empowering youth through education and support.



Students from Kenyatta University taking part in discussions

2. Statistics on Youth Issues:

Mental Health:

- According to the World Health Organization Atlas (WHO), the mental health outcomes of this population are directly proportional to the intensity of risks that adolescents are exposed to during this developmental stage.
- Globally, mental health issues affect 10–20% of Adolescents and Young Persons, and the onset age for 50% of these issues is 14 years (World Health Organization Adolescent Mental Health. 2020)

Education and Empowerment:

- Globally, an estimated 263 million children and youth are out of school. (Source: UNESCO - Education for All Global Monitoring Report)
- In Kenya, around 14% of primary school-age children are out of school, with higher rates in marginalized communities. (Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics - Basic Education Statistical Booklet)
- Limited access to quality education, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, hinders youth development and their ability to make informed choices. (Source: United Nations Population Fund - State of World Population Report)

Prevalence of Drug Abuse:

- According to a study conducted by the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), approximately 9.2% of university students in Kenya have engaged in drug abuse. (Source: NACADA - Substance Abuse among University Students in Kenya: A Survey Report)
- The study also revealed that 62.3% of the students surveyed reported having witnessed or been exposed to drug abuse among their peers. (Source: NACADA - Substance Abuse among University Students in Kenya: A Survey Report)

Menstrual Health:

- Menstrual hygiene management remains a significant challenge for many girls and young women, especially in underprivileged communities. (Source: UNICEF - Menstrual Hygiene Management in East and Southern Africa: A Review Paper)
- In Kenya, around 65% of girls and women cannot afford sanitary pads, leading to unhygienic practices and potential health risks. (Source: ZanaAfrica Foundation - Menstrual Health Management in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities)
- Menstruation-related taboos and lack of proper facilities in schools further exacerbate the difficulties faced by girls during menstruation. (Source: Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council - Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Schools: An Investment in Girls' Education)

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Halima Dolif, Kenyatta University student and NGL alumna welcoming attendees to the event

3. Event Highlights:

i. Comprehensive Workshops:

- The event featured engaging workshops addressing youth and mental health topics; with community members and the learners providing vital knowledge and insights.
- Statistics on the prevalence of mental health issues and other significant youth challenges were shared to raise awareness among participants.

ii. Student-led Presentations:

- University students delivered impactful presentations on the importance of mental health and dangers of drug abuse which supplemented with statistics and global trends. We had prepared a skit together with a poem to shed more light on the existence of these vices in the community and highlighted the role that parents, the school and community can play in curbing the issue.
- These presentations emphasized the significance of destigmatizing mental health, raising awareness about drug abuse and promoting access to menstrual hygiene products and facilities.

iii. Group Discussions and Peer Support:

- Interactive group discussions provided a platform for youth participants to share their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. The event provided a platform for the younger learners to interact with university students, share thoughts and exchange ideas,
- Peers and facilitators encouraged dialogue, offering support and guidance based on their experiences and knowledge.

iv. Interactive Activities:

- The event incorporated interactive activities, such as role-plays, games, and creative exercises, to deepen understanding and promote empathy.
- These activities helped challenge misconceptions, build confidence, and foster a supportive environment.

v. Community Engagement:

- The event fostered community involvement by encouraging parents, guardians, and local community members to be more present for school workshops and contribute their perspectives to the wellbeing of learner.



¹ University students performing a poem, for the young primary school learners on the implications of drug abuse

4. Event Outcomes:

The objective was to foster a safe and inclusive environment for sharing experiences and concerns. This was achieved through active discussions, where participants actively brainstormed potential issues they will face in the future, allowing them to uncover underlying issues. Based on the discussions and activities conducted during the events, several key issues emerged as the most pressing problems faced by young people in their communities. The identified issues include:

a. Substance Abuse and Addiction:

The issue of substance abuse and addiction was highlighted as a significant problem affecting young people.

Participants emphasized the need for rehabilitation centers, support networks, and awareness campaigns to address this issue effectively.

b. Lack of Access to Quality Education.

Youth participants highlighted the challenges they face in accessing quality education, ranging from limited resources to inadequate infrastructure. Students who lack access to digital resources and internet connectivity face limitations in accessing online learning materials, participating in virtual classes, and engaging in digital skills development. This divide widens educational inequalities, hindering the academic progress and future opportunities of disadvantaged youth.

c. Lack of Civic Engagement and Political Apathy:

Participants expressed their observations about the lack of civic engagement and political apathy among young people.

They emphasized the need for initiatives that encourage youth participation in civic activities and provide platforms for their voices to be heard in policymaking processes.

d. Unemployment and Underemployment:

Participants expressed concerns about the limited job opportunities and the mismatch between available jobs and their skills.

They highlighted the need for initiatives that bridge the gap between education and employment, such as internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training programs.

e. Mental Health and Well-being:

The issue of mental health emerged as a significant concern among young people.

Participants emphasized the need for increased awareness, access to mental health resources, and support systems to address the rising prevalence of mental health issues.

f. Inequality and Social Justice:

Youth participants expressed their concerns about systemic inequalities and social justice issues prevailing in their communities.

They emphasized the need for inclusive policies, equal opportunities, and measures to address discrimination and social divisions.

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5. Recommendations:

Based on the identified issues, the following recommendations to address the challenges faced by youth are proposed for future programs:

Collaboration:

- Foster ongoing collaboration between schools, community groups, and universities to create a sustainable network of support for underprivileged youth.
- Establish partnerships with local health organizations, NGOs, and government agencies to enhance access to mental health services and ensure access to quality education by all.

Comprehensive Education:

- Advocate for the integration of comprehensive mental health education into school curriculums, including mental wellness centers in communities that youth can easily access.
- Promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues through dedicated sessions and workshops for both youth and adults in communities.



Grade 6 student who addressed the members during the event

Youth Leadership and Mentorship:

- Encourage youth-led initiatives that focus on addressing youth issues, building leadership skills, and creating platforms for peer mentorship. Especially for the younger learners in middle school and high school, there is a lot they can learn from university students, them being relatively closer in age, they can mirror their aspirations and align themselves to them as mentors and develop a healthy relationship to ensure they grow up to be more informed and skilled.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for underprivileged youth, connecting them with university students and community members who can offer guidance and support, and help bridge the gap. This can start through programs that bring together youth to engage in activities together, outside of the universities.

6. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the C-C event in Nyeri, Kenya, brought together a diverse range of participants, including community members, parents, teachers, university students, and the community organization, Positive Circles. The collaborative efforts and shared commitment towards addressing youth issues were evident throughout the event. The meaningful conversations and experiences provided a platform for intergenerational dialogue, empowering children and amplifying their voices. The event's success in fostering community engagement and raising awareness about critical topics such as poverty, access to education and mental health sets a promising foundation for future initiatives and collaborative efforts aimed at creating a better future for youth in the community.