

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, GIRLS' RIGHTS, AND LEADERSHIP EDUCATION IN KENYA

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As a student in the Master of Sustainable Development Practice program, I was given the opportunity to do my fieldwork practicum with Carolina for Kibera, a non-profit located in Kibera, Kenya outside of Nairobi. Kibera is one of the largest squatter settlements in the world with half of the population under the age of 15. Carolina for Kibera is an organization that focuses on poverty reduction through health, social, and economic well-being programs in order to combat issues in Kibera such as crime and insecurity, pollution, and gender discrimination.

Urban squatter settlements are complex living environments that pose significant risks to adolescent learning and development, particularly for females. Because of this, Carolina for Kibera (CFK) created a girls program named Binti Pamoja, which teaches girls about reproductive health, girls' rights, and leadership through mentorship opportunities and discussion

groups. The purpose of my practicum was to evaluate the program, provide recommendations to staff, and create new tools for the improvement of service delivery to adolescent girls through the program.

First, I did a review of existing program documents including objectives and evaluation tools. Next, I completed extensive participant observation in Binti's afterschool programs and safe spaces. These programs consist of peer leaders teaching lessons and activities that relate to different topics affecting girls in Kibera. Thirdly, I conducted qualitative surveying of Binti's peer leaders to learn more about their perceptions of living in Kibera, their satisfaction related to working for the program, their knowledge of leadership skills, and their desired program changes and improvements. Finally, I conducted semi-structured interviews of staff in order to gain additional insight on the program.

Through these methods I was able to gather preliminary findings that

I presented to CFK and Binti Pamoja staff. First, all survey respondents indicated a distinct improvement in their lives since becoming involved in the program. Additionally, topics currently taught were in line with peer leaders' perceived negative impacts of living in Kibera. All respondents could name at least one leadership quality and saw themselves as leaders, but wanted more leadership training. Many respondents wanted increased stipends; others believed leaders should be self-motivated. Observations indicated that leaders were often late, rarely prepared a lesson plan, and their performance and enthusiasm was largely influential on the amount of active verbal participation. Interviews with staff suggested lack of motivation among the peer leaders.

Based on these findings, I created new templates for peer leader evaluations as well as quarterly participant evaluations in order to hold leaders accountable and make sure participants are retaining the information. I also recommended to program staff that the most pressing issue in my opinion was to change behavior among the leaders while taking into account their suggestions, as their happiness is critical to the program's success. This resulted in a restructuring of the mentorship program and requirements. I also developed curricula on women's rights, menstrual hygiene, and the Girl Declaration based on the results of my document review of program goals. Finally, I created leadership curriculum based on the needs and desires indicated in the peer leader survey responses.

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