

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

PARTICIPATORY AND TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ABAGUSII, BASED ON POPULAR EDUCATION MODEL



HOPE FOUNDATION FOR
AFRICAN WOMEN

*Eliminating Gender Disparities
to Create Strong Communities*

Peer Mentoring program





Introduction

This project is a partnership between HFAW and United Methodist Women, Youth and Children (UMWYC). HFAW is a not for profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of marginalized and vulnerable women and families in Kenya through popular education for women's economic empowerment, and increasing awareness of their reproductive health, human rights and gender issues, encouraging and empowering women to work in their communities to create sustainable change. Part of UMWYC mission is to equip women and girls to be leaders, to provide transformative educational experiences and work for justice through service and advocacy. Early 2014, HFAW embarked on a new and exciting pilot project based on popular education after 6 staff participated in the Epes international course model aimed at transforming communities and empowering vulnerable women. This pilot which began with complete community and county leadership involvement ended up with a six month participatory training of 30 participants (20 women and 10 men) that ended with a graduation ceremony. September 2, the graduation day, was the culmination of an exciting, transformative and empowering training which seeks to address various human rights and gender issues in Borabu Sub-County, Nyamira County.

One of the goals of the training was to produce trainers of trainees. Key among the issues tackled include FGM, gender based violence, and HIV/AIDS, general reproductive health, advancement of human rights and creation of action plans to address these issues. To have all the 30 participants graduate was a major achievement considering that majority of them have led peasant lives in the village.

This was an extraordinary day for majority of the participants especially women who had not expected to return to school and earn a certificate, get recognition and support from their family members and community. It was a special day also because the ceremony was grossed by leaders from Kisii and Nyamira counties who applauded and indicated their support for the graduates and the program. Success is also noted because we created out of them 4 teams who have planned to spread the training to 4 different locations in 2015, namely, Mekenene, Esise, Kiabonyoru and Nyansiongo. The accomplishment of the training was reflected in personal testimonies of the graduates, *"Today, I am a transformed person, that action plan can be used even in our homes"* said Karen Nyabokeye. She said she was ready to go out and transform others.



Graduation of 30 health and human rights promoters



County woman representative giving out certificate to Karen . she is so happy

For the current project the United Methodist Women, International Ministries with Women, Children and Youth(IMWCY) graciously granted HFAW a generous donation of \$8000 for a three-month project to continue to do the transformative work that began in the Borabu Sub-county. In addition, it was critical for us to mentor the graduates with facilitation skills to be able to lead the community into prioritization of issues as well as planning and implementing an action plan to success in 2015.

It was also important for HFAW staff to have resources that will enable them to network with other organizations with similar goals in order to create supportive collaborations. It is important to note that HFAW was planned to hold its events from September to December 2014. However, due to the delays in receiving the funds and countrywide teacher strikes we did not complete the events by December. HFAW requested an extension of time to end of February 2015 which MWYC graciously extended.



Highly motivated to change their community



Accomplishments

Several accomplishments have been registered during the peer mentoring transitional training:

1.Strategic planning and pilot evaluation:

On September 15th, 2014 the graduates met with the HFAW team and held a strategic planning meeting. The goal for this meeting was to assess the pilot training for future success and weaknesses; understand the details of peer mentoring sessions and strategize for the success of 2015 scale up program. On pilot assessment graduates identified many strengths: introduction of action plan which can be used everywhere for success; the confidence in them to confront issues; the understanding of gender issues; the male role models among them who are willing to spread the word and advocate for the women without intimidation; the confidence to go out and campaign against an issue such as FGM; the men who now are willing to share properties and discuss issues with their wives as opposed to demanding and the fact that we have local county leadership support were some of the strong points mentioned. In addition, women who received their interest free loans from kivazip shared information about what entrepreneurship they had established and the positive impact this is making in their lives and that of their families.

On weaknesses the graduates revealed a few challenges related to good mastery of the content for some topics. They also worried that they lacked the skill and experience such as HFAW staff in facilitation to which staff promised to be in constant support to them. Staff shared some content guidelines and homework to prepare for mock training workshops. HFAW team left for Nairobi and guided the practice sessions through email and cell phones and under the guidance of grassroots staff and leaders.



Health promoter Lisper evaluating giving feedback on the pilot program



HFAW staff Grace receiving the views of the graduates

2. Peer mentoring mock sessions 1:

On November 10th and 11, 2014 23 graduates turned up to conduct their mock training. HFAW **monitoring and evaluation criteria** based on the goals of the peer mentoring program focused on the following aspects of the graduates training: if they had stated objectives; if they had confidence and mastered the content; the list of activities used and the level of participants' involvement; what resources were employed as teaching aids; what and how dynamics were used to simplify learning and motivate interest; what evaluation techniques were adopted; and what level of demonstrated interest from the participants. The mock training was conducted from the four teams based on the four locations.

Strengths: The new facilitators demonstrated passion and commitment talking about the issues and employing the popular education methods. Two teams had good mastery of content, used dynamics and resources and had a nice process of engaging the participants. We noticed that music was well employed which made their sessions more interesting. Among the top well-presented topics was GBV, FGM and the theological vision for the program. Several popular education methods such as role play, group discussions and plenary presentations were used. On the part of weaknesses, two teams had issues in the use of English which compelled us to allow use of Swahili and their local language, Ekegusii that they are comfortable with. Even though English is the official language in the country, policy allows use of Swahili which is our national language. The country also recognizes that many rural populations are most familiar with their ethnic languages. Some facilitators on the two weak teams did not have objectives and used monotony of dynamics instead of the variety we taught them. They also had some weaknesses in the use of the resources and the evaluation technique was only average.

HFAW team and their peers gave them feedback on their points of weaknesses. To address the weaknesses HFAW team worked with them to take lead in disbanding the current teams and reorganizing themselves to ensure that each team had at least three strong facilitators. We also encouraged them to identify different talents and ensure that each person held a role they were able to play most effectively. This arrangement convinced all of us that the graduates were best positioned to do better as they enthusiastically asked us to come back to see how they would have improved.



Callen facilitating a lesson with the health promoters



Health promoters listening to mock facilitation



HFAW staff giving feedback to health and human rights promoters

3. Peer mentoring mock session 11:

Additional mock facilitation workshops were conducted by 26 graduates on November 23, 2014. There was a great improvement seeing women taking charge and being more aggressive than the first workshops. Majority of the facilitators demonstrated mastery of content; made sure everybody participated; involved various methods such as circle discussion, group work and went overboard with use of various dynamics. Some of the teaching aids included use of locally made materials such as rings made from banana fibers. We saw women and men use dynamics to make the point that men need to also baby sit and the men took it positively and even demonstrated carrying a baby on their back. We think that the men in the group will ultimately be role models for the community. Lisper who is one of the younger women said, "I honestly did not know I could train since I am shy but now I feel ready." Elizabeth who is the chair to the grassroots committee opened up to us "Your tough feedback was a wakeup call, we had not realized that facilitation was so challenging until you made us do it." Evans who is a jovial man had this to say. "You know, when you put me on the spot I thought you were cruel but now I appreciate your way of doing things. I thank you for putting up with us."



Joyce Mathew is a passionate facilitator



Joyce with her fiber rings used as teaching aids. These rings are normally used by women to balance heavy items on their heads such as water in a round bottom clay pot



Men practicing carrying babies on their back - this will transform women lives



4. Action plan on FGM, Child abuse and teenage pregnancies at Gisebei primary school:

HFAW team reiterated the importance of working toward problem resolution²⁰¹⁵ in their communities. Therefore, the graduates went a step further and discussed how they will put their skills to practical community work in January 12, 2015. They had already identified teenage pregnancy in the village as acute problem leading to girls dropping out of school. Since we have been invited to talk to girls in the neighborhood primary school the opportunity has presented to them to mentor these girls. Due to the extended countrywide teacher strike the mentoring for the girls and boys did not happen until February 6 which was also an International zero tolerance day for anti-fgm crusaders.



Pupils at Gisebei primary school in readiness for training



Health promoters explain the female body- and the cut feb 6th 2015



Pupils watching health promoters dramatize children abuses and solutions

Perhaps the most successful part of this program is to have our graduates take lead in becoming community change agents. Working with the school administration and HFAW staff the new graduates were able to practically put their skills to work in a neighboring school, Gisebei primary and demonstrated real life transformative strategies by way of mentoring the pupils. **On February 6th 2015, they reached 850 (half being girls) pupils with anti.FGM messages where they explained the female body and what happens when FGM/cut occurs.** They also streamed an FGM documentary so they pupils can begin to reject FGM as early as possible. They answered the pupils questions.

In addition, through role plays and drama they showed pupils what child abuse is all about, how they need to report to the teachers if this happens at home, to the parents if this happens at school and to HFAW each time it happens so that HFAW can report to the local police and chief. The pupils were also shown through drama and resources that they have rights- to education, food, shelter, health and were to be free of abuse and free of FGM for the girls. They had a right to protection to mention a few. Another important session that health and human rights promoters dramatized was how the young girls can prevent sexual assault as well as early pregnancies. This was dramatized by two health and human rights promoters who literary dramatized a consistent refusal to early sex and encouraged to make a strong effort to run for help with either the teachers, parents or chief and local police. These are the only informal systems in place but they made sure pupils made good use of them and were encouraged not to be afraid to speak up. Through these sessions the health promoters engaged the pupils with questions and answers to make sure they understood the essential parts of the mentoring.

HFAW also made an achievement when they were able to initiate a discussion of teacher's and solid responsibility over the mentoring and protection of these young girls during these vulnerable ages. Some of the youth whose parents are health and human rights promoters felt very humbled to be working to change the lives of their children and many more when just a year ago they could not have imagined it.

An additional achievement is the participation of men. These men have matured from being antagonistic to women empowerment to becoming staunch supporters. They have gained tremendous confidence in working toward resolving gender issues. Their understanding that their families are better when women are supported is transforming the way women's issues are understood in this community. The backlash that could have emanated from the women's empowerment program has been drastically reduced especially due to the fact that men are speaking for women to share childcare responsibilities with women.



This health promoter in pick school uniform dramatized to the youth how to say no to unwanted sex



5. Networking:

HFAW networked with other organizations to create supportive partnerships. In this regard HFAW registered for Kenya Consortium for ngos (Kenco) membership to benefit from mentoring opportunities including getting tutorials in strengthening accounting, human resource development and program implementation structures. HFAW joined various organizations such as Women empowerment link and Gender violence recovery center in a public campaign advocating for domestic violence bill 2013. Additionally, HFAW graduates participated in the alternative rites of passage (AROP) program organized by Turning Point Counseling Solutions, an organization focusing on counseling for among others, victims of HIV/AIDS and sexual assault. The aim of the AROP was to mentoring girls to avoid FGM and gain modern skills and spiritual growth.

6. Resource Seeking:

One of the most critical achievements through the MWYC grant is the moral encouragement it gave HFAW staff. The MWYC grant is so special to HFAW staff because as a young organization it was important that someone believed in our work. HFAW was therefore motivated and worked diligently to seek resources for 2015 and future programs. We submitted various grants for 2015 programs such as to African Women Development Fund (AWDF), Ford foundation, Canada Fund and Segal Family Foundation (SFF). Out of these applications and due to this positive energy Segal Family Foundation has accepted our application and has done their first part of their due diligence this January 2015. We are waiting for the next steps of their diligence and will inform MWYC of any positive developments. The MWYC grant was also critical because it allowed some stipends payment to three staff which enormously encouraged them to focus more on the work rather than worry about their survival issues. There staff were therefore able to focus on networking with other organizations and applied for training opportunities. Additionally, HFAW is working to streamline an online marketing system for African and women's art products to supplement our resources and increase our self-sufficiency.



HFAW Lisper in blue pants and Hellen next to her left collaborates with other civil societies to pass domestic violence bill of 2013

7. Capacity Building:

HFAW puts a lot of value in training its staff. In this regard office associate and program manager participated in a community health workers for early childhood development training aimed at helping health promoters to help incorporate parents to child stimulation education for children aged 0-5 years during home visits. This training will help HFAW staff train our health promoters learn how to use the opportunities they have interacting with parents in helping them stimulate their children's education from an early age. Additionally, HFAW CEO was accepted into the highly competitive women's leadership training sponsored by the Global Women Network Leadership (www.gwnl.org) planned for May 3, 2015. This program will offer HFAW an 8 day direct training and 6 months Skype mentoring to help us expand our opportunities.

Next Steps: Our biggest ambition is to ensure that we expand the impact of this program to more locations and schools. This is not just training; it is an intervention. The depth of education conducted in participatory process touching on key community issues such as youth and children's issues, gender violence, FGM, HIV/AIDS alcoholism, poverty, human rights and the interrelationships between these issues and consequent solutions has worked as a fundamental awakening avenue for this community. HFAW, new facilitators, the county leadership who are aware of our program and the outsiders who have heard about us yearn for an expansion of this program to 4 localities, and schools. We have applied to SFF to support the 4 location agenda. We hope the MWCY will support our school agenda. As we train we want to do so in ways that literary tackles the problems according to people's prioritization. In addition, we are aware that this work will not be successful without serious capacity building and strengthening of our structures. We also want to sharpen our resource mobilization process and the associated accountability process as well as our networking and collaborations with organizations of similar agenda.



HFAW staff Mary helping in building the health promoter's capacity through role plays



Challenges:

Our program implementation is not without challenges. The transport cost from Nairobi to the rural village and within the village takes a toll on our meagre resources. We have an enthusiastic community that is helping to create ownership of the project to the extent and desire to expand the transformative project to more locations and schools. However, our financial resources are limited. We are working diligently to build our resource base and staff capacities.

How the IMWCY Can Help

HFAW is deeply indebted to the support we have received from the IMWCY and Epes Foundation. IMWCY's grant has been instrumental in all the accomplishments listed in this report. We hope that IMWCY will consider giving us additional financial support to assist us continues deepening our next step of this work. Epes supported HFAW by capacity building its staff and the initial funding from our supporters on global giving helped us graduate 30 health and human rights promoters. IMWYC supported us to mentor these graduates to become effective facilitators. The global giving funding supplimented this grant to ensure that work at Gisebei primary school was conducted. It will be enormously helpful if we can have an opportunity to put these facilitators to work to transform their communities. We are seeking financial assistance from the IMWYC to support similar interventions within schools. Even though our financial needs are many as HFAW is a young organization we are requesting a grant of \$35,000 to support one year trainings for schools. Please note that IMWCY has total discretion on how much grant to support HFAW with.

With this grant HFAW will work to outreach to community schools for a bigger impact. During this period, we will be able to reach to at least 5 schools with over 4500 pupils, 150 teachers, and 1500 parents in this Borabu Sub-county with anti-fgm messages, child abuse prevention messages, and early pregnancy prevention messages and children and youth rights. We believe that the se interventions holds key to success as it targets the 3 key players in change making in the child's/youth's life and that is the child,/youth, teacher and parent. In each of the schools we will involve local and county leadership. This will ensure continuity of ownership of the program with local people who will take lead in addressing their problems. Should we be fortunate to receive the Segal Family Foundation support, we will continue to deepen our work of advancing trainings on health and humna rights to additional locations. Key to our success lies with holding ourselves accountable as HFAW staff to our community, our funder IMWCY, our mentor organization Epes and other funders who will join hands to assist us.



Health promoters showing FGM/cut documentary



Kids seeing FGM/cut for the first time

Conclusion

HFAW's work in rural Kenya is extra-ordinary. We feel the urgency and heightened interest from the ordinary women in the village. We think that our project is shifting the paradigm, changing people's mindset from waiting for help from outside to becoming real agents of change. Both HFAW and the new facilitators have the passion and determination to transform their community.

HFAW, health promoters and some teachers at Gisebei Primary



Evans says he can now show love in public to his wife. Lookin gon County Leader Jackson Mogusu

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