
Context Matters

— RESEARCH GRANTS —

2020-2023 Context Matters Awarded Grants (Round 3)

Research title: Leveraging coaching to improve sexual health literacy among teachers in informal urban settlements in Nairobi, Kenya

Principle Investigator: Dr. Purity Nthiga, PhD., Kenyatta University, Kenya

Co-researchers:

Dr. Sheila Wamahiu, Jaslika Consulting: SRHR/Child Rights Expert

Ms. Deborah Kimathi, Dignitas

Research location: Dandora and Kawangware, Nairobi County Kenya

Research dates: April 2021 – January 2023

Dr. Purity Nthiga, PhD., is currently a lecturer in the Department of English and Linguistics, Kenyatta University, and a co-associate at Jaslika Consulting. Dr. Nthiga has over eighteen years' experience in the education sector as an academic, researcher, trainer, and materials developer. She is also an experienced teacher at both high school and university level; she supervises many undergraduate and post graduate students at Kenyatta University. Dr. Nthiga research explores the areas of English as a Second Language, language education, discourse analysis, gender, language and education, education in emergencies, and literacy. She has presented various papers in both local and international conferences. She holds a PhD and Master of Arts degrees both in Applied Linguistics from Kenyatta University, Kenya.

Summary: According to the APHRC status report on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents living in slums in Kenya, much has been done to provide insights into adolescents' SRH outcomes in the country, but little attention has been paid to understanding and meeting the SRH challenges and needs specific to adolescents living in resource-poor urban settings. Teachers are critical players in the education of children in all areas of life including sexuality and sexual health because they are an important source of information and counseling for children and adolescents. However, sex, sexual health, and sexuality are often considered taboo subjects and teacher development programs pay little attention to the sexual health literacy of teachers. As such, teachers are sent out unprepared to create safe contexts that allow learners to explore, understand, and appreciate gender and sexuality related issues. What this means is that teachers must confront sexuality issues in schools and in their communities based on diverse sources of knowledge, using different approaches, and crowded by their own biases.

Jaslika and Dignitas will implement an action research project to identify and address the sexual health literacy gaps of upper primary in-service teachers in two informal settlements in Nairobi. Building upon an ongoing coaching project by Dignitas-Kenya, the research will address the importance of strengthening teachers' knowledge and skills through in-service coaching and mentorship as a strategy for empowering adolescent girls. This project will be guided by a

combination of participatory and critical research methods that will provide opportunities for in-service teachers to express and analyse their sexual health literacy levels and then propose ways to improve their knowledge of content and the methods of sharing SHR information with adolescent learners. The teachers' reflective experiences will be assessed against expert knowledge and a literature review to co-create guidelines and methodologies for effectiveness. Discussions, interactions, and sharing of knowledge and learning will be mainstreamed across the activities to enable comprehensive empowerment.

The research will address the knowledge gaps through coaching teachers using evidence-based and accurate information on sexual health literacy, enabling the teachers to contribute to the sexual wellbeing of learners. The results generated from this project will also contribute to the larger body of evidence on the practice of sexual and reproductive health education in general. It is also expected that the results of this research project will also influence the development of grounded policy and a prototype for the education sector to consider as an innovative response to the SRH challenges in resource constrained environments. Overall, it is anticipated that improved literacy in SRH and in SRH education shall improve the empowerment of girls and women as well as advance gender equality in general.