
Context Matters

— RESEARCH GRANTS —

2022-2024 Context Matters Awarded Grants (Round 4)

Research title: Unearthing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Literacy Crisis for Adolescents in Rural Primary Schools in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya

Principle Investigator: Dr. George Andima, Kisii University, Kenya

Co-researcher: Prof. Colomba Kaburi Muriungi (Female), Chuka University, Kenya

Research dates: January 2022 – September 2023

Summary: Building on a previous Context Matters Research Grant project, Dr. Andima and Prof. Muriungi will be examining the factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy – one of the main health challenges facing the young people in the Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya. Specifically, they will be exploring the types of Sexual and Reproductive Health Literacy Materials (SRHLMs) available to teachers and pupils, how these materials are accessed, and whether adolescents (10-15 year-olds) are able to comprehend the messages contained in the materials.

Kisii Central Sub-County is one of the most densely populated sub-counties in rural Kenya with a population growth rate of 2.75% compared to 2.28% national population growth rate, according to the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD, 2017). Records available from several health facilities in Kisii County indicate that teen pregnancies are on the rise (Abuga, 2019). The fact that Kisii Central Sub-County continues to experience a surge in the number of teen pregnancies is a serious concern among health professionals, educationists, politicians, and researchers.

This situation is caused by lack of information on and/or limited access to SRH information and services, along with other factors such as sexual and gender violence, drug and substance abuse, and lack of support systems as noted in the NCPD report (2017). A CODE funded collaborative research study between Prof. Colomba Muriungi (Chuka University) and Dr. Andima George (Kisii University) in Tharaka Nithi County (2018-2019), observed that girls' lack of exposure to knowledge on menstruation and SRH information and services, contributed towards high levels of teen pregnancies.

The results of this new study will assist Kisii Central Sub-County policy makers when reviewing SHR literacy policies by providing data and findings on the efficacy and availability of SRHLMs

for 10-15 year-olds. This has the potential to contribute to curbing early pregnancies and other sexual health related challenges in the area. Controlling or absence of early pregnancies will enable many girls to stay in school and hence contribute to the attainment of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to achieve equitable quality education for all. The findings will also be critical in providing valuable data in designing future SRH interventions especially in resource limited contexts.

Dr. Andima George has a post-doctoral fellowship from Aga Khan University, Kenya. He holds a PhD in language education from Kenyatta University, Kenya. He is a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Media Studies at Kisii University, Kenya. Andima has worked extensively in early grade literacy interventions among the most disadvantaged communities in Kenya. Andima has wide experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating program efficacy in education and early childhood development interventions. Andima specializes in Early Grade Literacy, Gender issues in education and Language development. He has supervised and mentored many students in his field of specialization. He has a wide experience in research and has authored several papers and made presentations in a number of academic regional and international conferences. He is a facilitator for instructional training programs for university lecturers without an educational background.

Prof. Colomba K. Muriungi holds a Master of Arts in Gender Studies in African Literature and a doctorate in African Children's literature from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She is a Professor of African Literature in the Department of Humanities, and the Director, Quality Assurance at Chuka University, Kenya. Colomba specializes in Gender Studies, Cultural Studies and Children's Literature. She has a vast experience in research and has published thirty-four (34) journal articles, two book chapters, and has presented over forty (40) papers at regional and international conferences and workshops in her areas of specialization. Colomba has also supervised twenty-three (23) students at Masters and PhD Level to graduation and reviewed several papers for publication. Additionally, Colomba has previously won research grants, some of which have enabled her to participate in a number of community and women empowerment programs in her rural home in Tharaka Nithi County in Kenya.