
Context Matters

— RESEARCH GRANTS —

2022-2024 Context Matters Awarded Grants (Round 5)

Research title: Digital Literacy As Tool for Empowerment: A Case of Teenage Mothers Living in Kenya's Urban Slums

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Co-researcher: Mr. Charles Muriu, Program Manager, Plan International Kenya

Research location: Nairobi County, Nairobi, Kenya

Research dates: March 2023 – November 2024

Research Summary

Kenya's constitution of 2010, along with the Basic Education Act of 2013, enshrines the right to free and compulsory basic education for all children. Furthermore, the Children Act of 2022 defines children as those under 18, with the right to education regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex, disability, or culture. Despite these provisions, teenage pregnancies among school-going girls in Kenya have led to school dropouts, hindering their right to education. These pregnancies often force girls to be out of school for extended periods.

In response, the Ministry of Education introduced the National School Re-entry Guidelines in 2020, aimed at managing the re-entry of teenage mothers after childbirth. However, these young mothers still need support to make up for the missed education. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been identified as tools that enhance equitable and accessible education in Kenya. However, the implementation of ICTs faces challenges, including the need for infrastructure, equipment, and connectivity in all schools. To ensure that children who cannot access education due to geographical factors (such as living in informal settlements) or life events (like teenage pregnancy) have a way to access education, available and accessible technology must be considered. The government of Kenya also recognizes Alternative Providers of Basic Education and Training (APBET) as a means to extend education to learners beyond traditional school settings, often referred to as informal learning.

Consequently, this study seeks to identify the technologies accessible to teenage mothers outside the formal school environment, explore the challenges they face in using such technologies for education, and investigate how tools like teacher-recorded video lessons can provide educational access to teenage mothers. The restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have offered an opportunity to reconsider how technology can be harnessed to enhance teaching and learning, reaching students both within and beyond the school environment. This study primarily focuses on how video recordings made by teachers can enhance learning among teenage mothers, ensuring they cover syllabus content even outside of traditional school settings.

This study will be conducted in the urban slums of Nairobi County, Kenya, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Purposive sampling of rescue centers with cases of teenage pregnancies will be identified for the study. Data will be collected through interviews and tests to assess students' experiences and performance in various subjects. The research is expected to contribute to enhanced learning outcomes for teenage mothers and provide valuable

insights for policymakers as they work to address the gaps in the implementation of the 1994 School Re-entry Policy for Girls and the 2020 National School Re-entry guidelines.

Dr. Beth Ngugi is a lecturer in the Department of Humanities at Murang'a University of Technology. She holds a PhD in applied Linguistics from Laikipia University in Kenya and a Master of Applied Linguistics from Kenyatta University in Kenya, giving her a strong foundation in language and education. Dr Ngugi has over fifteen years of teaching experience, having taught at both high school and university levels, where she has made an impact on her students in linguistic development. Furthermore, she has supervised postgraduate students at Mount Kenya University. Dr Ngugi's research is centered on English language teaching, gender, and multilingual education. She has presented various papers at conferences. Dr. Beth Ngugi's work aims at promoting inclusive language instruction methods and explores the intersection between language, gender, and cultural diversity.

Charles Muriu is a Kenyan-based Educationist and Project Management Professional with over 20 years of experience in child rights programming in both development and humanitarian contexts. Currently working with Plan International – a child rights organization committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalized children (especially girls) and advancing gender equality.

Charles is a certified Project Manager and holds an M.A. in Development Studies and a Post Graduate Diploma in Planning and Management of Development Projects. He has had the opportunity to undertake research, advocacy and programmes using the gender transformative approach contributing to the realization of children's rights within an enabling social and policy environment.