

College: BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
Project Title: 'Kaa Rada' (Kaa rada is a local slang for Be Aware)
Project Leader: MILLICENT AUMA
Location: SIMBI PRIMARY SCHOOL, KENDU BAY COUNTY, KENYA
Project Date Range: June 8th, 2019 to August 10th, 2019

Background

One of the main drawbacks to women empowerment initiatives in Kenya is the normalcy with which Gender Based Violence (GBV) is treated. Gender Based Violence is a prevalent phenomenon all over the world and can be defined as "a large variety of crimes committed like rape, sexual harassment, stalking, human trafficking, domestic abuse, genital mutilation, and forced prostitution all based on one's gender" (Wikipedia). While global statistics show that 30% of women experience GBV before the age of 18, more than 38.7% of women in Kenya experience GBV by the time they are 15 years old. The most common form of GBV being rape by intimate partners (37.5%) and domestic violence (National Crime Research Centre, 2014).

Although the number of men experiencing GBV in the country has been seen to rise in the last half decade, women continue to comprise the largest portion of GBV victims and survivors in Kenya (38%) (WHO 2016). According to LVCT health 2015 report, girls aged between 12-17 form the largest population of GBV survivors (41%) followed by 18-49-year-old women (32%) and girls below 11 years (24%) (Kenyan Woman, 2015). However, only 15.2% of female victims report these cases to any authority or talk to someone about it (National Crime Research Centre, 2014).

Nyanza province, where I come from, in Kenya is one of the most affected regions. Reports from the Kenya Police indicate that 7 to 10 incidents of defilement are reported daily. However, the residents barely ever report cases of rape and domestic violence which are the most rampant form of GBV in the region. This is because of the cultural norms that encourage male dominance over women. For example, the residents believe in the idea of men disciplining their wives with more than 50% of the populace holding on to the belief that it is a man's traditional right to discipline his wife (National Crime Research Centre, 2014). Such chauvinistic ideas silence women from speaking up or even defending themselves against GBV and make them vulnerable. Girls growing up in abusive households learn to suffer in silence whenever assaulted because that is what their mothers, sisters or aunts did. This silence is largely aided by the fact that they do not know who to turn to for help. Some women do not even know how to identify such GBV acts against them.

The Project

Kaa Rada is a proactive GBV prevention program that encourages open discussions of GBV in a safe space for teenage girls aged between 12 and 17 years. Statistics indicate that it is at this age that girls are most vulnerable to GBV. *Kaa Rada* aims to reduce this narrative by training and sensitizing teenage girls within this age bracket on GBV and how to counter it.

Home should be a place where people feel safe. For these girls *Kaa Rada* will be a step toward creating that safe space at home. Internal peace and preventing trauma that results from GBV are the goals of this project and its connection to peace building. The program aims at educating teenage girls on forms of GBV, sensitizing them on how to react to GBV, and available channels for reporting GBV or seeking help besides teaching them basic self-defense techniques. Through this project, teenage girls will also be educated on sexual and reproductive health. This is aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies occasioned by either sexual assault or lack of sexual health information.

The main objective of project is to de-normalize acts of GBV such as wife battering, rape and psychological abuse teenage girls experience in Kendu Bay County. As most of the students in this area come from homes where such cases are prevalent, it is necessary and important to teach them that GBV is a vice and an unacceptable crime that should not form part of societal norm.

Objectives

1. Create a safe space for teenage girls to openly ask questions, express their sentiments and experiences with GBV.
2. Sensitize teenage girls on Gender Based violence by informing them about all forms of GBV and how to identify them.
3. Train teenage girls on self-defense techniques to use to distract abusers and escape abusive situations.
4. Inform the teenagers about available formal and informal channels to report GBV or seek help.

Implementation

In partnership with Youth Arts Development and Entrepreneurship Network (YADEN) East Africa, I will conduct project *Kaa Rada* at Simbi Primary School in Kendu Bay County, Kenya, over a period of 10 weeks. YADEN East Africa is a non-governmental organization whose model is founded on creation of sustainable systems and structures through which young people can define themselves and build strong identities. The organization is at the forefront of advocating against challenges that youth, especially young women, experience such as GBV.

There will be weekly meetings of 4-5 hours on Saturdays with a group of approximately one hundred 7th and 8th grade teenage girls from the school. The students will be exposed to material that explain the vices that make up GBV, its possible impacts on their lives as victims or witnesses, and measures that can be taken to counter these inhumane activities. To ensure effective skill development, I will hire two certified martial arts trainers recommended by YADEN East Africa to facilitate the self-defense training sessions. This training is not designed to train the girls in combat, rather it will teach them how to extricate themselves from abusive situations. YADEN has committed to support the program by assigning two of its counselling team staff to facilitate open discussions about GBV. The two will be responsible for group discussions and informing the students about available support resources for GBV victims. The course of *Kaa Rada* will further be supported by a volunteer graduate student who will facilitate group projects. The project team will be expected to meet once before the start of the project to review role allocation and discuss project goals, after the fourth week to discuss progress and once at the end of the project to debrief.

The first week's visit at the school is set aside for the *Kaa Rada* crew to meet and train the supporting teachers at Simbi Primary school. The trained teachers will be required to attend at least three sessions of the project to aid with the sustainability plan of *Kaa Rada*. Consequent weeks will be student centered and each week will be allocated a topic. After the introductory meeting, the project will immediately commence with group formations and goal settings. Students will be informed about their choice to commit to the project and roles in their groups. Weekly topics will be introduced at the beginning of each meeting. Each session will end with a quiz; oral or written (handbooks will be provided). The objective of the quizzes is to ensure the teenage girls internalize concepts learnt during the session. As a policy, the students will be informed about their right to only share what they are comfortable with and the responsibility to respect each other's privacy. There will also be direct contribution of the students as each team will be required to come up with a project that will be presented at the end of ten weeks to the entire team. Each group will be provided with \$75 to cater from project expenses.

Volunteer GBV survivors and professionals working in Anti-GBV initiatives will be invited to share their experiences and advice for teenage girls in school on proactive measures against GBV. Most discussions will be held in small groups to ensure effectiveness and reach.

Sustainability

Kaa Rada intends to adequately train the first cohort as trainers. Skills acquired by the first cohort will enable them to train subsequent cohorts. We will establish a club within Simbi Primary School that will be sponsored by YADEN with supervision from a trained teacher. This model is self-sustaining and ensures continuity of the club once established. YADEN will periodically offer refresher courses to advance *Kaa Rada*'s cause. We will stock the school with books, DVDs, pamphlets and self-defense manuals for future training. *Kaa Rada* will also develop an initiative that allows the club members to attend conferences about GBV in the country to further the course of the project.