



UGUNJA DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE 2023 ANNUAL SCHOOL HEALTH CLUB PROJECT REPORT.

Background.

Ugunja Development Initiative is a youth-led Community-Based Organization aiming at working with vulnerable communities of youth through capacity strengthening and exploiting opportunities. During the year 2023, Ugunja Development Initiative implemented seven school health club sessions, three community based sessions of youth age 14-23 and missed two months' sessions. The project aimed at empowering adolescents and youths to making informed decisions and build their self-worth through an interactive learning approach in twenty-two schools of Ugunja Sub County.

Through collaboration with local stakeholders, health providers and community leaders, the follow-up project established a comprehensive and supportive environment for life-skills education. It recognizes the evolving needs of the community and integrates periodic assessments to ensure continued relevance. By fostering a sense of empowerment and agency, the project encourages individuals to take an active role in their sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, the initiative emphasizes the creation of resources, local partnerships and integration of SRHR education into existing community programs, contributing to the long-term sustainability of positive outcomes. Overall, the follow-up project serves as a dynamic and adaptable approach to furthering SRHR impact, addressing specific challenges and nurturing a community-centered model for informed decision-making.

Objectives.

1. Hold an inception meeting with sub-county decision-makers on the project extension.
2. Strengthen community and school health club sessions within twenty- two Junior Secondary Schools.
3. Increase champions' knowledge through quarterly trainings on different sexual reproductive health and life skills topics.
4. Increase health clinic personnel and school health patrons' knowledge on basic counseling and adolescents' dynamics.
5. Promote community service and enhance awareness and talent building among the learners.
6. Increase learners' awareness on menstrual hygiene management information and access to products during MHM day.
7. Increase school health club project indicators through documentation by health club patrons.

Methodology.

Testimonials, role-plays, outdoor, case studies and participatory learning activities and discussion formed the basis of the program during the interactive sessions with over one thousand adolescents and youths. Participants were responsive to the concepts of the activities of the session and indicated a commitment to sharing information with other peer youths.

Project achievements.

The overall project annual output from January to December 2023 was 88 % of the set objectives both at school and community. The 88% achievement was due to highly developed interest in learning new things, reputation of UDI of having fun activities, good coordination by caregivers, church leaders and chiefs and success stories of school health clubs among other adolescents. Further, the school health club active collaboration with patrons and clinical personnel and sub county heads of education and health also highly contributed to the success. These collaborative efforts not only enriched the knowledge and leadership capacities of club members but also facilitated a holistic approach to life skills education.

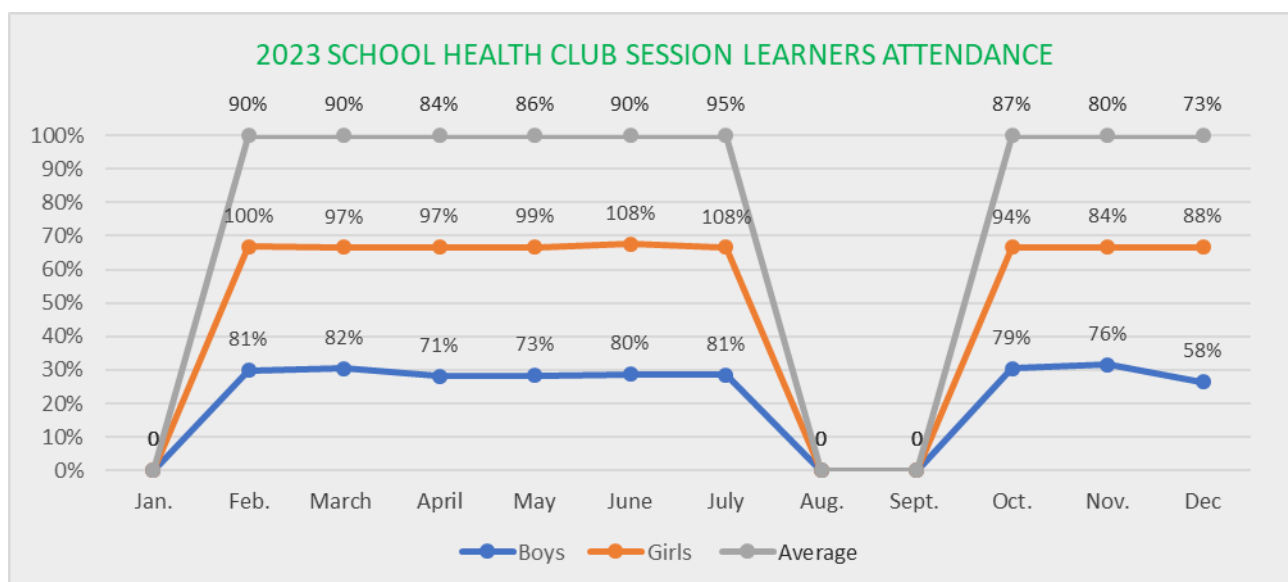


UDI recognized the pivotal role teachers play in the holistic development of students, particularly in navigating sensitive topics related to reproductive health, sex education and contraceptives. Through targeted training teachers and clinical personnel were trained with skills and knowledge to enhance their capacity to understand and the approaches towards addressing adolescents with a non-judgmental attitude. This approach not only enhanced teacher's confidence in understanding and addressing students' unique needs but also created a culture of openness within respective schools. This synergy ensured a cohesive integration of guiding and counseling principles into the broader educational framework, reinforcing a sustainable and supportive approach to students' emotional and reproductive well-being.

- Over 80% school patrons reported increased learners' behavior change as this project contribution in the respective schools.
- 86% of school patrons and clinical personnel trained on basic counseling adolescents and youth dynamics and health club management.
- 70% schools documenting and reporting key project indicators especially; SGBV cases, teen pregnancies, STIs, drugs and substance abuse, menstruation-related complications and management in the twenty-two schools.
- Over 462 adolescent girls received sanitary pads during the project period.

Through testimonials from both the school patrons, champions and club and non-club members during the sessions indicated that the school health club project is ideal and impactful mostly in addressing multiple social and cultural factors and improving the capacities of adolescents and youths to making good choices and building their leadership as well as providing a safe environment both in school and in the community. The analysis of the achievements on learners and the school as documented during the implementation period is provided below;

a) Learners' attendance during the project period –January-December 2023.



Averagely 86% of the targeted adolescents and youths in school successfully participated and attended the health club session with girls contributing high at 95% and boys 73%. Throughout the year, learners were trained sensitized and mentored in various sexual reproductive health related subjects including menstrual hygiene management, contraceptives, HIV and other STIs, teenage pregnancy prevention, sexual and gender based violence, condom protection from STIs including HIV, drugs and substance abuse and sexual gender based violence among other subjects. Learners did not only gain essential knowledge about physical and mental well-being but also cultivated practical skills for a healthy lifestyle including improved academic performance and personal lives.



Generally, from the discussion, adolescents and youths highlighted poverty, lack of good parental care, drugs and substance abuse, negative peer influence, lack of self-control, ignorance, negative social media influence, curiosity and experimentation, insufficient knowledge on contraceptives and sexual and gender-based violence as their major challenges affecting young people in the community. Consequently, the challenges highlighted has a number of effects including; teen pregnancies, school dropout, early marriage, HIV and other STI infections; community isolation due to reduced self-esteem; stigma and discrimination, and stress leading to depression and death/ suicide.

From the interactive sessions, adolescents and youth developed hope with positive mindset on approach to the dynamic challenges they undergo on daily basis. Some of the resolutions based on the testimonies included; consistent and correct use of condoms and other contraceptives, abstaining from sex, having good role models, enhanced awareness on teenage pregnancy prevention, good parenting and use of life skills to make an informed decision about adolescents' lives, positive behaviour change, develop self-control.

Further, adolescents and youths expressed their concerns and controversial subject of contraceptives which was evidence that many of them still did not have correct information about. Similarly, adults also suffer from knowledge inadequacy around contraceptives thus low contraceptive uptake in the county. During the sessions at community during the school holidays, there was increased demand for contraceptives especially condom where we distributed a total of three thousand and eighty-six male condoms to the youths to protect themselves from both disease contraction and also early pregnancies.

b) Project impact in schools.

The school health club not only reported positive effects on learners but also highlighted several impacts across different schools. These included improvements in both learners' and teachers' hygiene practices, strengthened relationships between learners and teachers, heightened documentation of various cases, decreased school absenteeism and a positive shift in the management of the school health club. Additionally, the club demonstrated an improved ability to handle the dynamics of adolescents and youth among teachers. There were enhanced referral cases such as STIs between school and health clinics with enhanced prioritization and management with privacy.

Teachers acknowledged and reported improved learners' performance with health club contributing significantly. The engagement of learners in community service has experienced significant augmentation, reflecting a broader and more proactive commitment to contributing positively to the community. This expanded participation underscores a collective effort to foster a sense of social responsibility among students. The project also engaged schools and learners on the importance of engaging in various community services including, improving sanitation within various schools and tree-planting activities throughout this project period. In addition, t50% of the schools have established health club kitchen gardens where they grow different traditional vegetables and sell to school and use the money to for supporting both club and non-club needy girls with sanitary pads, club members' personal essentials thus reducing the dependency and vulnerability.

c) Project impact on the community

During the year 2023, UDI also documented a profound impact of the school health club project in community especially its influence on various aspects of well-being and development of adolescents and youths. Access to accurate and inclusive sexual reproductive health subjects and equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to help them improve their decision making capacity including leadership. This has significantly contributed to the overall health of the adolescents and youths in the community including increased uptake of contraceptives thus reducing early pregnancies.

Through continuous school and community interactive empowerment sessions, the project has also contributed in the preventing of sexually transmitted infections. The comprehensive sexual and reproductive health including life skills education has highly contributed to increased knowledge and skills especially on safe sexual practices, importance of regular screening and the use of protection methods. This has not only protected individuals from the health risks associated with STIs but also helps in preventing the wider transmission within the community.



Unexpected outcome.

1. Enhanced documenting, reporting and referral of SGBV cases, teen pregnancies, STIs, drugs and substance abuse, menstruation-related challenges and management.
2. Improved behavior change and enhanced ability and interest in learning.
3. Improved academic performance of school health club members including champions.
4. High expression of the interest and desire to join the club.

Project Impact;

i) Learners.

1. Increased learners' confidence and openly discussion sexual issues with opposite sex partners including parents and teachers.
2. Increased behavior changes from both club and non-club members across the schools.
3. Reduced absenteeism among school girls as a result of access to sanitary products.
4. Increased confidence, self-esteem among students seeking a space for dialogue with teachers about WASH, sexual reproductive health issues including participation in class resulting in improved performance among club members in most schools.
5. Increased cases of STIs, drugs and substance abuse due to increased documentation and reporting.
6. Improved personal and environmental hygiene among club members and champions.
7. Natured pragmatic leadership evident through improved self-esteem among champions and club members and subsequent influence on non-club learners.

ii) Teachers and school.

1. Improved teachers' knowledge on health club management and techniques for dealing with adolescents' dynamics.
2. Enhanced relationships between teachers and learners in school.
3. Improved water sanitation and hygiene including trash disposal and management in schools.
4. Reduced cases of teen pregnancies, drugs and substance abuse, and STIs.
5. Reduced incidences and cases of indiscipline cases among learners.

Conclusion.

The school health club project has significantly advanced the mission of promoting well-being in this crucial domain. Through targeted interventions and a commitment to inclusivity, the project has made substantial strides in raising awareness, providing access to essential services and fostering a supportive environment. The incorporation of evidence-based practices and collaboration with key stakeholders has significantly contributed to the huge impact. However, sustainability of this project is essential through adoption and funded the department of health and education for continuous increased knowledge and skills to enhance decision making and improve leadership capacities of adolescents and youths.

Challenges.

1. Inadequate funding to fully support and scale up the project.
2. Retrogressive social and cultural practices.
3. Inadequate facilitation materials to improve on the facilitation.
4. Most adolescents have limited information and knowledge on sexual reproduction.



Recommendations

1. Training and continued mentorship to new teachers on basic health club management, counseling skills and sexual reproduction issues.
2. Accelerate information and services on sexual reproductive health and rights, especially during the school long holidays targeting all adolescents and youths in the respective sub-locations.
3. Support for vulnerable girls' sanitary pads and underpants for both girls and boys.
4. Increased funding to improve the school water sanitation and hygiene.

GALLERY:



Fig 1: stakeholders meeting during school health club project inception meeting.



Fig 2: Learners at Ulwani, Luoka and Sigomere during club session discussion and presentation.



Fig 3: Hhealth club patrons and health care workers during basic and guiding and counselling training.



Fig 4: champions engaging during the monthly training on life skills at Equator special school.



Fig 5: Learners of Simenya secondary during menstrual and hygiene management celebration

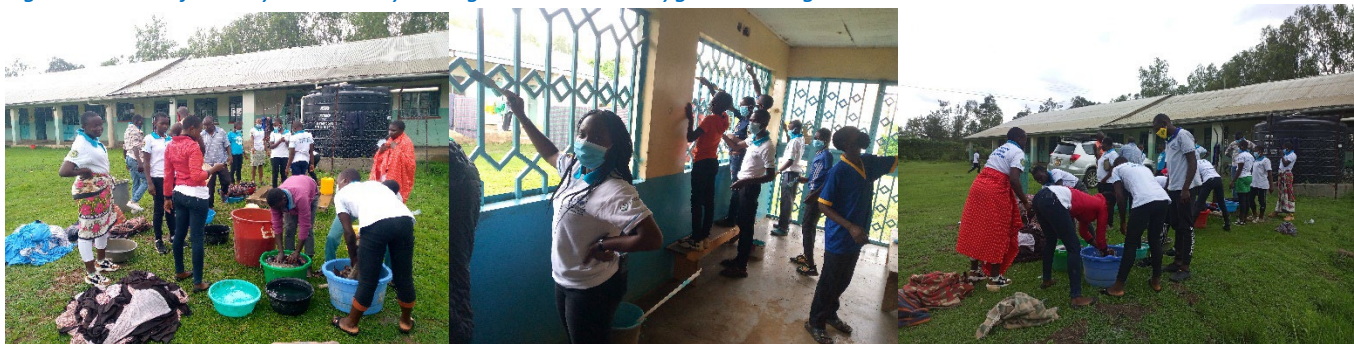


Fig 6: Champions engaged in community service at Equator special service.



Fig 7: School health Club & no club Adolescents & youths during the community health club sessions on drug and substance abuse including contraceptives.





Fig.8: School health club and non-club sharing experiences on drug and substance abuse during the November community health club sessions.



Fig.9: UDI rep., participant & Health care provider moderating sessions during community sensitization forum on teen pregnancy & contraceptives.



Fig.10: Plenary session with adolescents and youth in December during sensitization forum on teen pregnancy & contraceptives.

