Youth First Kenya: Evaluation of an Evidence-based Resilience Programme on Psychosocial Wellbeing and Education in Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi

EE4A
Evidence-based Education Reforms for Sustainable National Transformation

Presented by Karanja Justus Muraya

Authors: Katherine Sachs Leventhal, a Karanja Justus Muraya, b Joyce Kingori, c Lisa DeMaria, a Milka Waruguru, c James Wallunya, b Jane Nungari Njuguna, c Evalyne Simaloi, b Emily Kamene, b Mary Wambui, d Steve Leventhal a

a CorStone, Baltimore, US; b SOWED Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya; c BasicNeedsBasicRights Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya; d Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi, Kenya
Shifting Global Focus in Education Sector

Growing global recognition:

- Focus on academics is insufficient to support learning
- Must also support life skills, social-emotional skills, transferable skills, 21st century skills, soft skills, mental and social wellbeing
Youth First (YF)

• Evidence-based teacher-delivered health & resilience model researched & developed by **CorStone** (USA)
• Successfully piloted in India with 100,000+ pupils
• Currently at the scale up stage in 26,000 public primary covering 2.6 Millions adolescent pupils (PPP –GOI/CS)
• Studies in India Indicate that YF improves mental & physical health, & social wellbeing resulting in improved education performance
Youth First Kenya (YFK)

- Is a partnership project between CorStone, SOWED Kenya and Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya, & TSC & Ministry of Education
- Adapted in 2017, YFK targets at risk adolescent pupils between the ages 12-14 transitioning from primary to secondary schools
- Currently YFK is undergoing the scaled (4:9:25) piloting & trials in three phases in rural public primary schools in ASAL regions of Kajiado & Tharaka Nithi Counties
Youth First Kenya: A Partnership

Rural government schools and teachers in Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi Counties conduct Youth First Kenya with pupils in Class 7 and 8.

Non-profit in Kenya that seeks to improve mental health. Main point of contact for Youth First Kenya in Tharaka Nithi County.

Non-profit headquartered in Baltimore (US). Conducts programs to improve health and education for youth worldwide. Has developed and conducted Youth First among 100,000+ children in India. Technical lead.

CorStone

BasicNeeds BasicRights Kenya

Non-profit in Kenya that seeks to empower marginalized populations. Main point of contact for Youth First Kenya in Kajiado County.

SOWED Kenya

Rural government schools and teachers in Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi Counties conduct Youth First Kenya with pupils in Class 7 and 8.

Intervention permission granted by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi County Governments. Ethical study oversight granted by Chuka University and NACOSTI.
Youth First Kenya Engagement

2017
• Youth First adapted as Youth First Kenya (YFK)
• Small program and measurement pilots in 4 schools

2018
• YFK conducted in 9 schools in Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi counties
• Assessed acceptability, feasibility, pre- to post-test change for pupils and teachers

2019
• YFK conducted in 25 schools in Kajiado and Tharaka Nithi
• Assessed pre- to post-test change for pupils and teachers

Today

Results forthcoming
## Content of Youth First Kenya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Adolescent Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductions and group formation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Resilience for better health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Listening skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Practicing healthy behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Character strengths</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Changes in adolescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Life stories and planning to reach our goals</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Positive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Identifying emotions &amp; emotional awareness</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Taking care of my body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Benefit finding</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Promoting rights and gender constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Managing strong emotions</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Assertive communication</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Substance use and abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Restorative practices for conflict resolution</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Conclusion and celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Group problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Identifying and opposing violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Forgiveness, apologies, and appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resilience is the ability to bounce back, thrive from difficulties & move up to a better place in life & to be a more fulfilled individual.

Resilience is not innate; rather, it’s a set of skills that can be taught & acquired.

Resilience impacts at 3 levels resulting in 5 outcomes.
Research Questions

How do psychosocial, health and educational outcomes of eligible adolescent pupils in YFK schools in ASAL regions change before & after interventions (pre- to post-test)?

How feasible and acceptable is YFK as an adaptable & scaleable model in Kenya?
Study design

Pre/post-test mixed-methods study

Quantitative

- Pre and post questionnaires for all pupils and teachers in programme (n = 208 pupils; n = 17 teachers)
- Assessed demographics, psychosocial wellbeing, physical health, gender equality attitudes, school engagement, pupil-teacher relationships

Qualitative

- In-depth interviews with 8 teachers post-intervention at 8 schools
- Explored experiences, perceptions of training, perceived impact on pupils and teachers
Pre to Post-test Changes (Pupils): Psychosocial Indicators

Improvement in Psychosocial Indicators

- **Resilience**: 21.40%
- **Self-efficacy**: 7.90%
- **Psychological Wellbeing**: 6.10%
- **Social Wellbeing**: 9.90%
- **Gender Equality Attitudes**: -1.40%

**Note**: $n = 208$; *** $p<0.001$; ** $p<0.01$
Pre to Post-test Changes (Pupils): Education Indicators

Improvement in Education Indicators

Student-Teacher Relationships
Perceived Exclusion/Privilege
Classroom Cohesion
Classroom Satisfaction

Note: n = 208; *** p<0.001; ** p<0.01
Pre to Post-test Changes (Teachers): Approaches to Discipline

Teacher Approaches to Discipline in their Classrooms

- Punishing Students: -21.50%
- Providing Students with Recognition and Rewards: +3.40%
- Involving Students in Decision-making: -1.00%
- Hinting (rather than directly asking for better behavior): -10.30%
- Aggression: -14.90%

Note: n = 17; exploratory analysis; statistical significance not calculated due to sample size.
Pre to Post-test Changes (Teachers): Psychosocial and Job-Related Outcomes

Changes in Teacher Psychosocial and Job-Related Outcomes

-10.10% 10.70% 1.70% 4.60% 0.10%

Job-Related Burnout Resilience Teaching Self-Efficacy Mental Health Professional Teacher Behavior

Note: n = 17; exploratory analysis; statistical significance not calculated due to sample size.
Qualitative findings

1. Teacher Preparation & Training
2. Pupil reception
3. Significance in pupil’s lives
4. Support by NGOs
5. Teacher motivation
6. Growth and expansion
Qualitative findings

1. Teacher Preparation and Training
   • Teachers felt well-prepared to facilitate (Transition from teaching)
   • Trainings helped teachers confidently understand and cover topics

2. Pupil reception
   • Although pupils were uncertain about the program at the beginning they received the program positively, & increasingly embraced & owned it

3. Significance in pupil’s lives
   • Both pupils & teachers reported that YFK was important to their lives
   • Pupils felt that YFK helped them focus & shape a brighter future
   • Teachers felt YFK helped the students in; 1) personal development &; 2) academic performance
   • Teachers also felt that YFK helped them in their personal lives
4. Support by Partner NGOs
   • The support supervision model adapted & provided by the partners provided adequate handholding for teachers to conduct sessions

5. Teacher motivation
   • Teachers were motivated to participate in YFK because they saw; 1) benefits for students &; 2) personal benefits for themselves
   • Teachers felt that the concepts in YFK were important and not covered in any other parts of the 8-4-4 curriculum

6. Growth and expansion
   • Pupils and teachers universally called for expansion of YFK to reach more classes and more schools throughout the country
YFK: A Scalable Model for Kenya’s Youth Flourishing in the Face of Challenges

Study supports the feasibility, acceptability, and initial evidence for YFK’s effects.

YFK represents a “resilience” programme, which is a new model for Kenya.

Resilience programmes have great potential in Kenya, with its rapidly changing landscape of opportunities and challenges for youth.

YFK is scalable (the model will be institutionalized in Bihar, India. 26,000 middle schools for 2.6 million pupils/year).
Policy Framework for Nomadic Education

• The policy framework recognizes the myriad of challenges disadvantaging adolescent learners from nomadic pastoralist regions

• Specifically objective one of the policy framework while acknowledging these challenges fails to contextualize the need for resilience building in these regions;

• To realize the goal of universal access to basic education it is important for definition of equity to be broadened to factor in the need for resilience building

• Encourage the adaptation and use of the existing national curricula and training materials in nomadic regions to the local needs and demands in ASAL regions.
Policy Implications

Potential policy synergies particularly within Kenya’s curricular reform (e.g., Competency Based Curriculum; CBC)

• CBC targets 4 competencies
• YFK improves ALL 4 of these competencies
• As a well-tested, scalable model for early adolescents, YFK has potential for integration into the CBC
Thank you