



# **PATHWAYS**

**MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**



**SEMI-ANNUAL**

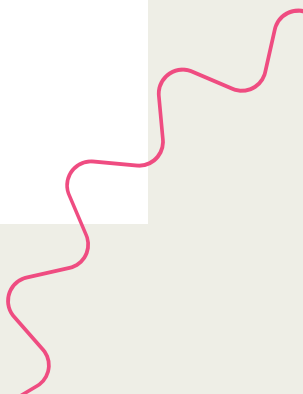

**REPORT**

**JULY 2021**



**“We are a policy and accountability think tank; meaningfully engaging communities on Population, Health, and the Environment.”**

**Pathways (PPI) works to provide a safe space for advocates and communities to meaningfully influence public health and environmental policies through research, training, and capacity strengthening. Pathways (PPI) believes that policy engagement has to shift into new and innovative ideas.**



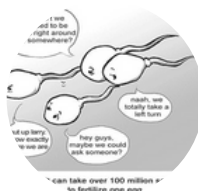


## 06

### Keeping the County Assembly Engaged

## Strength of a Woman!

## 10



## 13

### Just Jokes

## Art is food for the soul: Art Project in Nairobi and Nakuru

## 14



## 16

### Age of Sexual Consent in Kenya

## SMART Advocacy Workshop

## 18



## 20

### Stigma in Youth's Reproductive Health Information and Services

## Periods Do not Pause for Pandemics: International Menstrual Hygiene Day

## 22



## 24

### Youth Against Corruption



## Hey! Wossap! Niaje!

We at Pathways Policy Institute are as fresh as a hot cup of coffee in this July weather, and we love to keep you updated about our activities and projects. Shall we get right into it? Here's what we've been up to during the first half of 2021.

In celebration of International Women's Day, our youth ambassadors set off on a road trip for a cause. For us, this is the most basic, most honest way of celebrating and honoring womanhood - raising awareness about menstrual health through a pad drive at Ngare Naro, Nyahururu. Read more about it in this copy.

You will also read about our 'Periods Do not Pause for Pandemics' stance; which is a conversation in which we have taken center stage. Pathways (PPI) is a policy and accountability think tank on issues of population and health, and we believe that the stigma around menstruation ought to be addressed and we do this by creating safe spaces for engagement and conversation.

You will read about our Art Project, held in Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa. You will also read about our engagement workshops with the Laikipia County Reproductive Health Technical Working Group and the County Assembly Advocacy Forum, which focused on Family Planning and Reproductive Health.

In this semi-annual report, you will also find insightful opinions on the cross-cutting question of corruption, and a social-legal piece on the sexual age of consent in Kenya. Don't you just want to dig in? We won't stop you.... go right ahead.

Enjoy our semi-annual report, and be sure to give us your feedback and comments through our social media links below.

### Editorial Team

**Pathways Policy Institute**





# Message from the Chairperson

This past year has been uniquely difficult, but we ride in the eye of the storm. It is therefore not surprising that as the COVID-19 pandemic was doing its push-ups ready to attack, Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) was also doing its own push-ups to launch.

We are grateful that we achieved all the targets and activities scheduled for the year. This was plausible because other than adjusting to the unprecedented times, we had to hold such activities within the guidelines issued by the government. We have all adapted, grown and learned and so has Pathways Policy Institute.

That being said, we need to examine what has worked and what has gone wrong on a local and global scale and acknowledge where we all might need to listen more keenly, adapt our thinking and change our actions.



For Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) specifically, we are keen to assess how our strategy fared, how people and processes adapted and how quality and commitment to PPI clients has helped them respond, recover and thrive under the strain of extraordinary circumstances. PPI has an opportunity not just to help create awareness in the various counties we work in, but also help re-shape and create a better world.

In this semi-annual report, you will read more about what Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) is doing to help create a better world for the youth, governments and for the planet; guided by the same fundamental values that have helped us so far and emerge stronger.

We also take this time to acknowledge and send our most sincere thanks to our donors; **120under40 Gates Institute, PAI and US Embassy Kenya**. Without your generous support, we would not be able to mark the achievements outlined in this report. We wish you all a second half of the year 2021 full of health and kindness.

**Faith Kaesha**

**Chairperson, Pathways Policy Institute**

## *Adapt. Change. Overcome!*

Life continues to be challenging, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions are however starting to lift. During this time, it is worth noting that many communities have come together to work with our teams and have shown the spirit of 'Ubuntu'.

National and community-based organizations have also come forth to do good, and they should indeed be congratulated for their community spirit and great initiative. Various groups have also offered aid and information to fellow citizens who were left destitute when the lockdowns and restrictions were introduced to counter the spread of COVID-19.



The world is slowly moving into self-reliance and domestic resourcing for community development work. It is not lost to us that due to COVID-19 and the limited resources from donors, institutions, including Pathways Policy Institute have had to adapt to the inevitable changes.

While we continue to pursue grant work, we have a consultancy and capacity strengthening arm for youth and CSOs to ensure sustainability. We will surely weather this COVID-19 storm and come out stronger! Stay healthy and stay safe!

**Solomon Kibue**

**Treasurer, Pathways Policy Institute**

**"Pathways (PPI) believes that the 2020-2030 decade will be driven by organizations that conduct SMART Advocacy on health governance."**

Universal Health Coverage and care will be realized when civil society organizations, together with citizens, identify their key priorities and advocate for the same in national and sub-national policies. PPI is leading the way in conducting SMART Advocacy training to civil society organizations and youth in Kenya for them to develop advocacy priorities and have the skills to map their targets, their influencers and engage them.

# Keeping the County Assembly Engaged



How do you keep a County Government informed and engaged on matters to do with Family Planning and Reproductive Health? You sensitize them. You provide them with evidence-based benefits, demonstrating how prioritization of Reproductive Health could lead to better livelihoods for communities.

Pathways (PPI) in partnership with the National Council for Population and Development among other partners did exactly that: they sat down with the County Assembly Advocacy Forum (Laikipia County) and addressed the issue head on. The informative meeting sought to break barriers in the funding of Family Planning and Reproductive Health services.

Pathways (PPI) tabled evidence-based advocacy goals, and made recommendations on the necessary ways of improving the reproductive health services in the County. From the discussions, it came out clearly that it was necessary for the County Assembly to increase its budgetary allocation for Family Planning and Reproductive Health.

***“Availability of reproductive health services is directly linked to the level and quality of education of girls in a community.”***



## The Facts

Laikipia County's Demographic profile as relates to population, fertility, reproductive health and contraceptive use supported the fact that availability of reproductive health services is directly linked to the level and quality of education of girls in a community. The data showed that when women of reproductive age do not receive their Reproductive Health services and contraception commodities when required, the level and quality of education they receive drastically falls.

Needless to say, but we are saying it anyway, the economic growth of the County and the Country as a whole, is directly linked to the availability of Reproductive Health services and Family Planning options for women.

## Impact of COVID-19 on Reproductive Health

In attendance at the meeting was the Laikipia East Reproductive Health Coordinator who broke down Laikipia county's Reproductive Health indicators for the years 2019 and 2020 and explained how the COVID-19 pandemic affected Sexual and Reproductive Health services statistics in the County.

Notably the uptake of Family Planning and contraception among the 10 - 24 years age group had declined during the 2019-2020 period. It was also observed that pregnancy among adolescents during that period had increased, particularly within the age of 15 - 19 years, where the numbers shot from 4402 in 2019 to 4962 in 2020.

*“Pregnancy among adolescents during that period had increased, particularly within the ages of 15-19 years”*

Concerns arose that Laikipia County has only one youth friendly health centre whose location is not so friendly or accommodative; since it is next to the mortuary. This stirred a lot of conversation from the members reporting that the center has not been functional since the COVID-19 numbers surged in the County. It was reported that the fully equipped youth center was taken over by the hospital management due to lack of enough space especially with the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases and the guidelines by the government such as social distancing, among others.





# Which way forward?

As a way of forging a way forward, youth friendly health centers are key in changing the trajectory of access to Reproductive Health services in the county, which will in turn provide data to inform advocacy and decision-making. In light of the allocation for youth recreational centers in the County's budget, interdepartmental projects could be tailored to create a one-stop-shop set-up for Reproductive Health services, career and educational advisory and social recreational activities.

Further, it was agreed that more private and public partnership were necessary to ensure projects do not stall or come to an end due to lack of donor funding. Self-sustainability is key, coupled with increased budgetary allocations to the Reproductive Health sector by the County Government.

To this end, the partners will create a technical group within the county involving the bodies and organizations that work in the area of health, and this will serve to strengthen the working relationships between the partners and the County government.

One of the quick methods highlighted to enable and increase access to health care, including Reproductive Health services was to undertake NHIF recruitment and awareness activities. The idea is to place more emphasis in the rural areas of the County, in order to reach out to the populations left out in the previous NHIF registrations and awareness campaigns.

***"Increased NHIF card utilization will drastically reduce the overall household expenditure on health."***

This engagement with the County Assembly was highly successful, and a follow up activity in the form of further training of the members of the Executive Committee was agreed upon. The County Assembly proposed that Pathways (PPI) together with its partners should undertake advocacy training for Community Serving Organizations in Laikipia County; which should commence immediately after the Executive Committee sensitization. Thereafter, the youth should develop memos and submit them to the clerk of the County Assembly for the County's action and possible enactment and enforcement of the recommendations.





***“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” — Theodore Roosevelt***

# Strength of a Woman



## What's up with IWD?

*"Women are the real architects of society." Cher*

A couple of theories exist as to how or when the celebration of the International Women's Day (IWD) began. Most explanations however orbit around the year 1917, which marked the day when women in Soviet Russia agitated for, and were granted the right to vote. A public holiday was declared on the auspicious date of March 8th, and it carried on to this date.

"The gift of life astounds me to this day  
I give it up for the woman  
She's the constant wind that fills my sail  
Oh that woman" **Shaggy**



A century later, a scraggy musician called Shaggy belted out his song 'Strength of a Woman', and he immortalized the celebration of IWD in tones, notes and lyrics which are hard to forget. For the modern generations who may not know the history that started IWD, song and pomp bring the point home.



# Road Trip 4 a Cause

This year, the theme for IWD was 'Choose to Challenge', and in line with that theme, Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) set out on a journey to challenge the existing notions about sexuality and Reproductive Health. Dubbed the 'Road Trip 4 a Cause', Pathways, in collaboration with Drawing Dreams Initiative (DDI) embarked on a road trip and social event at Kimanjo Primary School in Laikipia North.

The event brought together 52 young people from different walks of life to celebrate IWD. During the event, Pathways (PPI) held a session on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Menstrual Hygiene Management.

## Surprising findings

Women and men from the community joined in the discussion with the young people, and pointed out that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was still a big issue in the community. This was surprising because, across the country, the question of FGM seems to have died down over a decade ago, and yet it plagues this community up to date.

The issue of early pregnancies came up, and this was blamed on lack of proper and age-appropriate information since most students in the school had gotten pregnant during the school break. Pathways (PPI) now has new ground to cover in providing reproductive health education to the young people in this community.

## What about the men?

The menfolk of the Kimanjo community were also included in the Menstrual Hygiene talk to which they acknowledged gratefully through a football match. The winners of this match received the International Women's Day champion's title and were gifted sports jerseys.

The Pathways (PPI) and DDI team later on, camped at Twala grounds, a campsite run by Twala women's group, in support of the women's group. The Sexual and Reproductive Health conversations continued into the next day and the activity culminated with a condom-blowing competition for the facilitators conducted by Pathways (PPI), with the aim of destigmatizing condom use as a form of contraception/Family Planning.

During the event, 150 girls who participated in the session were gifted three packs of sanitary towels. They learnt about Menstrual Health and Hygiene, life skills, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and career choices.

You know what? Life is not about the serious moments. It is about the fun-filled moments of honest connection that bring true value to our experiences.



[Click here for More on YouTube...](#)



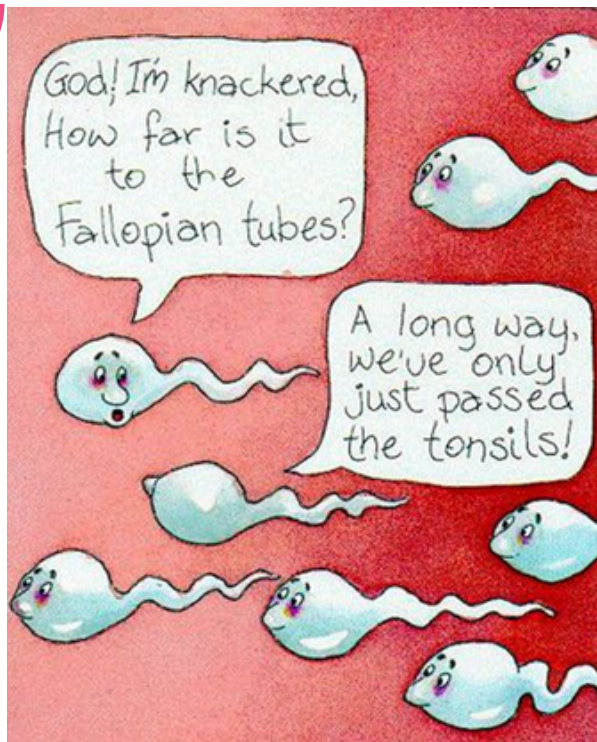


To further commemorate International Women's Day, Pathways (PPI) in collaboration with Drawing Dreams Initiative (DDI) ran a drive for sanitary pads at Ngare Naro Primary School in Nyahururu. The purpose of the drive was to meaningfully engage the students of the school on Menstrual and Reproductive Health. The educational drive brought together 189 girls and 161 boys from classes six, seven, and eight for a Menstrual Hygiene Management talk.

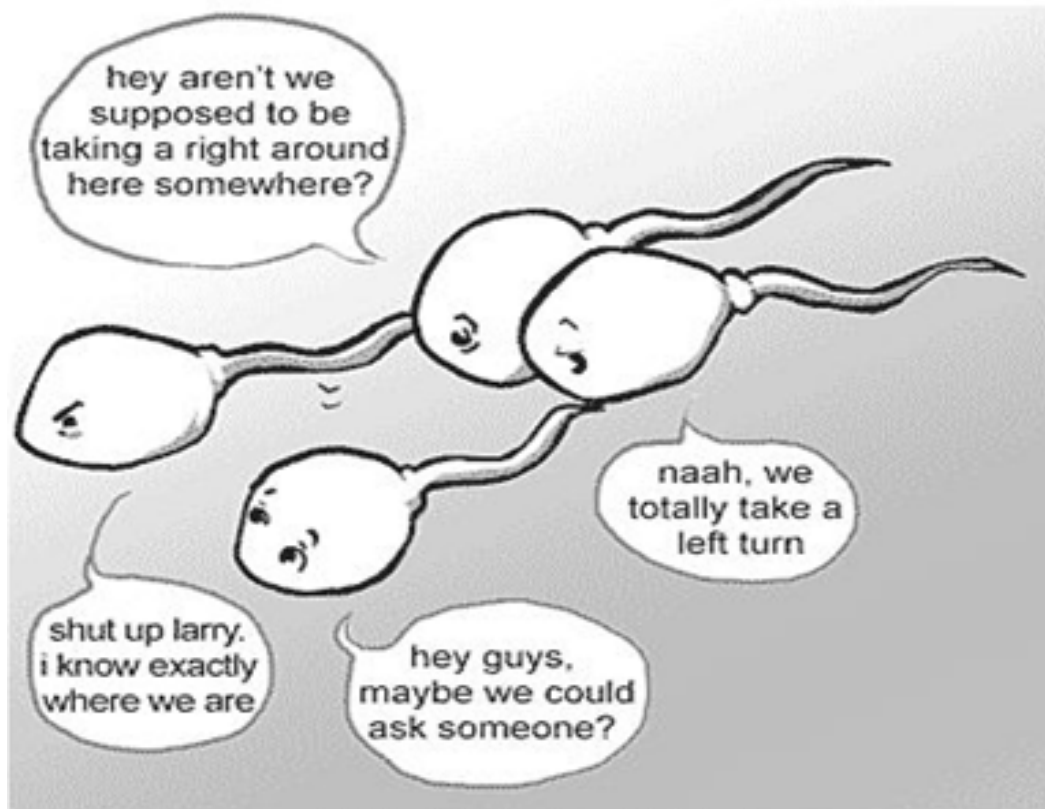
The students, guided by the Pathways (PPI) team had interactive conversations around Menstrual Health and Hygiene, Reproductive Health, life skills, self-empowerment, and career choices. All the girls that were in attendance each received a sanitary kit with 3 packets of pads.







© Sarah Andersen



why it can take over 100 million sperm to fertilize one egg

**Art is food  
for the soul:**

# Art Project in Nairobi and Nakuru



Pathways (PPI), supported by the US Embassy and Mandela Washington fellows, have taken active steps in addressing the question of corruption in the country. This was aimed at the creating of an image-based novel as a teaching and information tool on anti-corruption and ethics. The project also sought to identify anti-corruption champions in Nakuru and Nairobi Counties. The idea is to use art to communicate and represent the insights of young people on fighting corruption in our counties.

Once it is created, the novel will then be used in the capacity building of youth on accountability and to score leaders on key thematic issues which shall be identified in the educational and advocacy forums.

To this end, Pathways (PPI) engaged a total of sixty young people aged between 16 and 21 years, who shared their understanding of what corruption is and expressed it through art.

Close attention was on their understanding of corruption around the domains of bribery around government tenders, bribery in the traffic department, and smuggling of illicit drugs and other goods. The separate groups drafted images and portraits of their understanding of corruption while giving insight on what they would like the graphic novel to look like graphically to ensure corruption in the novel came out in the most age-appropriate way for them and those in their age group.

The second part of the creation of the image-based novel which was the review, took place in Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa. The same groups of youth involved in the first meeting met up again to review the first draft of the graphic novel offering insight into the areas they felt did or did not capture their thoughts. From these interactions, the youth provided more ideas on what they would like to see in the final draft of the anti-corruption graphic novel.



## Why a graphic (image-based) novel?

Science and Psychology confirm that an image has a higher chance of evoking an emotional response in a person than a set of words, written or spoken. For example, in a newspaper campaign, using a set of consistent images to accompany the text will generate a far more positive response from the target market. It follows therefore that to create real impact, an image-based novel would cut it.

We now await Kenya's premier graphic novel made by our very own youth, who are Pathways (PPI) partners and ambassadors. It is now all hands-on deck as we make great strides in the fight against corruption.

## ART FACTS

THE "earth" WITHOUT "art" IS JUST "eh"

DREAM YOUR PAINTING THEN PAINT YOUR DREAM

Art's to express not impress

CLOSE your EYES to SEE

Stop saying "I WISH" Start saying "I WILL"

LIFE is the ART of DRAWING without an ERASER

Art lets you run away with leaving home

ARTISTS cannot fail; It is a SUCCESS TO BE ONE

Every GOOD painter paints what they ARE

"art" IS IN THE "heart"

I may not make my art QUICKLY but I make it with QUALITY

Every ARTIST began as an AMATEUR

Art is a poem WITHOUT words

If you always DO what you DID, you'll always GET what you GOT

For you to think about





# Consent

## Age of Sexual Consent

### What's the age of sexual Consent in Kenya?

The Age of Sexual Consent in Kenya is 18 years old. The age of consent is the minimum age at which an individual is considered legally old enough to consent to participation in sexual activity. Individuals aged younger than 18 years in Kenya are not legally able to consent to sexual activity, and such activity may result in prosecution for statutory rape.

Many young people have found themselves at crossways with the Law for engaging in sexual intercourse with their partners aged below 18 years. It does not matter that the sexual contact was consensual, because anyone aged below 18 years is considered incapable of giving legal consent for sex.

### Do the youth understand Age of Sexual Consent?

Pathways (PPI) undertook a Kenyan contextual analysis on the age of consent and barriers to adolescents' access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services. This was done through the engagement of youth aged between 16 and 21 years in an unfiltered conversation about their understanding of sexual consent and their access to Reproductive Health services.

Pathways (PPI) also conducted key informant interviews with government and civil society representatives to document current responses in addressing the age of consent-related barriers to adolescents' access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services. This would then enable the organization to document the challenges in the national response, and to efficiently address the age of consent-related barriers and advocacy recommendations.

***"The challenges faced by the youth include stigma and discrimination in society and within the healthcare system."***

From this interaction, the challenges faced by the youth include stigma and discrimination in society and within the healthcare system where sexual consent issues arise, which discourages young people from seeking medical care altogether. The restrictive legal and policy frameworks push young people in a corner where they cannot fully address their sexual behavior and have open conversations for fear of legal consequences.

## More Education needed

Many young people, both boys and girls are not aware of what their sexual and reproductive rights are, and what protections are availed to them by the Law. The youth reported that the legal and medical costs involved where a young person has engaged in sexual intercourse without age of consent consideration are prohibitive.

## Our Project of the month

### The IKO Project

August 27, 2020

**IKO;** is a Kiswahili Word meaning I KNOW ONE (IKO) and is a project that envisions a provider-biased free society; aimed at recognizing and awarding Health care providers who are BOLD enough to offer Family Planning services to adolescents and youth out of the conventional settings. The project, being piloted in Laikipia and West Pokot, aims at identifying, motivating, and recognizing the BOLD health workers (Nurses and Community Health Workers) and giving them a platform to speak out, mentor their peers and challenge societal mindsets on Youth Access to Family Planning.



[Click here for More on YouTube :-](#)  
[Bold Health Worker 2020](#)



[Click here for More on YouTube :-](#)  
[ICFP2021 BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AYSRH](#)



# SMART Advocacy Workshop

From 3rd - 7th May 2021, Pathways (PPI) participated in the SMART Advocacy workshop organized by The Advocacy and Accountability Collaborative (TAAC) at Nokras Hotel in Murang'a County. TAAC was Launched in 2017 and is intended to facilitate the Family Planning 2020 (now FP2030) goals. The Kenya Hub is co-chaired by Peter Ngure and Angeline Mutunga.

The purpose behind TAAC formation is rooted in the role that advocacy has proven to play in the past 100 years. TAAC is aimed at helping organizations and individuals at the global, national and local levels achieve critical Family Planning goals and milestones under the strategic aims of fostering joint accountability for results and impact, sustained domestic resource mobilization and increased use of data for quality decision making and advocacy.

## Capacity and Accountability

The main objectives of the SMART Advocacy workshop were among others, to refine the Kenya TAAC Hub vision for success and articulate a two-year broad agenda for action. It was also aimed at assessing the Kenya fiscal space for Family Planning and Maternal and New Born Health supplies landscape, accountability, and advocacy priorities for action in the next 12-18 months.

The workshop also sought to build SMART advocacy capacity and develop accountability and advocacy strategies for action in the next 12-18 months. Participants were able to develop SMART objectives, map out relevant policy makers and develop work plans in line with the objectives of the workshop.

## The TAAC Kenya Hub:

Participating, were 16 Advocacy leads/representatives drawn from different member organizations. These included Zamara Foundation, Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK), Ukambani Women Empowerment for Transformation (UWET), Organization of African Youth (OAY), SDGs Kenya Forum, Drawing Dreams Initiative Jhpiego and Nairobi's among others.



## Financial Literacy

Through interactive sessions and group discussions over the span of 5 days, the group learnt about the budget making process in Kenya, SMART Advocacy and Public Finance Management. This was comprehensively broken down by Dr. Urbanus Kioko who facilitated the workshop virtually. By the fifth day of the workshop, the team was a lot more conversant with the budget cycle, what budget advocacy entails. At the end of the workshop everybody was in agreement that for Advocacy to actually make a difference in our communities the following changes have to take place:

- Decolonization of philanthropy in International Development.
- Shift of more funding to locally led grassroots organizations.
- Investment in community power building; advocates and leaders.
- Facilitate more engaged, informed, and coordinated partners and donor base.
- Dismantle silos around intersecting health issues and artificial geographic boundaries.
- Explore and support innovative funding models and approaches.

### So, What next?

In follow-up to this, a webinar series will be held in which all members were urged to actively participate. A TOT training was also proposed to ensure sustainability in knowledge dissemination among the 16 TAAC Hub members organizations.





# Stigma in Youth's Reproductive Health Information and Services



A meeting was held in Laikipia County, which aimed to review the Reproductive Maternal Neonatal and Child Health (RMNCAH) indicators in the County. Among those in attendance included the Laikipia County Department of medical services, the Reproductive Health Technical Working Group, Deutsche Stiftung Welbevölkerung (DSW) and other stakeholders within the Country, who are all partners of Pathways (PPI).

***"...the percentage of pregnant women who are adolescents between the ages of 10-19 years stood at 27%."***

In attendance was Mr. Francis Ruga, the County Reproductive Health Coordinator who presented data on the women who went for antenatal counselling in Laikipia County, and gave a breakdown of the distribution in the sub-Counties. From this, it was important to note that the percentage of pregnant women who are adolescents between the ages of 10-19 years stood at 27%.

This goes to show that adolescents and youth are engaging in sex without the proper Reproductive Health information and services. They do not seek out information and Family Planning options due to fear of judgment in the health facilities. This data further showed that when women of reproductive age do not receive their reproductive health services or contraception commodities it affects the education of most girls which directly affects the economy of the County and Country altogether.

## Training Champions



Pathways reported that they trained 17 champions who are also helping in these conversations on the importance of education and the harmful effects of these practices in the community.

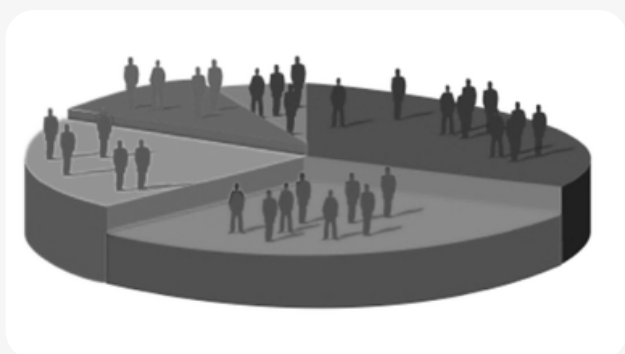
In addition, the IKO project Awards that aim at awarding the administrative chiefs and other community champions who will be identified and voted in by the adolescent and youth in the community, as the bold ones, who are fighting against FGM in Laikipia North.

***"They do not seek out information and family planning options due to fear of judgment in the health facilities."***

Lucky Namunyak from Pathways urged the different stakeholders to join hands and motivate those helping in the fight against FGM. Therefore, members were informed that Pathways Policy Institute in partnership with Drawing Dreams Initiative are holding forums in different schools to disseminate Menstrual Health and SRHR information.

## The Demographics

DSW coordinator broke down Laikipia county's Reproductive Health budget study findings FY 2020/21 – May 2021.



The overall objective of the study was to analyze Health and Family Planning budget allocations for FY 2020/21 at the national level and eleven (11) other counties; Kilifi, Mombasa, Nyandarua, Meru, Laikipia, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Trans-Nzoia, West-Pokot, Bungoma and Nandi. Family planning has been recognized as one of the high-impact interventions in the RMNCAH Investment Framework.

Peter Ngure, the Founder, Pathways Policy Institute then presented the Laikipia County Out-of-pocket expenditure tracking of Family Planning services in Laikipia County. In 2018, Laikipia county launched its family planning cost implementation plan guiding expenditures and activities related to Family Planning.

### Need for NHIF Registrations

From the FP Cost Implementation Plan (CIP) Laikipia county has embraced an increased NHIF enrollment and a reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure for general health. The survey on out-of-pocket Family Planning expenditure in Laikipia County observes that the average cost per woman for Family Planning can be lowered by increasing the number of visits to the FP health care center and NHIF card utilization.

There is also a need to undertake NHIF recruitment and awareness activities and place more emphasis to recruit in the rural areas reaching out to the population left out in the previous NHIF registrations and awareness campaigns.



## Periods Do not Pause for Pandemics:



Menstrual Hygiene Day also known as MH Day is an international and annual awareness day held every year to highlight the importance of proper Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The theme of Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021 was “Action and Investment in Menstrual Hygiene and Health.” This year, Pathways (PPI) in conjunction with Drawing Dreams Initiative (DDI) held two events to mark #MHD2021.

### Why Menstrual Health Education matters

The discussions during the events were organized to focus on the following thematic areas: Menstrual Health, Reproductive Health, Life Skills and Career Choices. The objectives of these activities were to educate participants on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), to disseminate Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) information to the girls and boys and to distribute sanitary towels.

## International Menstrual Hygiene Day

This is cognizant to the fact that most of the pupils/students in the two institutions come from the informal settlements close by and they face various challenges such as inadequate access to sanitation facilities, broken families, child marriage, sexual violence, violations of bodily autonomy and period poverty.

### Boy-child in the Menstrual Conversation

Pathways Policy Institute in conjunction with Drawing Dreams Initiative held two pad drives in St. Louis Primary school on 26th May 2021 and at Likii Secondary School on 28th May 2021, in Laikipia County. These two pad drives were not only held because it is normal to do so on the 28th of May every year; but took place strategically to break the taboos surrounding the inclusion of the boy-child in the menstruation conversations in schools.



*It was further aimed to share accurate information on the importance of good Menstrual Hygiene Management from the most formative stage of young people's lives, which is while they are still in school.*

## The Impact

As a result, 150 girls were reached directly at Likii Secondary School, 5 teenage mothers received 2 kilograms of 'Unga wa Uji' each and 100 boys were mentored. At St Louis Primary School, 50 girls received pads and 100 boys were mentored.

The engagements which involved students from different grades/classes and schools had one thing in common, inclusion of boys in the Menstrual Health and Hygiene matters, which is still very low and, in some cases, nonexistent.

It was very quickly noted that social norms imposed on boys and young men, are what make them shy from this conversation. Those that were present for the talks in both schools after noticing how comfortable the male facilitators were with talking about Menstrual Hygiene, also very quickly got involved and were eager to learn and ask questions that they would normally shy away from asking. They too by the end of the talks shouted proudly that indeed periods do not pause for pandemics.

## A dance for Menstruation, yippie!!

The dancing and laughter that took place afterwards, as the students, teachers and facilitators interacted, expressed a shift in the perception of menstruation. It was a huge relief to the girls that a matter previously perceived as shameful could be so warmly accepted among all of them and be a reason to celebrate and be proud.

As the girls proudly held up their sanitary kits, which were tokens from Pathways (PPI) and Drawing Dreams Initiative (DDI), the boys and young men smiled proudly beside them signaling an understanding that menstruation is natural and nothing to make the girls feel embarrassed about. Huge and plausible strides indeed.



# Youth Against Corruption



Seated outside under the clear blue sky, under a white tent, 20 young men and women aged between 15 and 21, clutching pencils and drawing books in their hands attracted the attention of the people of Githurai - Nairobi. Their excitement was visible from their infectious youthful smiles that complimented their white Anti-corruption series T-shirts that also caught the attention of many because of the bright colored fists drawn on them.

## Is it our Culture?

They readied themselves to talk about corruption; an issue that many of them unapologetically believed would never end in Kenya. 'It is culture in Kenya, we're beyond fixing.' Commented one of the young girls in the group immediately she was asked for her opinion on the issue of corruption in Kenya.

171 kilometers away in Nakuru County, a similarly aged batch of 37 eager and highly spirited young men and women sat together in a hall to talk about the monster that has sadly been normalized and included in almost all dealings in Kenya, Corruption.

## Is it a way of Life?

As an opening for the discussions in both forums, the big question of the day was posed, 'what is corruption and what do you think about it?' A bright faced girl, eloquent in speech from the Nakuru team was first to speak. She very confidently stated that she feels corruption is a way of life, is now normal in our society and has been embraced by everyone since it saves time and seems to be the only way one can get things done in Kenya, especially when dealing with the government. She proudly expressed that she would never bother with following protocol when corruption gets her services and sometimes special treatment much faster.

*"...corruption is a way of life, is now normal in our society and has been embraced by everyone since it saves time and seems to be the only way one can get things done in Kenya."*



They also cited the diversion of goals due to the mismanagement of positions of power leading to little to no development in the country and generally a bad reputation as a country. This part of the conversation seemed to evoke sadness among them as there was a sudden silence that punctuated the serious faces that they all wore.

## Is there hope?

At this point, the facilitator asked them to point out a few solutions they felt could be enforced to prevent corruption being so rampant in the society. The solutions they offered included:

- Accountability with evidence.
- Use of integrated systems that show how all public funds are used.
- The employment of anti-corruption agencies that deal with matters of corruption in the country.
- Independent bodies that oversee elections.
- Heavy penalties for those involved in corruption in order for them to be examples.
- Public participation and sensitization on constitutional laws and rights alongside accountability and integrity to the public. The public also needs to understand that the fight against corruption begins with having transparent leaders.
- The government should ensure services and amenities meant for the public are available to everyone efficiently to prevent the need to bribe in order to get special treatment or services.

### Personal Responsibility

By the end of the discussions the youth despite being separated by so many kilometers had one thing in common, they all expressed that they understood that the fight on corruption is an individual responsibility and that change begins from within.

### “Vijana bila Ufisadi!”

With this proclamation having charged up the group, the youth alongside the Pathways team joined together to take group photos while chanting ‘VIJANA BILA UFISADI’ which translates to ‘YOUTH AGAINST CORRUPTION’ while lifting their anti-corruption themed sketches in the air and vowing to be the flag bearers for the fight against corruption.





The discussions were very interactive and before long, those who seemed shy at the beginning opened up and spoke freely about their experiences with corruption. They began by defining corruption as the acquisition of illegal and sometimes deserved commodities or services in exchange for a bribe (favor or money), which usually happens between a person in a position of power and authority and a person without. Another group explained that bribes are mostly disguised as tips, donations, gifts and favors by those engaging in corruption in order to evade arrest.

Some of the examples of corruption they had witnessed included:

- ***The movement of drugs and selling of alcohol that is enabled by bribing the police especially during the COVID-19 curfew hours that are set up by the government.***
- ***In institutions like schools, money for marks is a phenomenon that has become normal. Securing of positions in schools is also not an issue of merit nowadays but rather who the highest bidder will be.***

- ***The lack of political integrity observed every 5 years during the presidential elections. The issue of rigging and buying of votes being a common occurrence.***
- ***The abuse of power in government offices whereby those in power i.e. judges expect money from their clients in order for them to make a ruling on a case.***
- ***Government service delivery is riddled with bribery; the giving out of tenders and bursaries by the government is based on how much the recipient of the tender is willing to part with to secure the tender rather than the provision of the service in the government offices.***

## What about Development?

They explained that as a result of the corruption happening all around, there have been effects like loss of morale and a negative attitude from citizens for participating in presidential elections which are very important. This leads to the election of bad leaders becoming a cycle that repeats itself every 5 years.



## Pathways Policy Institute Youth Champions Initiative

## Our Project of the month

January 8-9, 2021



Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) launched the Youth Champions Initiative in Laikipia County for adolescents and youth who are passionate about advocacy for Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and advocate for adolescents and youth. The Laikipia Youth Changemakers are engaged in fulfilling our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through #MHM Clubs in Laikipia as we distribute sanitary towels and offer awareness on Menstrual Hygiene, SRHR and Advocacy for MHM to be funded by County governments.





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