

BETTER BOYZ 2026

The Menstrual Uhuru We Owe Our Boys

By Jackie Mauta



Why does inviting boys into menstrual health
conversations matter for the future of our communities?



There are moments in community work that **refuse to stay inside reports**. They linger long after the **attendance sheets have been filed away, the presentations packed up and the journey back to the office has ended**. One of those moments came from a **Grade 9 classroom in Laikipia County**. We had asked the boys what they would do if they noticed that a girl had stained her uniform or her seat during her period. The room became unusually still. Then, almost as if he was simply stating the obvious, one boy replied, **"I would give her my sweater."** In that instant, the classroom stopped feeling like a training session. It felt like a glimpse into the future. If this was how a fourteen year old chose to respond to another person's vulnerability, perhaps a different generation was already beginning to emerge.

A few days earlier, **another classroom had revealed a different kind of truth**. **Christine Muthoni**, PPI's **Adolescent and Youth Assistant also better Boyz Programme Lead**, stood before a room full of adolescent boys and asked a question that seemed simple enough: **"What do you know about periods?"** No one rushed to answer. A few boys looked at one another before lowering their eyes. Then, in voices barely louder than whispers, came the answer: **"Kunyesha."** In Kiswahili, the word means **"to rain"**, but in this classroom it had become a coded way of talking about menstruation without ever saying the word itself. The whisper carried years of inherited discomfort. It told the story of boys who had grown up close enough to menstruation to know it existed, yet far enough away to believe they were never supposed to talk about it.

What happened next reminded us **that silence is rarely the same as indifference**. Once the first question had been asked, the rest followed naturally. **The boys wanted to understand sanitary pads. They wanted to know how tampons worked. They wondered how girls managed pain, attended school and continued with everyday life during their periods. Some questions sparked laughter, but none came from cruelty. They came from curiosity. Better Boyz did not teach boys to care**; it gave them permission to ask, and in doing so, allowed empathy to replace assumption. By the end of the sessions, the room that had begun with whispers had become a room full of conversation.



As those conversations unfolded across **Sweet Waters Secondary School, Sweet Waters Primary School, Mirera Primary School and Wathituga Primary School**, I found myself watching not only the boys, but also the men at the back of the classrooms. The **male teachers** never quietly slipped away when menstruation became the topic of discussion. They remained seated. They listened. They smiled as boys wrestled with unfamiliar ideas. They applauded thoughtful responses and encouraged those who were hesitant to speak. Their presence challenged a belief many communities have carried for generations that menstrual health belongs only in conversations between women and girls. Without saying it aloud, they demonstrated something powerful: **boys learn what responsible manhood looks like by watching the men already in their lives**. Sometimes, leadership is not found in giving the lesson. Sometimes, it is found in choosing to stay in the room.

Our Better Boyz Stops 2026



SWEET WATERS PRIMARY SCHOOL



SWEET WATERS SECONDARY SCHOOL



MIRERA PRIMARY SCHOOL



WATHITUGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

The conversations stretched far beyond menstrual health. **Dennis Kamau, PPI's Youth and Communications Assistant**, asked the boys what it means to be a better boy. Their answers spoke of respect, responsibility and becoming people their families and communities could be proud of. **Mary Mureithi, PPI's Assistant Program Associate** guided discussions on **equality and equity**, helping the boys think about fairness beyond the classroom. When we turned to drug and substance abuse, I began with a question of my own: **"Are all drugs bad?"** Their answer was immediate: **"No."** They understood the difference between medicine that heals and substances that destroy lives. They spoke honestly about peer pressure, ambition and the futures they wanted to build. **During breaks, they came looking for us with more questions, proving that the most meaningful conversations often continue long after the session has officially ended.** Every drive back to the office became another reflection, as our team spoke about the courage we had witnessed, the optimism we carried home and the possibility we had seen in these young boys.

Better Boyz 2026 reached 190 adolescent boys across four schools in Laikipia County. Those numbers matter, but they cannot tell the whole story. They cannot capture a classroom whispering "kunyeshia" because saying "period" out loud still feels uncomfortable. They cannot measure the significance of male teachers choosing to remain in the room instead of walking away. They cannot record the quiet confidence of a Grade 9 boy who instinctively chose compassion over embarrassment by offering his sweater to a girl who might need it.

Those moments remind us that changing attitudes is rarely dramatic. It happens one conversation at a time, one question at a time and one act of empathy at a time. Menstrual health may have been the reason we entered those classrooms, but we left carrying something much bigger: the conviction that when boys are invited into conversations with honesty, dignity and trust, they do not become bystanders. They become allies, advocates and the kind of young men every community hopes to raise.

**The conversations continue every day.
We invite you to be part of them**

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