

Stories of change from the Youth First Kenya program in Kilifi County



Learners engaged in the Youth First Kenya Program performing a short skit during one of their sessions in class. Skits are an engaging way of getting learners to fully participate and re-enact some of the challenges they face or are likely to face in the community.

Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya in partnership with CBM global, with support from funding from Fondation d'Harcourt have been implementing the Youth First Kenya (YFK) program in Kilifi County.

YFK is a school-based, evidence-based personal resilience and health curriculum for adolescents, drawing from best practices in resilience, positive psychology, social-emotional learning, and adolescent health. Evidence drawn from the program has demonstrated positive outcomes such as improved performance, improved communication, improved learner to learner and learner to teacher relationships, improved problem solving and goal setting, among others.

Below are brief stories of change as shared by teachers who have directly benefited from the program from across a select number of schools in Kilifi County.

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I have greatly improved my decision making process

By Athumani Charo

35-year-old Athumani is a teacher at Mariakani primary school in Kilifi County, specializing in science and technology, physical health education, music, art and craft, and English. He has been teaching for about 11 years and was happy to share his experience with Youth First Kenya (YFK) and how it has greatly influenced his decision making.

Youth First Kenya is by far the best program I have interacted with thus far in my teaching career, and this is purely based on how it has impacted me personally.

It's amazing how I am 35 years of age, yet the program has enabled me to still learn a lot about myself and this has in turn influenced my decision-making process both at personal level as well as, as a teacher.

Previously, I was quick to anger particularly when pupils made all sorts of mistakes in class. I would be really consumed by this anger. However, going through the YFK curriculum enabled me to realise that mistakes that these adolescents are making, are a part of their growth. In addition to this, sometimes these pupils may be going through a tough situation which is negatively impacting how they behave.

I have also noted a definite improvement in relationships and level of focus among these learners as they are now cognisant of how their dreams can be impacted either positively or negatively by the decisions they make today. This is especially evident in the way they respond to peer pressure.

In the just concluded national examination, we noted a definite improvement in performance from our learners and this reflects the positive influence of this program on them.

I am hopeful that this program will be scaled up to impact more learners.

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My confidence as a teacher has grown



A Youth First Kenya session ongoing at Gandani Primary School in Kilifi County

By Rama Guni

31-year-old Rama Guni is a teacher at Gandani Primary School in Kilifi County, specializing in mathematics, social studies, kiswahili, agriculture and nutrition. She has been teaching for about 5 years and was happy to share her experience with Youth First Kenya (YFK) and how it has greatly built her confidence as a teacher.

There is no doubt in myself that the YFK program has really improved my teaching. My ability to problem solve whenever an issue affecting both my learners as well as myself emerges, has drastically improved. I have noted that I used to have certain biases towards certain learners but today I don't.

I have also accepted the fact that man is to error, and we learn from these experiences. This acceptance has boosted my confidence as a teacher. In addition to this, simple yet profound ideas such as conducting sessions while seated in a circle, has boosted my relationship with my learners. They are now able to approach me openly and express themselves when experiencing challenges in life either at school or at home.

We are also noting improved interactions among the learners. They are now having open discussions where they air their views. This is unlike in the past where many of them were shy and seldom expressed themselves.

In terms of performance, I can confidently say that our performance greatly improved during the just concluded national exam. Our school's mean score in the previous year was 204/500 and this rose to 236/500 in last year's exam. This is growth.

I therefore strongly believe that YFK is a really good program and I wish it could be scaled further upwards so as to continue to positively impact future generations.

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My attitude towards learners has become more positive

By Raymond Kadenge

54-year-old Raymond Kadenge is a teacher at Ndatani Primary School in Kilifi County, specializing in Science and Technology. He has been teaching for over 15 years and was happy to share his experience with Youth First Kenya (YFK) and how it has greatly improved his attitude towards learners.

The YFK program has improved the way I handle learners not only when I am teaching them but also when I am handling disciplinary cases in the school. This is because I have improved my listening skills as well as my attitude towards the learners.

Previously as a teacher, I did not bother to listen to perspectives from learners. I didn't believe they had an opinion.

Today my approach to teaching is very child centred and customer focused. I now understand the child is my customer and therefore I am conscious about addressing their needs.

Thanks to the YFK program, I now consider myself a good counsellor. I have changed the way I handle cases of indiscipline by focusing on providing guidance in the place of punishment.

I have noted that I am now more approachable to the learners. They are now freer to share the challenges they are facing both at home and in school. I am humbled because many of them ended up identifying me as their role model as they appreciated my gesture of lowering myself to their level. As a direct result of this,

most of these learners promised to take up science as they transition to secondary school.

I am happy to report that 90 percent of our learners joined secondary schools while 10 percent opted to join vocational training colleges.

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