



Community Mental Health

October Report

Connections for Healing and Hope

KQ Team

Innovative Youth Led intervention

The latest updates

In a bid to strengthen Community Mental Health, the Green String Network- GSN came up with an innovative youth led project named Kumekucha Quest (KQ). In a country where 55% of the population is youth, it is important to have a programme that focuses on the young people and the unprecedented challenges that they face, that compromise their well-being and strain their Mental health.

This two-year project adapts GSNs existing community-led social cohesion program, Kumekucha: It's A New Dawn, for children and youth aged 10- to 24-years-old in Nairobi and Kwale counties, Kenya. This project is supported by Grand Challenges Canada and well-wishers like yourselves that donate to the Community Mental Health programme. Grand Challenges Canada is funded by the Government of Canada and is dedicated to supporting Bold Ideas with Big Impact®.

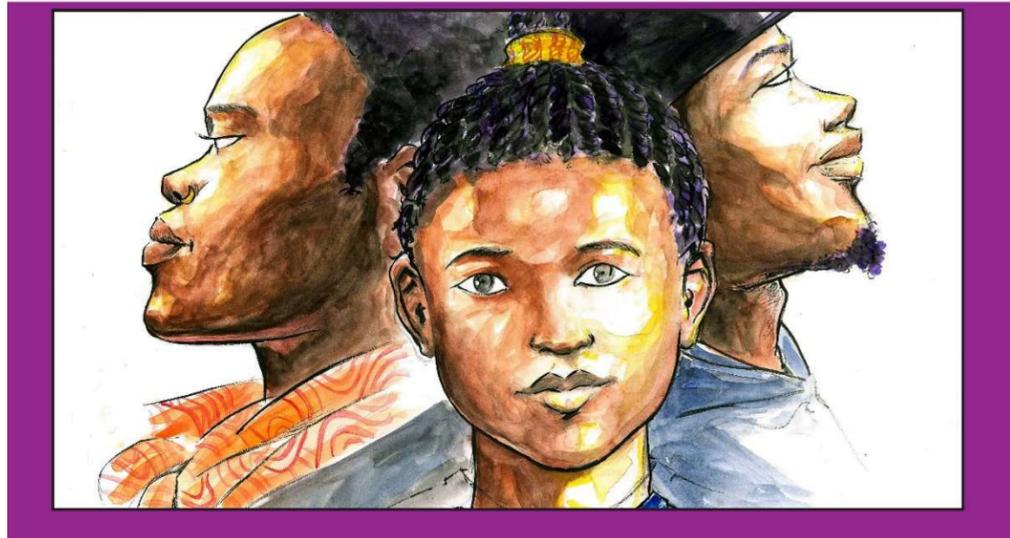
The KQ project comprises three Programmes in two distinct stages. During the first stage, youths aged 18- to 24-years-old will embark on a 12-week peer facilitated quest to explore experiences of past trauma, learn to address daily stressors and challenges, and learn to build resilience. Youth participants in this 12-week Kumekucha Quest Programme will, then, have the option to be trained as mentors who can further hold space for younger children and teens in their communities who have similar life experiences including toxic stress, childhood adversity, and trauma.

This second stage of the KQ project, comprising the Kumekucha Watoto and Kumekucha Vijana Programmes, is collectively referred to as Kumekucha Watoto and Vijana (KWV) - translating to children and teens, respectively - and is geared specifically towards 10- to 17-year-old participants

The consortium team leading this project includes GSN as the lead organisation and its two implementation partners, namely Diplomats for Health in Resilient Community in Nairobi and Samba Sports Youth Agenda in Kwale. GSN serves as the curriculum design and research lead while the two youth-led community-based organisations focus on implementation at the community level in Majengo (Nairobi) and Kwale (at the coast), respectively. Participants learn about trauma and



mental health on the programme and therefore gain knowledge about trauma and its effects. They also learn about and practice self-regulation tools and begin to explore healthy coping strategies.



Kumekucha Quest: Children and Youth ages 10-24 in Nairobi and Kwale Counties are the main beneficiaries.

Methodology

The main drivers of the programme are the Circle Keepers (CKs) who are community-based youth volunteers paired with adult mentors. The activities comprise of peer support groups in which 12-15 participants from a community meet for two hours a week. CKs guide participants through the 12-week curriculum, including an introduction to stress and trauma, embodied coping mechanisms, the cycles of violence of hurting-self and hurting-others, as well as key elements of well-being safety and security, connection, and issues of identity. KQ seeks to strengthen the social fabric by enhancing both individual and collective wellbeing and resilience.



Kumekucha Quest: Young people in Kwale County in a circle process

After the participants complete the 12 weeks they can become Youth Mentors to Watotos and Vijanas (10-17 years old). Development efforts have historically focused on either children or adults - with the idea that adolescence is the healthiest stage of life - leaving the adolescent age group increasingly marginalised with little attention. Current research suggests that the rapid physical, psychosocial, cognitive, and social growth experienced by adolescents represents a prime area for investing in and can even result in a ten-fold economic benefit, particularly in low-income countries, that will be crucial for meeting the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Patton et al., 2016).

In the last 12 months in round one of implementation 67 direct beneficiaries went through the programme and 1670 indirect beneficiaries benefitted from it. In our preliminary findings we found young people gained improved social connections, increased capacity to see long-term and big-picture, and the support and skills to handle life challenges. In turn this influences their attitudes of trust, peace, and reconciliation, all of which they are more likely to embody; lowering their levels of stress and trauma reactions and increasing their general well-being.

Next Steps

We are embarking on round two of the KQ programme which will see the youth (18-24) who have gone through the programme be mentors to children- watoto (10-17). This will be implemented in the form of after school programmes, sports, and the arts. We still need your continued support to ensure that we reach many more at risk youth.

Thank you for your continued support!