

PROJECT TITLE: SUPPORT THE HEALTHY KIDS KENYA INITIATIVE BY ADOPTING A SCHOOL AND HELP KENYA FIGHT THE NCD BURDEN.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Lifestyle-related diseases are the leading cause of death and disability today, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a major public health concern with significant social and economic implications in terms of health care needs, lost productivity and premature death. Kenya is experiencing an epidemiological transition in its disease burden from predominantly communicable diseases to a rapidly rising burden of NCDs. NCDs are responsible for 39% of the deaths in Kenya, they include cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental health conditions.

The Healthy Kids Kenya Initiative, can be described as a whole school approach where the aim is to actively involve all learners in health promoting initiatives, since health outcomes for children and youth are mainly influenced at the individual, peer, family and school levels. It is worth noting that schools play an essential role in creating a healthy environment for learners to grow and learn every day. A sick school cannot promote and implement government educational policies effectively but a healthy school will appropriately do so. The messages reaching children need to consistently reinforce the importance of choices that lead to better health.

Through the Healthy Kids Initiative we shall advocate for comprehensive lifestyle changes (including better nutrition habits, physical activity, psychological stress, social support and environmental exposures) to be used to prevent, treat and even reverse the progression of chronic diseases by addressing their underlying causes. The initiative will help increase opportunities for healthy habits in learners experiencing health inequities, and provide them with positive experiences that will translate into a lifetime of healthy living.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Chronic diseases have dramatically increased in children. Children are being exposed to many chronic disease risk factors including poor diets, low levels of physical activity, and increasingly sedentary activities. In Kenya, the state of school health and wellness in terms of sickness and illness is wanting. NCDs such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases contribute to over 50% of in-patient admissions, accounting for almost 100,000 deaths (27%) per year while premature deaths are at 18%. Approximately 7% of Kenyans die from cancer, and 37,000 new cases are diagnosed every year; 22.6% of adults aged 18-69 years have high blood

pressure or are currently on medication for raised BP; while 2.3% have elevated levels of fasting blood glucose.¹

The prevalence of the main NCD risk factors, including Overweight and obesity are now on the rise in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings² with children and youth increasingly at risk. In Kenya Children are increasingly struggling with obesity, causing health problems that used to be primarily dominant among adults; type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and elevated cholesterol levels. The CDC reports that 60% of Kenya's urban residents are overweight or obese.³

NCDs have pushed households into or keeping them in a poverty trap as a result of health care expenses and income losses from disability or the premature death of a family income earner. In recognition of the negative impact that NCDs are already having on health care costs, productivity, and household income, a raft of measures should be taken to invest more in healthy diets and physical activity among Kenyans. The Healthy Kids Kenya Initiative works with school communities to curb these negative health trends. Our innovative, school-focused health promotion project improves the lives of learners in school communities.

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Healthy Kids Kenya is dedicated to empowering Kenyan children by educating them about preventative health and creating a fun & supportive school environment using innovative approaches. Our programs prevent, manage, and in some instances reverse NCDs by providing schools with evidence-based resources that promote lifelong health, covering the following pillars: 1) Sports, Physical Activity & Physical Literacy, 2) Nutrition & Food Systems, and 3) Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) health literacy.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM IMPACT

Lifestyle changes initiated during childhood persist to adulthood. The long-term impact of this initiative is embedding lifelong healthy-living behaviors that will improve the overall health and well-being of the target communities by reducing the risks of overweight, obesity, and NCDs, which represent major contributors to Kenya's national burden of disease and mortality. Your donation will enable us to deliver wellness programs to underserved schools across Kenya at a critical time.

¹ Ministry of Health. (2015). Kenya STEPwise survey for non-communicable diseases risk factors 2015 report.

² World Health Organization. (2020, April 1). *Obesity and overweight*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>

³ Aryeetey, R., Lartey, A., Marquis, G. S., Nti, H., Colecraft, E., & Brown, P. (2017). Prevalence and predictors of overweight and obesity among school-aged children in urban Ghana. *BMC obesity*, 4(1), 1-8.