



2023

International Day of the Girl Child Activities Report

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Abiero Girls' Empowerment (AGE) is a hands-on charity that actively champions marginalised girls at Wasamo Girls Secondary School (the only girls school located on the remote island of Mfangano and its environs, in Kenya), through financial support and mentorship, giving them the opportunity to break generational poverty and become exceptional contributors to society. A lot of these girls, whose community prioritise marriage and children, have sacrificed their education and ambitions to become child brides and adolescent mothers (often against their will).

The International Day of the Girl Child, observed on October 11th each year, is a United Nations initiative that aims to promote the rights of girls around the world and address the unique challenges they face. The day focuses on empowering girls and ensuring their access to education, healthcare, and opportunities, regardless of their background or circumstances. It advocates for gender equality and highlights the importance of addressing issues like child marriage, gender-based violence, and discrimination that many girls face globally. The International Day of the Girl Child serves as a reminder of the importance of investing in girls' education and well-being to create a more equitable and just world.

METHODOLOGY

In commemoration of the **International Day of the Girl**, Projects Coordinator Ms. Lizz Mwemba carried out a three day activity at the Wasamo Girls Secondary School. The activities were carried out with students from Form 1 to Form 4 as highlighted:

Wednesday, 11th October, 2023

Principal Florence Oyoo, Secretary of AGE, welcomed the Projects Coordinator to engage the girls focusing on empowering the girls on crucial aspects such as education, leadership, and community engagement. Ms. Liz Weya, a member of AGE, joined virtually and talked to the students (Form 1 to Form 4) about the importance of investing in girls' rights, in line with the theme of this year's commemoration. The girls showcased their talents through dancing and singing performances.

Branded pens and snacks were distributed. The students were happy and thanked AGE for organizing the session. The Principal thanked AGE for the session and requested for a follow-up session on personal, social and health education the next day.

Thursday, 12th October, 2023

An afternoon session was had with Form 1 -3 students to talk about personal, social and health education. The discussion focused on areas such as relationships, consent, abstinence, safe sex, and prevention of unwanted pregnancy. The activity was an intervention to the worrying trend of rising cases of unwanted teenage pregnancies and sexual abuse targeting young girls in the community. At the time of reporting, five students in Wasamo Girls had become victims of these atrocities.

This session culminated in the formation of the 'Safe Club,' where the girls expressed their curiosity about topics such as abortion and its effects, LGBTQ issues, safe days, challenges faced by teen mothers, and the consequences of early relationships. Principal Florence graciously allocated a bi-weekly slot on Wednesdays from 3:20 PM to 5:00 PM for these vital discussions, understanding the need for continuous personal, social and health education.

Friday 13th October 2023

The Projects Coordinator had a separate discussion with the AGE sponsored girls. Encouraged them to remain focused on their education and reminded them that education serves as their beacon of hope, transcending their current circumstances and shaping a promising future.

RESULTS

The AGE initiative at Wasamo Girls Secondary School yielded transformative results, empowering students and shaping a positive community future. Comprehensive personal, social and health education sessions addressed vital topics, contributing to awareness and prevention efforts against teenage pregnancies and abuse.

The 'Safe Club' will provide a secure space for discussing sensitive issues, fostering open dialogue. Individual counseling sessions personalized support, highlighting education's transformative power. Principal Florence Oyoo's commitment, including dedicated time slots for the 'Safe Club,' ensured continuous support. These efforts collectively created informed, empowered, and confident young women, marking a significant step toward a positive future for both students and the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the successful outcomes of the Abiero Girls' Empowerment (AGE) initiative at Wasamo Girls Secondary School, the following recommendations can be made to further enhance the impact of similar programs in the future:

Expanding Educational Initiatives: Continue organizing sessions that focus on education, leadership, and community engagement. Collaborate with experienced educators and professionals to provide valuable insights and mentorship to the students, encouraging them to excel academically and pursue leadership roles in their communities.

Sustaining Talent Development: Encourage and support the students' talents through regular workshops, training, and opportunities for public performances. This could include organizing talent shows, art exhibitions, or cultural events, fostering creativity and boosting their self-confidence.

Strengthening Comprehensive personal, social and health education: Develop a structured curriculum for comprehensive personal, social and health education that addresses a wide range of topics, including relationships, consent, abstinence, safe sex practices, prevention of unwanted pregnancies, and understanding LGBTQ+ issues. Ensure these sessions are conducted regularly and include interactive discussions to address the specific concerns of the students.

Supporting Safe Spaces: Continue the 'Safe Club' initiative as a safe space for students to discuss sensitive topics openly. Ensure the club is well-moderated and facilitated by knowledgeable individuals who can provide accurate information and emotional support. Consider inviting guest speakers or experts to further enrich the discussions and provide diverse perspectives.

Preventing Teenage Pregnancies: Collaborate with local health organizations and authorities to implement programs aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies and sexual abuse. Provide access to personal health services including menstrual health services, counseling, and awareness campaigns to educate both students and their families about the risks and consequences associated with early pregnancies and sexual abuse.

Continuous Individual Support: Maintain regular individual counseling sessions for AGE sponsored girls. Offer ongoing emotional and academic support, addressing their unique needs and challenges. This personalized approach can significantly impact their confidence, resilience, and determination to overcome obstacles.

Institutional Commitment: Ensure the active involvement and commitment of school authorities, such as Principal Florence Oyoo, in supporting initiatives like the 'Safe Club.' Allocate dedicated time slots within the school schedule for such club activities, demonstrating the school's commitment to the students' well-being and personal development.

By implementing these recommendations, similar empowerment programs can create a lasting positive impact on students, equipping them with essential life skills, knowledge, and confidence to navigate challenges and build a better future for themselves and their communities.

CONCLUSION

The Abiero Girls' Empowerment (AGE) initiative conducted at Wasamo Girls Secondary School from October 11th to 13th, 2023, was a transformative experience for the students. Through empowering sessions on education, leadership, and self-expression led by Project Coordinator and Ms. Liz Weya, the girls gained confidence and awareness. Crucial personal, social and health education discussions and the formation of the 'Safe Club' provided a safe space for sensitive topics, contributing to prevention efforts against teenage pregnancies and sexual abuse.

Individual counseling sessions offered personalized support to AGE sponsored girls, emphasizing education as a beacon of hope. Overall, the initiative empowered the girls, fostering confidence, awareness, and determination, marking a significant step towards creating informed, empowered, and confident young women, shaping a positive future for the students and the community.