

NISITU (Nisikilize Tujengane)

Listen to Me, Let's Grow Together

The Population Council, in Kenya and globally, has been rapidly expanding its portfolio of programs and evaluations for adolescent girls. Evidence from several studies, including in Kenya, supports the idea that empowerment and asset-building interventions targeting multiple levels of the socio-ecological environment can improve education, health, economic and social capital, gender-equitable attitudes, and violence outcomes for girls.

One specific segment of the socio-ecological environment that has been lacking, but needs to be targeted in order for changes to occur, is boys and young men. There are several theories that favor including boys and men in this type of programming:

- The involvement of boys and young men in programming to create more equitable gender norms and reduce sexual and gender-based violence in a community will lead to more favorable outcomes for girls, as well as for the boys and young men themselves.
- Boys and young men's lives and options, as well as girls', are constrained by current expectations and definitions of masculinity, and they could also benefit from a transformation to more equitable gender norms in their communities.

The NISITU program's objective is to test these theories and to engage boys and young men using a girl-centered approach.

In 2017, the Population Council and partners undertook formative research to understand from girls: 1) what are the most influential types of males in their lives; 2) how and what they influence; and 3) what behavior changes among males they believed would improve girls' lives the most.



Population Council researchers are testing the effects of engaging boys and men alongside girl-centered programming to improve the lives of adolescent girls.

Following that, another round of formative work was done with the key types of males identified by the girls to understand their conceptions of masculinity, and the types of and motivations behind the different relationships that they have with adolescent girls and young women.

Finally, formative work was carried out with mixed-sex groups of adolescents using role plays to gain an even deeper understanding of their views and lived experiences of femininity and masculinity. This information was used to guide the development of the NISITU intervention and study.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The NISITU program is implemented in parallel with girls and boys in the same community. Girls and boys are assigned to single-sex groups of about 20–30 individuals per group. The groups are segmented by age and schooling status and are led by a mentor, who is a young woman or man from that community. Mentors participated in an initial training for two

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weeks before the intervention started and they continue to meet monthly for supervision meetings with program staff for the duration of the intervention. Safe spaces groups meet weekly at the same time and place. The content of the group meetings covers three main topics, each with separate versions adapted for boys and for girls:

Sexual and Reproductive Health

The sessions cover a wide range of SRH topics including puberty, menstruation and fertility, family planning, HIV/STIs, and hygiene; as well as life-skills sessions that cover healthy relationships, communication, and self-esteem.

Gender Norms and Power

Adapted from the International Rescue Committee's Engaging Men in Accountable Practice (EMAP) curriculum (15 sessions for boys and young men and 6 sessions for girls), the curriculum covers concepts of gender roles, masculinity and femininity, and violence and power in relationships. For boys and young men there is a focus on understanding their roles in the power imbalance and violence cycles in relationships.

Economic Strengthening

Participants receive financial education: basic training on money management, financial goal-setting, saving, and budgeting. In addition, they open age-appropriate savings accounts through a local financial institution. Older cohorts of adolescents also receive entrepreneurship training and a savings match, conditioned on attendance, to motivate and stimulate income-generating activities.

Girls and boys meet in separate groups. However, when the groups have formed and built cohesion after the first few months, male and female groups will be paired and will meet once a month to discuss the SRH and gender topics they have been learning in their sessions to model new approaches for male–female communication and relationships.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Using a quasi-experimental study design, the study will answer the following questions:

- 1) What impact did the intervention have on girls ages 10–19 (specifically focused on gender attitudes and experience of sexual and gender-based violence)?
- 2) What impact did the intervention have on boys and young men ages 10–24 (specifically focused on gender attitudes and experience and perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence)?
- 3) Did implementing the intervention with girls and boys in a community, as compared to only girls, have additional impact on girls?

In order to answer these questions, the study is being implemented in three communities: girls and boys intervention, girls-only intervention, and a control. Data will focus extensively on gender attitudes and experience and perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence, but also on social networks, self-efficacy, financial literacy, economic activity, mental health, decisionmaking, mobility, and sexual behavior.

TIMELINE

The household listing was conducted in early 2018 and the baseline data collection took place between March–May 2018. The intervention began with registration of female participants in July 2018 and for male participants in September 2018. The intervention will run until mid-2019. We expect to collect qualitative data in mid-2019 and have completed endline data collection by the end of 2019. Final results of the study will be available in 2020.

FUNDING

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