Getting girls back to school during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya: Lessons from the 4Ts initiative

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GETTING GIRLS BACK TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN KENYA: LESSONS FROM THE 4Ts INITIATIVE

George Odwe, Chi-Chi Undie — Population Council
Outline

- Introduction
- 4Ts Intervention
- Implementation
- Findings
- Lessons Learnt
- Policy/Programme Implications
POPULATION COUNCIL KENYA (PC Kenya)

- PC Kenya seeks to improve the well-being and health of current and future generations and to help achieve a humane, equitable, and sustainable balance between people and resources.
- We develop sustainable program solutions that respond to:
  - girls’ educational needs and build their social, economic, and health assets;
  - improve sexual and reproductive health and rights;
  - reduce HIV transmission; prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); assess various service-integration models; and
  - strengthen evidence for program related to unintended pregnancy.
- An affiliate of PC Inc.
Introduction:

- About 1 in 5 girls (18%) ages 15-19 in Kenya experience pregnancy
- The proportion of girls (ages 15-19) who get pregnant in Kenya has not changed in the last decade.
  - 74% have less than secondary education
  - 98% of girls aged 15-19 who have ever been pregnant in Kenya are out of school.

Early pregnancy & motherhood in Kenya

By County:
Percentage of girls aged 15-19 who have begun childbearing in Kenya

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased girls’ vulnerability

- School dropout
- Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)
- Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C)
- Social exclusion
- Child marriage
- Teenage pregnancy
- Child marriage
## Opportunities...

### School re-entry policy guidelines

**Purpose:**

- “The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a framework for enhancing re-entry of learners who drop out of school, including those with special needs and disabilities, in order to improve retention, transition and completion rates at all levels of basic education.”

### On-going MoE Efforts

- **School re-entry implementation plan and monitoring tools**
- **Guidance & Counseling Policy:** would provide room for building evidence-based solution (e.g., parental engagement)

### Changing social norms

- **Government ownership of the issue**
- ✓ Examples - policy popularization; Back-to-school campaigns
Intervention: 4Ts ‘Trace, Track, Talk, and reTurn’

- An intervention geared toward operationalizing Kenya’s school re-entry policy guidelines in the time of COVID-19.

- MoE-led effort to:
  - Trace girls who are currently out-of-school
  - Track them down at the household level, and
  - Talk to them about the importance of education and the education policy documents:
    - school re-entry policy guidelines & national school health policy
  - reTurn to school - ensure they do return to school as a result of this intervention.
Implementation

Implementation Sites:
- Homa Bay County: 8 sub-Counties (42 Zones)
- Narok County: 6 sub-Counties (32 Zones)

Activities: (May-August 2021)
1. Orientation of CSOs
2. Sensitization of stakeholders:  
   - School heads, BoMs, Teachers, Parents, Learners
3. Distribution of re-entry guidelines~2000 copies
4. Monitoring
Implementation

Tracing
Head Teachers, School BoMs, Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs)

Tracking
CSOs, Chiefs, Village Elders

reTurning
MOE: County Dept of Education; Dept of Policy, Partnerships, EAC Affairs; Director General’s Office

Key Messages
You have the support of the government, the Ministry of Education, and head teachers to return to school.

Children
Education is for ALL children:
- This means that any child in your home who dropped out of school (whether female or male) is free to return to school.

Help
Why? Because education can help ensure you have a bright future.

So... for tomorrow
Let us know we have a few questions to ask you or your parent/guardian so that we can inform school about whether to expect you back in school or not.

For your information, the government’s school reentry policy guidelines are freely available online:
https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2324&context=departments_sbsr-rh

Monitoring tool

Location Information:
- County: [Tick one that applies]
  - Homa Bay
  - Narok
- Subcounty: Zone:
- Village Name:
- Village elder’s name:
- Mob. No:

Girls’ Details:
- Girl’s Name:
- Age: [____|____]
- Parent/Guardian’s Name:
- Mob No.:

Primary Reason for Being Not in School (Tick one that applies):
- Pregnant/parenting
- Lack of childcare
- Marriage
- Taking care of sick parent
- Lack of school fees
- Other [Specify]

Planning to reenter [Indicate Yes or No] Yes=1    No=2
Not planning to reenter [Indicate Yes or No] Yes=1    No=2
Already reentered [Indicate Yes or No] Yes=1   No=2
Results:

Enhanced education access by marginalized girls

- Reached more than **1,500** out-of-school girls and their families in Homa-Bay and Narok Counties during COVID-19
  - 30% re-entered school during the intervention period
  - 54% were planning to re-enter school during the intervention period
  - 16% were not planning to re-enter school

![Pie chart showing percentages of students planning to re-enter school, not planning to re-enter school, and those who re-entered.](chart.png)
Results:

*Teenage motherhood is the main reason for being out-of-school*

- Pregnant/parenting: 90.7% (Narok N=651), 90.7% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Marriage: 17.5% (Narok N=651), 2.2% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Lack of childcare: 4.3% (Narok N=651), 2.5% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Other: 2.2% (Narok N=651), 3.8% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Taking care of sick parents: 0.3% (Narok N=651), 0.0% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Fell ill: 0.0% (Narok N=651), 0.7% (Homa Bay N=773)
- Lack of school fees: 0.0% (Narok N=651), 0.2% (Homa Bay N=773)
Some barriers…

- **Harmful cultural practices**

  Proportion of married girls not planning to return to school despite being reached by 4Ts

  **82.5% (n=131)**

- **Norms - gender/cultural/social**

  “One of the girls was pregnant and since she is not allowed to live in the same house/under the same roof with the father in her condition, she was forced to drop out of school to go put up with a relative until she delivered”.

  (SCO, Homa Bay County)
Lessons learned:

❖ The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girl’s access to education.

❖ Targeted messages for parents and girls are effective in promoting school re-entry for marginalized girls.

❖ Parental engagement and support is key to promoting school re-entry.

❖ Harmful cultural practices and taboos as major barriers to school re-entry for girls.

❖ Structural- and system-related challenges affects optimal delivery.
  — e.g., Distance, lack of/poor documentation
Policy/Program Implications:

Norms are changing:

- Government ownership of the issue (policy popularization, radio program, 4th ‘T’, number tracking, intervention monitoring, etc.)
- Although monitoring data on boys were not collected, they were also beneficiaries of the intervention. The intervention enhances access to education for boys, as well

“We are really happy with this 4Ts program and the school re-entry project as a whole. It has highlighted the need to have a proper policy on school re-entry and sensitized us on the need to encourage the parenting girls to go back to school. With a document and a structured tool, we are now able to give these girls and their parents the right information, and even the simple messages that are easy to understand to enable them go back to school.”

[Head teacher]
CONCLUSION

- The 4Ts is effective in expanding out-of-school girls’ access to, and inclusion in, education in the time of COVID-19, however, contextual and/or system-related challenges may hinder optimal delivery.

- For scale-up, there is need to:
  
  - Take into consideration the contextual vulnerability that may hinder re-entry and retention;

  - Develop targeted approaches for married girls; and

  - Establish/strengthen tracking system for monitoring and reporting on school re-entry, retention and challenges
Acknowledgements...

We would like to sincerely thank the following Ministry of Education team:

1. Ann Gachoya- AD, Directorate of Policy, Partnerships and EAC Affairs, MoE
2. Truphena Kirongo-AD, Director General’s Office
3. Fredrick Kiiru –CDE, West Pokot County
4. Jane Njogu-CDE, Narok County
5. Millicent Nyabunga- CPC, Homa County and
6. Robert Moseti-CQASO, Narok County
THANK YOU

Q&A
The Population Council conducts research and delivers solutions that improve lives around the world. Big ideas supported by evidence: It’s our model for global change.