

“INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO COUNSELLING”

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INTRODUCTION

- Scouting is an International Educational Movement for young people and the largest youth movement in Kenya with a membership of 300,000 boys and girls. The mission of the Scouting Movement is to develop the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and character formation of the young people in order to be reliable and responsible members of their local and international community. It contributes to young people's education and development by providing a safe environment where young people can learn and grow by doing and discovering for themselves, while experiencing fun, adventure and challenge. Scout Leaders play the role of mentors to young Scouts and provides them with an adult they can relate to.

- According to the 2007 economic survey, there are approximately 8 million pupils in primary school and 1.5 million in secondary schools, Scouting activities take place mostly in schools and other institutions of learning. The youth in Kenya is faced with many challenges and the movement has attempted to diversify its programs over the years to respond to the increasing challenges facing young people today.

- One of the projects that have been initiated through the support of USAID and PATH is “Scouting for Solutions” projects. The project aims at delivering information and skills to young people so as to help them make healthy choices. Through the Scouts Voice news letter, one of the interventions of the SfS project, young people continue to share issues affecting them such as Drug Abuse, Gender Violence, Career Choice, Sexual Harassment, HIV AIDS, Rape etc . The Scouts are trained in alternative journalism or emancipatory journalism that allows young people to assume a more meaningful social and civic role. They write articles, interview their colleagues on specific areas of concern for example drug abuse, family violence. It gives young people a voice, we hear their concerns and aspirations, they share their challenges and interact with other young people through writing. This becomes one of the ways we are able to identify issues affecting young people and the Scout Leader counselor handles them through guidance and counseling.’

- In 2007 Kenya scouts saw the need to bring counseling nearer to young people through an innovative approach that trains Scout leaders (teachers in charge of Scouts). Kenya Scout Association partners with Physiological Health Services, an institution that provides counseling training to the Scout Leaders through the project. The Scout Leaders are provided with basic elements and methodologies of counseling and they use their interaction with the Scouts to address emotional and psychological needs of Scouts who might be going through difficult times. The Scout Leaders extend their services to other needy people outside Scouting. By training Scout leaders as counselors in every school, Kenya Scouts and PATH believe that this is an effective way to bring professional counseling services to more young people who cannot access these services because they are expensive and inaccessible.

METHODS

- Under the SfS project, Kenya Scouts use experiential and participatory methods that utilize a modular curriculum. The key components of the curriculum are:
- Counseling – the counseling module introduces Scout leaders to counseling, provides theoretical premises of counseling as well as skills building exercises. It also helps the Scout leaders understand and put the skills required to provide basic counseling to young people. The counseling given to young Scouts is supplemented by little magnet theatre.

- These are half told stories that Scouts self script, rehearse and perform to the members of the school community and those outside the school. The Scouts invite these members to step forward, role play and complete the stories, once enough options have been enacted; the Scout leader facilitates a discussion of the best options. The performances are geared towards behavior change, provides an avenue for solutions to many challenges facing young people and through the performances the community gets involved in searching for solutions.

- In addition, the young Scouts go through activity packs. Activities geared towards helping young people to adopt healthy lifestyles are packaged in form of packs. The Scouts acquire knowledge; develop skills and attitudes using participatory methods.
- So far, approximately 3,500 Scout leaders have been trained and the programme is still going on. It's expected that every Scout leader trained, he/she recruits 32 Scouts and trains them besides providing counseling to them.

FINDINGS

- The effectiveness of this model of providing counseling services to students in school as well as well as training Scout leaders is being assessed through case studies. The preliminary data from one of the case studies shows that Scout leaders are helping young people especially girls, meet the challenges of life. These challenges include early pregnancy and unhealthy or risky behavior.

CASE STUDY 1

- Muikali, a mother of two girls aged 5 and 8 years, is a dedicated teacher, scout leader and a role model to young girls in her community. She teaches mathematics and science at Emali Primary School in Emali town, Makueni District, Kenya. Emali is a small town located on the Nairobi-Mombasa road in the dry parts of Makueni District. The town is a stopping point for the trucks that ferry goods from the port of Mombasa to destinations such as Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali and Kinshasa. The social environment in Emali town is often cruel and depressing because of the high rate of poverty. Gangs of unemployed youth engage in idle talk at street corners while truck drivers spend their time and money in the drinking joints and lodgings that are scattered throughout this dusty town. To a stranger, it is obvious that hopelessness and idleness among the men create a volatile mix in this town.

- “The presence of truck drivers in bars and lodgings has always been a threat to our young girls in the school”. Muikali explains with the concern of a mother of two girls growing up in this harsh reality. “Three girls from the school have been raped this term. There was also one attempted rape a few weeks ago. As a scout and a mother, I felt that it was my duty to take up the cases because the girls were obviously traumatized. The training I received in counseling under the SfS project has helped me a lot in counseling these girls. A lot still remains to be done but I do the best I can despite limited time and resources” Muikali explains

- Asked what she show as a way out of the challenges facing girls in her school, Muikali replied: “Our main objective right now is to keep the pupils and especially the girls, focused on their school work to avoid the temptation of engaging in sex with the truck drivers. Scouting and the SfS project have really helped the children by involving them in activities that instill discipline. It is also giving scout leaders counseling skills that they need to help these pupils face their challenges with confidence”.
- *Muikali – Teacher and scout leader - Emali*

CASE STUDY 2

- Naftali, is a scout leader and a father of two boys and one girl. He teaches in a primary school near his home where everyone knows him as “mwalimu” Naftali was trained under the SfS project and introduced to counseling and the modular curriculum that teaches young scouts “how to learn by doing”.
- “I have found the approach used in the SfS project very helpful to myself and my scouts. I am now a better scout leader, teacher and father. The counseling module has particularly helped me work with the scouts better. There are very many challenges that face our children in schools including drugs, peer pressure, early pregnancies and others”.

- Asked how he has been able to use his skills in counseling, Naftali explained: “I hold counseling sessions with scouts every week. Other pupils in the school have come to know about it and they often come to me with issues. The community here is very poor so children also face a lot of issues at home”.
- Naftali further explained that the training influenced him personally – “soon after the training, I went for VCT and I am happy I did because I now know my status”.
- *Naftali – teacher and scout leader - Bungoma District*

CONCLUSION

- One priority finding is that we are able to reach many young people especially girls with professional counseling services who otherwise would have missed either because of poverty or counseling is not available. In Kenya, experience has shown that professional counseling is quite expensive and inaccessible to many young people.
- The parents of the Scouts' committees' in schools have provided another target group that the Scout leaders are providing counseling to. This is a rare opportunity and we believe it will not only improve the relationship between children and their parents but also enhance family cohesiveness

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