



## Youth Engagement Project

# Haki Talk Series

## Child Rights and Child Protection Forum



## Report

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Kangemi -Nairobi

Compiled by: Leonida Odongo

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## Abbreviations

**ACRWC:** African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child

**KPL:** Kenyan Peasants League

**STI:** Sexually Transmitted Infection

**UNCRC:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Background

Child rights and child protection are anchored in international, regional and national instruments. For example, from a global perspective, rights of children are contained in the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC), at regional level in the Africa Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as well as constitutions of many countries across the world. Child rights and child protection differs from country to country, however in the majority of African states, a child is a person below the age of 18. The vulnerability of children and youth warrants their protection.

## Introduction

Kenyan Peasant's League (KPL) Women's Collective organised a session with children and youth on 29 December 2021. The aim of the forum was to provide mentorship for children, discuss hygiene and distribute dignity packs (sanitary pads and panties) to vulnerable children. The forum was held at Kaptagat Hall in Kangemi-Nairobi. Haki Nawiri Afrika provided technical support in terms of child rights and child protection training during the forum.

### Introductions and Icebreaking



### Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other

There was an introduction of participants to each other. This was done in order to break the ice and enhance effective participation.

### Participants

The forum had 75 participants (50 primary school pupils, 3 university students and 5 secondary school students and 17 parents). The participants were drawn from Westlands Constituency which included: Kangemi, Githogoro, Deep Sea, Kibagare and Ndumboini.



**Cross section of participants**



### **Part 1: Menstruation and Personal Hygiene by Judy Awuor -Kenyan Peasants League**

The participants were taken through personal hygiene. It was said that a person should be clean at all time and that hygiene is not only about the body but also includes the hair and overall presentation including clothing. It was mentioned that hygiene during menstruation is important in order to prevent bad odour. It was emphasised that a person must change their pads and the best pad was said to be Sunny Girl because it is not perfumed. It was said that perfumed pads cause irritation on the genitalia. It was explained that the best panties to wear are cotton panties as they allow aeration. It was mentioned that other pads have a gel which is not healthy and it was said that this gel is cancerous.

### **Menstruation and Personal Hygiene Session**



One participant was asked to demonstrate how they put pads in a panty. This process was considered important because many people do not know how to handle and dispose of pads effectively. It was said that the best way to handle used pads was to wrap in a newspaper and then throw in a dustbin. It was mentioned that pads should not be thrown in the toilet because they block the toilet. Parents/guardians present during the meeting were asked whether they share information about menstruation with their children, it was observed that very few parents engage their children in such discussion. It was noted that sex, sexuality and menstruation are still taboo subjects in many Kenyan households with many parents assuming that talking about sexuality enhances engagement in sexual practices.

Parents/ guardians were urged to create time with their children, discuss issues including sexuality because children and young people end up getting information either from the internet or from their peers and are at risk of being misled or misinformed.

It was said that failure of parents/guardians to talk to their children about sexuality is one factor that makes children and young people start exploring and end up with unwanted pregnancies, STIs and sometimes abortion which is risky. Examples were given of a clean-up where foetus were found within Kangemi, it was shared that when young people are given the correct information including consequences of their activities, they are more likely to make informed decisions and at the same time pass this correct information to fellow youth.

In the forum children shared various rights violations observed in the community, personal hygiene, signs and symptoms of child abuse, handling abused children. The forum also discussed goal setting among students and setting personal visions. Sanitary pads were distributed to children during the forum. It was pointed out that life already is difficult because of the high cost of living and the participants were cautioned against involving in unwanted sexual debut.

## Part 2: Mentorship by Cecilia Katuma-Kenyatta University

It was said that it is important to have a goal in life as this helps guide one's path. It was pointed out that many young people drop out of school because of peer pressure but if one is focused they can be what they want in life. It was emphasized that the participants, especially the young children need to adopt an attitude of hard work. Personal experiences were shared of moving from primary school to secondary school and eventually university as a result of being focused and having a plan on where one wanted to be in life. It was said that young people should not choose the kind of economic activities they engage in as long as it is legitimate. It was pointed out that some young people belittle blue collar jobs such as selling *sukuma wiki*<sup>1</sup> while this can be a good source of income, instead of depending on men for money.

It was emphasized that once a girl is educated, life becomes better and she can make choices of what to do with her life. It was said that once educated, one has a broad choice of people to interact with, people capable of transforming one's life. It was said that many girls are lured cheaply by *bodaboda*<sup>2</sup> riders.

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<sup>1</sup> Sukumawiki is a Kiswahili word for kales

<sup>2</sup> Bodaboda is a term for motorcycle, used commonly as a source of public transport

## Mentoring Session



### Part 3: Child Rights, Child Protection and Parental Responsibility by Leonida Odongo-Haki Nawiri Afrika

During the session, human rights was defined as entitlements that one has by virtue of being a human being. Human rights were further defined as what people ought to enjoy because they are human being and this is protected by law. It was however pointed out that despite the emphasis of equality when it comes to rights, there are various impediments that hinder some people from accessing rights. It was further mentioned that violation of rights of others can either be intentional or unintentional due to ignorance. The causes of rights violations were explained as poverty where for example children get neglected by their parents because of the economic status of the parents/ guardians leading to inability to provide basic services such as food, clothing and shelter, religious reasons for example there are some religions or sects that do not allow children to go to school or do not allow for their congregants to go to hospital when sick.

#### What is Ailing our Community?

The participants were asked to share the various rights violations that they have either experienced, heard about or saw happening in their communities. The responses were as follows:

- Defilement of a child
- Child neglect
- Excessive beating
- GBV within the household
- Substance abuse of parents
- Teenage pregnancies
- Child marriage
- Abortion
- Parental irresponsibility

Examples of child rights were explained as:

- Right to life
- Right to a name
- Right to education
- Right to health and medical care
- Protection from child labour and armed conflict
- Right to a name and nationality
- Protection from sexual exploitation
- Protection from harmful cultural rites for example FGM
- Right to leisure
- Protection from torture and
- Right to privacy

### Deliberation on Child Rights



### Forms and Types of Child Abuse

Child abuse was defined as harm to children that results from human action or inaction. Child abuse was also defined as anything that causes physical, sexual, psychological and mental injury to a child.



Causes of child abuse were described as follows:

Emotional status of parents /guardian	This results from stress, depression or illness leading to violent outbursts
Lack of poor bonding between child and parent/guardian	For example, if the child is unplanned, closely spaced leading to overwhelming of the parent or caregiver
Family crisis	Due to unemployment for example during the onset of Covid 19, poverty, alcoholism, divorce or separation of parents
Parents/guardians background	A person abused as a child may end up abusing others because of what they went through growing up
Undesirable characteristics for a child	This happens when a child has disability for example hyperactive behavior, autism, blindness, deaf, dumb or intersex

The participants were taken through forms and types of child abuse to enable them understand, recognize these forms of abuse and report when they see cases of abuse.

### Forms of Child Abuse

The forms of child abuse were described as familial which taken place in the family or within a home. Examples given were child labour, excessive beating and verbal abuse. Extra-familial abuse was described as abuse taking place outside the home and this included child labour and sexual labour. Institutional abuse was described as abuse taking place within institutions such as schools, hospitals, day care centres, children's homes, remand homes and police stations.

### Types of Child Abuse

Types of child abuse were discussed as **sexual abuse** occurring when children are used for gratification of sexual desires. Examples of these abuse were described as defilement, touching a child's sexual organs, engaging children in pornography.

**Physical abuse** was described as abuse that has manifestations that can be observed for example excess punishment, beating, burning and biting.

**Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse was described as psychological ill treatment that affects a child's normal development. Examples given were shouting, threatening, belittling, teasing children. It was also said that parents/guardians who are over protective of children are emotionally abusing them. It was emphasized that emotional abuse affects children's self-esteem.

**Child neglect** was described as a form of child abuse where parents or guardians do not provide the necessary basic needs for children. It was also said that neglect also comes when children are left unattended for example locked in houses.

## Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

Signs and symptoms of child abuse were describing as follows:

### Sexual abuse

Physical signs	Behavioural signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken hymen in females</li> <li>• Tears, bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks around the sexual organs</li> <li>• STIs</li> <li>• Pregnancy]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger, anxiety and tearfulness</li> <li>• Promiscuity (in older children)</li> <li>• Withdrawal from friends</li> <li>• Aggressiveness</li> <li>• Possession of unexplained gifts and monies</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>

### Physical Abuse

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burns</li> <li>• Pinch marks</li> <li>• Bite marks</li> <li>• Bleeding and bruises</li> <li>• Inconsistent explanation for injuries that are recurrent</li> <li>• Poorly healed bones or dislocations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truancy</li> <li>• Over compliant or being over-submissive</li> <li>• General fear of adults</li> <li>• Fear of returning home or parents/guardians being contacted</li> <li>• Poor /deteriorating school performance</li> <li>• Aggressiveness, resentment and violent behavior</li> <li>• Bed wetting, especially when it had stopped</li> </ul>
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### Neglect

Physical Signs	Behavioral signs
Poor personal hygiene Constant fatigue Malnourishment Illnesses Inappropriate or inadequate clothing	Lateness or absence from school (truancy) Dirty skin Diseases Life infestation Low self esteem

### Emotional Abuse

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden changes in body weight</li> <li>• Inadequate personal hygiene</li> <li>• Sadness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive or violent behavior</li> <li>• Alcoholism or substance abuse</li> <li>• Sleep disorders including nightmares</li> <li>• Low self esteem</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Poor school performance</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Self-harm including suicide attempts</li> <li>• Desperation for attention</li> <li>• Self-isolation</li> <li>• Refusal to speak (mute)</li> <li>• Eating disorders or lack of appetite</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul>
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### Effects of child Abuse

- The effects of child abuse were describing a:
- Damaging to children physical, emotionally
- Medical problems due to injuries or sexual abuse
- Fistula
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Behavioural problems for example aggressiveness
- School dropout and truancy
- Sexually Transmitted diseases
- Promiscuity
- Prostitution
- Isolation
- Low self esteem
- Depression
- Mental health problems
- Death

### Experience Sharing on Various Abuses in the Community



### Parental Responsibility

It was mentioned that parents and guardians have a responsibility of taking care of children and providing for their basic needs. It was said that parental responsibility is contained in the Children's Act. An example was given of parents who send children to school when children are not feeling well. It was emphasised that such acts amount to irresponsible parenthood.



### Cross section of Parents, Guardians and Children



It was explained that parental responsibility are the duties, rights, power, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent or guardian has over a child. Rights of a parent were described as determining the name of the child, providing social, moral and religious guidance and property administration on behalf of the child. The duties of a parent were described as maintenance of the child, provision of adequate diet, shelter, medical care and education for the child.

### Handling Cases of Child Abuse

Ways of handling cases of abuse were described as follows:

- Believe the abuse survivor
- Place the responsibility of the abuse on the perpetrator and not the victim
- Remain calm, accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully without interrupting
- Make it clear that you are taking the abuse survivor seriously
- Let them know what you are going to do with the information they have given you
- Let them know what will happen as a result
- Make a note of what is said and who is present
- Use the child's exact words as much as possible

### Handling Sexual Abuse

Ways of handling cases of sexual abuse were discussed as follows:

- Do not wash the child
- Do not throw away the soiled clothes worn by the abuse survivor
- Fold the clothes and wrap them in a newspaper
- Take the child to the nearest hospital

- Report the matter to the police
- Notify a human rights organization of Children's Department in your area

### Way of Preventing Child Abuse

Way of preventing child abuse were described as follows:

- Awareness creation on child rights and legislations that protect children
- Formation of community abused child protection structures
- Empowering children with information on child rights and child protection
- Encouraging children to report cases of abuse
- Poverty eradication programs to enhance economic support for parents and guardians
- Advocacy at local and national levels on child protection
- Enhance parental responsibility towards children

### Participants Comments

- When children and youth are aware of their rights they are able to protect themselves and others
- When children become conscious of their rights, they become more protected
- Young people including children need mentoring to enable them become focused and have positive role models
- Parents, especially mothers should befriend their daughters
- Parental responsibility contributes to child rights and child protection
- When children are empowered they are able to protect themselves from abuse
- Parental responsibility is key if children are to be guided properly
- Children and young people should be empowered to recognise abuse and be able to report

### Part 5: Sanitary Pads Distribution

Sanitary pads were distributed to participants in primary and secondary schools.



## Conclusion

The forum realised the set objectives of creating awareness on menstrual health and hygiene, parental responsibility, child rights and child protection. It was agreed that KPL would organise more sessions bringing more children and youth. It was also agreed that in future empowerment platforms will be held for the boy child and male youth for purposes of nurturing them. More forums need to be held in informal settlements to build capacity of children and parents on child rights and child protection.

## Annex 1: Social Media Engagement







**Haki Nawiri** @HakiNawiri · Dec 30, 2021

Very important to create safe spaces in the community for children and youth to air their views [@nanodo2001](#) [#ChildRightsKE](#) [@EACHRights](#) [@EACRN](#) [@thefacipulator](#) [@PeasantsLeague](#) [@BrianOdero7](#) [@AbukaAlfred](#) [@ICRW](#) [@HVMFoundationKE](#) [@kefeado](#) [@UNICEF](#)



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Parental responsibility contributes to child protection [@nanodo2001](#) [@thefacipulator](#) [@annet\\_kendi](#) [@Owiti1Susan](#) [@hubafrique](#) [#ChildRightsKE](#) [@feminist\\_rep](#) [@cghrkenya](#) [@BrianOdero7](#) [@AbukaAlfred](#) [@KGaudenzio](#) [@ICRW](#) [@Didara](#) [@UNICEFKenya](#)



**Haki Nawiri** @HakiNawiri · Dec 30, 2021

Period poverty adversely affects children and young people and makes some exchange sex for pads [@nanodo2001](#) [@Owiti1Susan](#) [@PeasantsLeague](#) [@kefeado](#) [@EACHRights](#) [@EACRN](#) [@AbukaAlfred](#) [@BrianOdero7](#) [@wakili\\_mburu](#) [@lrf\\_ke](#)

