

SLUM-CHILD FOUNDATION, NAIROBI, KENYA

Authors: Ivy Chumo, George Ochieng, Jackline Syonguvi, Stephen Onyango, Lavenda Ligala, Diana Musyoka, Hayley Stewart, Blessing Mberu, Caroline Kabaria (ARISE Hub).

INTRODUCTION

Supported by the ARISE Responsive Challenge Fund, the African Population and Health Research Centre worked with Slum-Child Foundation (SCF) to address water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Clean water often costs more in informal settlements when it is provided by intermediaries, reducing the amount of water people can afford for handwashing. With a lack of space, residents often rely on shared communal toilets, which can increase transmission risk through surfaces and can be hard for pit emptiers to de-sludge when full. Experts on WASH have previously mostly not taken into consideration the voices of children. This brief presents activities, key outcomes, lessons and recommendations.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Inception

In May 2023, we introduced the project to the Ministry of Education at the sub-county level, as well as other key stakeholders in the community. We received authorisation to work with over 30 children from five schools in Korogocho informal settlement.



2. School visits and selection of champions

We did school visits, had discussions with the teachers involved, and introduced the project. We identified 30 junior champions and two teachers in each school to participate in the project. We worked with teachers to share WASH skills with the selected champions. Champions have been encouraged to pass on these skills to other children in their schools.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Advocacy should always involve community voices:** Involvement of the people at grassroots level can help in advocacy and in coming up with concrete petitions.
- **Respect children's views:** Children's views should also be respected and be considered when making decisions especially at the ground level on matters that pertain them.
- **Sensitization and awareness creation** on issues of child rights protection to parents, teachers and other stakeholders to gain more support in advocating on issues affecting children.
- **Integration of WASH with education:** Integrate WASH education into the school curriculum to ensure that children learn about hygiene practices, water conservation, and sanitation from an early age.
- **Health clubs:** Encourage schools to establish health clubs or WASH committees to sustain WASH efforts.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Establish mechanisms for monitoring WASH service delivery and collecting feedback from the community. This will also enhance regular assessment of the functionality and maintenance of WASH facilities for sustainability.
- **Social inclusion in WASH:** Consider specific needs of women, girls, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in WASH service delivery. This can be achieved by ensuring that facilities are accessible, safe, and inclusive for all community members.

“The people of Korogocho (and informal settlements) now know what the government is supposed to do for them, as well as the role of every elected leaders. They have learnt a good way of accountability which is people centred. We are glad because we co-led the introduction of WASH champions in schools”

Executive Director, SCF

3. School focus group discussions (FGDs)

We held FGDs with children to hear their opinions and thoughts on WASH. We incorporated art and puppetry to facilitate these discussions with the children, and to identify WASH related challenges and opportunities.



4. Community forums and dialogues

We conducted five forums composed of 30 participants in the five villages we had identified. In every group we included people with disabilities, older persons, the elderly, youth leaders and women leaders.



WASH CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY BOTH CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY

- Inconsistent water supply
- Supply of dirty/contaminated water
- Open sewage lines and poorly maintained sanitation facilities
- Flooding of sewer lines during rainy seasons
- Inadequate community toilets and water points in the community, hence overcrowding
- Water and sewer line bursts
- Overflowing of open sewage lines into homes during rainy season
- Inadequate sewage management leading to spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera
- Insufficient and poorly managed sewage system
- Lack of privacy in some sanitation facilities

PROPOSED SOLUTION

- Government to ensure quality water and sewer systems
- Water purification before being supplied
- Closing sewage lines and ensuring maintenance of WASH facilities
- Drilling more boreholes
- Regularly monitoring water and sewer pipes to reduce bursts
- Increasing number of sanitation facilities and water points
- Creating quality sewer and water lines
- Regular cleaning of toilets
- Develop affordable, eco-friendly toilet designs suitable for slum environments

5. Sauti Yetu extravaganza event

We concluded the project with a large-scale event to launch the declaration document containing the views we collected from the community on WASH. The event was attended by over 400 people. Key stakeholders included community members, CBOs, children, teachers, local leaders, political leaders, the commissioner and several chiefs and assistant chiefs. The declaration was handed over to the Nairobi Women Representative Hon. Esther Muthoni Passaris. The team has been following up to ensure that the proposal included in the declaration is implemented.



KEY OUTCOMES

- Urban marginalised people are better able to come together, identify their priorities on health and well-being, and develop action to achieve these.
- Stronger relationships between community organisations, between urban marginalised people and government/other organisations/community.
- Empowerment of WASH champions in schools.

KEY LESSONS

- **Involvement of children:** There is a need to involve children in decision making processes especially on matters that touch on their wellbeing. Children responded well to discussing issues affecting them, coming up with solutions to the various problems that their communities face.
- **Normalise discussions on WASH:** Normalizing conversations about hygiene and sanitation can reduce stigma and encourage open dialogue among children. Some children are ashamed to talk about the sanitation situations at home because they are dire.
- **Peer influence and peer support networks:** Children often learn best from their peers, through activities like peer-led hygiene clubs, children-led campaigns, and role-playing exercises.
- **Sustainability and ownership:** Empowering children to become WASH champions and agents of change within their schools and beyond the school gates.
- **School-wide approach to WASH:** Adopting a whole-school approach to WASH that involves not only learners but also teachers and parents, helps to create a supportive environment where everyone plays a role in promoting and maintaining WASH standards.
- **Creative communication:** It is important to always use creative and age-appropriate communication methods to convey WASH messages effectively. This could include storytelling, games, drama, art, music, and multimedia materials to capture children's attention and make learning fun.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

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The UKRI GCRF Accountability for Informal Urban Equity Hub is a multi-country Hub with partners in the UK, Sierra Leone, India, Bangladesh and Kenya which we call ARISE. The Hub works with communities in slums and informal settlements to support processes of accountability related to health. It is funded through the UKRI Collective Fund.

ABOUT ARISE AND THE RESPONSIVE CHALLENGE FUND

The ARISE Hub – Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity – is a research consortium, instituted to enhance accountability and improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised populations living in informal urban settlements in low-and middle-income countries.

The ARISE vision is to catalyse change in approaches to enhancing accountability and improving the health and wellbeing of poor, marginalised people living in informal urban settlements.

ARISE is guided by a process of data collection, building capacity, and supporting people to exercise their right to health. ARISE works closely with the communities themselves; with a particular focus on vulnerable people living in the informal settlements; often overlooked in many projects and initiatives.

ARISE was launched in 2019 and is a 5-year project. It is implemented in four countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Sierra Leone. Through a £1 million Responsive Challenge Fund, ARISE provided small grants to organisations that test innovative approaches to improving health and wellbeing linked to the ARISE Theory of Change.

ABOUT APHRC

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is a leading pan-African research institution. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, the centre seeks to drive change with evidence led by a growing cadre of research leaders from across Africa.

APHRC has for the last two decades run numerous research projects and generated evidence that has shaped policy and practice across African countries. The center has actively engaged policymakers and other key stakeholders to achieve measurable policy impacts informed by rigorous evidence-based research.

ABOUT SLUM CHILD FOUNDATION

Slum Child Foundation (SCF) is a registered non-governmental organisation with special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. SCF started as a community-based organisation in 2008 and later become a non-governmental organisation.

The Foundation is dedicated to helping the most vulnerable and marginalised members of Kenyan society. We work with vulnerable and marginalised children, women and youths from major slums in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Foundation has developed interventions that promotes safe spaces for children in the slum of Korogocho, they include, addiction prevention initiatives and implementation of actions to promote children's rights, prevention of violence against children, safe WASH, prevention of gender-based violence, promotion of life skills for self-reliance and sustainability to promote women's and girls' empowerment.