

WERK Quarterly Newsletter

Linking Research to Advocacy and Action

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Would you like to present your research findings or research proposals to WERK members?

This will be a great opportunity for you to get invaluable feedback from your peers.

Please contact info@werk.co.ke for further information

From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to this 2nd edition of WERK quarterly newsletter for the year 2023. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep our members up to date with the latest organizational and program activities and secondly, to bring forth issues on education, women and girls, gender and research.

In this issue, we highlight the activities that have taken place between April 2023 and June 2023, WERK programs and up-coming events.

We hope that you will find the information useful. We would like to welcome suggestions and contributions from members for future publications.

Thank you for your continued support.

Mrs. Sophia Yiega, Executive Officer, WERK

Watoto Wote Twende Shule

The Story of Maya from Maweni Primary School, Tana River County

In a small rural village, where opportunities are scarce and traditional beliefs often overshadow dreams, a young girl named Maya (not her real name) from Boji village faced a life-altering challenge. Pregnant at the tender age of sixteen, her dreams of education seemed distant and unattainable. However, against all odds, her determination and the support of her community granted her a second chance at fulfilling her educational aspirations.

Maya's journey began with uncertainty and despair. The news of her pregnancy brought shame and disappointment to her family and the community. In a society where early marriages and childbearing were the norm, education for girls was often neglected. Forced to drop out of school, Maya faced immense challenges and doubted whether she would ever have the opportunity to continue with her education.

Amidst the difficulties, a ray of hope emerged when WERK visited Tana River County and discovered the girl's story. Recognizing her potential and resilience, and with the support of the head teacher, Maya was offered an opportunity to re-enroll in school. The chance to break the cycle of poverty and ignorance motivated the girl to embrace the opportunity with unwavering determination.

Returning to school as a teenage mother was not without its challenges. Maya faced judgment, whispers, and occasional taunts from her peers. However, with the support of her teachers, friends, and WERK, she found solace in a new found resilience. Maya refused to let the stigma define her, and with every obstacle she overcame, her strength grew.

As time passed, Maya's story began to inspire others in her community. Her unwavering commitment to education and her ability to balance motherhood and studies ignited a spark of hope in the hearts of girls who had faced similar circumstances. Maya's courage became a catalyst for change, prompting families to reconsider the value of education for their daughters and challenging societal norms.

Maya's journey, from an uncertain future to reclaiming her dreams, serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of education. Efforts on supporting teachers to address sexual exploitation and abuse issues, Maya's resilience, combined with the support of the head teacher, enabled her to break barriers and rise above societal expectations. Maya's story reminds us that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, deserves the opportunity to access education and pursue a brighter future.



Ms Elizabeth Owiti, Program Manager Watoto Wote Twende Shule Program holding a community engagement meeting with locals at Hosingo Primary School, Tana River

FINANCING VIOLENCE FREE FUTURES IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: MAKING INVESTMENTS THAT ACCELERATE PROGRESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

The financing violence free futures in east and Southern Africa study is in progress and the final report is almost ready. A dissemination workshop has been planned to take place in July, 2023.



Dr. Sheila Wamahi, Ms. Wangui Nganga and Lilian Onyango during a report-writing workshop at WERK office

WERK HOSTS EDTECH HUB REPRESENTAIVES

Representatives from Edtech Hub including David Hollow-Director of Research, Katy Jordan-Senior Researcher, Jan Sequeira-Research Portfolio Manager and Jill Makunga-Communications Manager paid a courtesy call visit to WERK office on 12th June 2023. The purpose of the visit was to understand more about the in-country work undertaken by WERK on behalf of Edtech Hub in Muranga and Mombasa counties and to gain further insight into the research being undertaken.



The team in a meeting led by the Executive Officer Mrs. Sophia Yiega



David Hallow and Jan Sequeira having a chat with Dr. Mary Otieno, Kevin Otieno and Consolata Otondi



A group photo of the members after the meeting. On the front row seated from left is the Chairperson WERK Dr. Alice Omariba, Jan Sequiera, Mrs. Sophia Yiega EO WERK, David Hollow and Dr. Mary Otieno. Standing from left hand side is Dr. Eunice Mvungu Board Member WERK, Mr Conrad Watola, Mr. James Angoye, Katy Jordan, Consolata Otondi, Elizabeth Owiti, Dr. Janerose Kibaara Board Member WERK, Jill Makunga, Francis Muniu and Kevin Otieno.

WERK AND EDTECH VISIT TO RWAITIRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Edtech Hub Representatives and WERK visited Rwaitira Primary School in Gatanga, Murang'a County on 14th June, 2023. Rwaitira Primary School is one of the treatment schools that WERK is working with in the Digital Personalized Learning (DPL) to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes in Kenyan classrooms study in Murang'a County. The purpose of the visit was to see how the DPL tools are being integrated into classroom activities and the challenges schools are facing while using the tools. Later on, the team paid a courtesy call visit to the Education office at County Government of Murang'a and held discussions on the status of education in the county.



The CEO Education Murang'a in a meeting with CEC Education, Edtech , WERK, EIDU and SCDE ECDE Gatanga

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (NACOSTI) OFFICIALS PAY A COURTESY CALL VISIT TO WERK OFFICE

Officials from National Commission for Science and Technology and INNOVATION (NACOSTI) paid a courtesy call visit to WERK office on 21st June, 2023. The purpose of the visit was to conduct a verification of WERK. WERK had applied to be registered with NACOSTI as a research institution in the year 2019.

NACOSTI is established by the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, No. 28 of 2013 (ST&I Act) as a State Corporation. The mandate of NACOSTI is to regulate and assure quality in Science, Technology and Innovation Sector and advises the Government in matters related thereto. The functions of NACOSTI include accrediting research institutes and approving all scientific research in Kenya; assuring relevance and quality of science, technology, and innovation programmes in research institutes; undertake, or cause to be undertaken, regular inspections, monitoring and evaluation of research institutions to ensure compliance with set standards and guidelines among other functions.



A group photo of the team including NACOSTI officials and WERK members led by the Executive Officer Mrs. Sophia Yiega.

WERK REPRESENTED IN AN E-LEARNING AFRICA CONFERENCE, IN DAKAR SENEGAL

WERK took part in an eLearning Africa Conference that was held in Dakar, Senegal from 24th to 26th May, 2023. Dr. Mary Otieno, WERK who is the lead researcher for the Digital Personalised Learning in Kenya: Bridging Research and Practice to Co-Create New Classroom Models for Learning, a research that WERK is conducting in Murang'a County on behalf of Edtech Hub represented WERK in the conference.



Right photo-Dr. Mary Otieno making a presentation during the conference and left, with Rebecca Daltry from Edtech Hub

The purpose of Digital Personalised Learning in Kenya study is to conceptualize and measure educational outcomes when integrating Digital Personalised Learning (DPL) into classrooms. Preliminary findings from our phase 1 cycle 0, indicate the following insights:

- As with any educational intervention, it is important to consider what education purpose a DPL tool is serving when integrating them into classrooms.
- Our Design Based Research (DBR) has highlighted the importance of not narrowing our understanding of the potential impact of these tools.
- Since DPL tools like the EIDU platform are designed to provide personalised learning content to learners, the focus is often on learning outcomes, particularly in the domains of literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers in our study were especially positive about the tool when they could see that the learning content was aligned with the curriculum and their lesson plans: a key theme in the qualitative data was teachers conceptualizing the DPL platform as an opportunity for learners to practice what they had been taught in lessons, consolidate their understanding and have additional opportunities to learn.
- The software also provides the opportunity for learning analytics: EGMA and EGRA are built into the device, generating evidence about learning outcomes in these domains (understanding the possibilities of this is the focus of another strand of our research)
- It was noticeable that teachers spoke about other benefits of the DPL tool: they highlighted that the tool helped improve engagement in the classroom, both through providing additional learning opportunities for learners who were sitting idle, and as a motivation for learners - some anecdotally noted that attendance had improved since the introduction of the device as learners were keen to use it.
- Teachers also reference other educational impacts such as the potential to enhance learners psychomotor skills and digital literacy

- And there were a number of interesting examples of the device being used as a form of peer learning, with learners engaging with it in pairs or groups, such as explaining the instructions to each other.
- These findings all highlight the importance of considering how a DPL tool is conceptualised when integrating it into classrooms: of course the opportunities to enhance core learning outcomes and generate assessment data is key if it is to be aligned to the curriculum (and we are assessing this through the RCT), but it is also important to consider other educational areas which may be enhanced or impeded by integrating the tool.

Reflections:

- Conducting research alongside teachers highlighted that learning is a two-way process when developing EdTech tools.
- Our conceptualization of the tool developed through teachers' insights include the fact that the learner experience is motivated through using the tool and it can encourage peer to peer learning.
- Teachers' own understanding of the EIDU app developed, as they began to describe it as a complimentary partner that helps and supports continuity of their lesson as "assistant class manager".
- Finally, the most striking thing was that teachers began to suggest more ways in which the app could be improved – that indicated to us that they were more open to new ideas and exploratory with the EIDU app in solving their additional pedagogical challenges.

WERK COMMEMORATES DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

The Day of the African Child is marked on 16th June of every year. This year's theme was "The Rights of the Child in the digital environment". WERK commemorated this day in Kilifi, Narok and Tana River counties.

In Kilifi, our staff joined other organizations in celebrating this day at Kiwandani Primary School. In Tana River, we joined pupils at Jajavo Primary School to offer mentorship to the learners while in Narok County; we celebrated the day with teachers and learners from Poroko Special School.

Here is a write up (not by a member of WERK) that speaks to Day of the African Child 2023: Protect children's rights in a digital world - <https://tinyurl.com/2p8en3mu>



Pupils from Kiwandani Primary School in Kilifi holding a match during the Day Of the African Child

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

WERK collaborated with UNICEF in enrolling 100 adolescents students (both boys and girls) from 10 secondary schools in Narok County in mentorship and community service learning to equip them with relevant 21st century skills to prepare them for life and work.

Community Service Learning is carried out with an aim of making the learners get to learn more about the community and themselves while fulfilling a need in the community as they apply skills and knowledge gained in classroom. That is, exploring opportunity to infuse the class work with real life experience in a way that make them identify a common problem with possible solutions that they then take lead in offering.

The students visited Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) Gazi Station. KMFRI specializes in conducting research in aquaculture, oceanography and critical ecosystem. They also support community groups such as Mikoko Pamoja and Gazi Boardwalk. Mikoko Pamoja deals with the protection of mangrove trees while Gazi Boardwalk specializes with ecotourism.

The KMFRI staff gave a career guidance talk to the students. Later, the learners had an opportunity to visit and learn how the marine ecosystem works, mangrove restoration and uses, ecotourism and carbon reduction in the atmosphere. They also had an opportunity to take part in preparation of mangrove nurseries as well as planting of the mangrove seedlings. The students later took part in preparation of mangrove nurseries as well as planting of the mangrove seedlings.



Students taking part in planting trees as part of conservation of the environment during the CLS activity

In other events

1. WERK held a virtual webinar on Analysis and interpreting quantitative data in social science research on 11th May, 2023. Mr. Conrad Watola was the presenter. Members who have research findings or research proposals to present can get in touch with the secretariat.
 2. A virtual meeting was held on 22nd June, 2023 where a presentation was made by Mr. Edwin Osundwa on the newly revised Strategic Plan 2023–2025.
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This quarterly newsletter is produced by Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK). The articles are contributed by WERK members. Articles from non members who would like to share their experiences on issues concerning education, women and girls, gender and research issues are welcome.

All contributions should be addressed to info@werk.co.ke

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