

WERK Quarterly Newsletter

Linking Research to Advocacy and Action

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WERK invites you to present your research findings or research proposals to WERK members in the coming months.

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 3rd 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 July 2023 and September 2023, WERK programs and upcoming 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

FROM A CHILD LABOURER TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC STUDENT: *The story of Swabir Islam from Anole Primary School, Bangale Sub County*

Some people know poverty by all its names. They know it intimately because it always there, walking with them on their bare feet and empty stomachs. They are aware of its presence every time they have to patch up their school shirt and wear two shorts to cover their bum because their school shorts are torn. They are reminded of its companionship every time the teacher asks them why they did not carry a book or a pen to school. Such is the story of Swabir Islam, a grade 5 student at Anole Primary School in Bangale Sub County, Tana River County. His situation was so dire that he had decided he was done with school in his first term of grade 4 in 2022.

He decided, rather than live with the never-ending stench of poverty hovering over him, he would rather go and work. He was a big boy after all. At the tender age of 11, he had to be a big boy. As such, his decision to get into the work force began so he became a mango picker. His small size made him a perfect candidate. He would climb up mango trees and pick them for whoever was willing to pay until one day he missed a step and slid off the branch he was on. To date, he still has a limp from the accident. A permanent reminder that things didn't work out as well as he had hoped because that accident was the end of him being hired for the job. He was no longer useful and misery became his company. His next best bet was to gather wood and sell to charcoal burners.

The Enrolment drive committee in the schools within the region, championed by Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK) through the Watoto Wote Twende Shule program have been actively involved in identification and enrolling back the out-of-school children back to school. Through the efforts of Mr. Franktide Ddaiddo, Swabir was re-enrolled back to school, albeit with a limp from his hiatus but with a smile and renewed hope. Nobody would send him home for books and stationery anymore because the Watoto Wote Twende Shule provided education kits for all the out of schoolchildren re-enrolled to their target schools. Swabir who only had two books to his name (one of which was borrowed) in a class he needed 12, had hopes that things would get better and he would not have to go back to work.

Swabir has turned into an enthusiastic learner who does not miss school at all. The school bag he got and the books he received have all played a huge role in motivating him to keep going to school. Other things like the food program have played a part too but in Swabir's own words, he is so happy he does not have to borrow books to use in class.

Swabir is not the only story of children forced into child labour due to poverty in Bangale Sub County. The boys mostly engage in charcoal burning and livestock rearing. The girls are afflicted with early pregnancies and consequently early marriages in a bid to escape poverty. While the enrollment drives get more of these children back to school, there is worry that some parents, not seeing the value of education, counteract the efforts made by the enrollment drive committees. Community dialogues focusing on changing the mindset of the communities has been key in ensuring that the out of school children especially those re-enrolled after dropping out to work, are not convinced to drop out of school again.

Digital Personalized Learning (Dpl) To Improve Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes In Kenyan Pre-Primary Classrooms-Endline Evaluation

WERK is collaborating with Edtech Hub, a global research partnership that aims to empower people by giving them the evidence they need to make decisions about technology in education, to conduct research in selected primary schools within Muranga and Mombasa counties. The research is assessing the impact of the EIDU app on learning outcomes. The EIDU app includes a digitized version of the Tayari programme (lesson plans for pre-primary teachers) and personalized learning content for learners in PP1 and PP2. The research aims to find out more about how the EIDU app is being used and the impact of the content on learning outcomes. WERK is currently training assessors who will undertake the endline evaluation of the DPL project in selected schools within Muranga County in the month of October 2023.



Mrs. Sophia Yiega, the Executive Officer at WERK addressing the enumerators during the 2 days training.

Watoto Wote Twende Shule Quarterly Review Meeting

A quarterly review meeting of the Watoto Wote Twende Shule project was held at Chambai Springs Hotel from 30th August 2023 to 1st September, 2023. The overall objective of the review meeting was to share on successes achieved, challenges experienced and cross learning from the different counties. Monitoring and evaluation, financial reporting and fundraising were also discussed in the meeting. The 3-days meeting which was attended by 21 staff members, led by the Executive Officer Mrs. Sophia Yiega was officially opened by the Deputy County Director of Education-Narok Mr. Ronald Mbogo.



Mr. Ronald Mbogo addressing the staff during the official opening of the meeting on the left hand side and The Executive Officer on the right hand side giving her remarks

During the meeting, the staff got a chance to visit 10 project schools to check on project implementation status. The schools visited were Naserian Osopuko, Entiapiri, Ngosvani, Enkare Nairowa, Ololonga Day, Oloruasi, Oleirien, Ololwa, Oloenae and Iladoru primary schools.



A group photo of the staff at Chambai Springs Hotel, Narok after the meeting

Webinars

During this quarter, WERK held three webinars. The first webinar was held on 13th July, 2023. The webinar dubbed ***Youth Skills Day: What Stands Between The Youth and Work*** was held two days ahead of the world Youth Skills Day that is celebrated globally. The webinar was moderated by Ms. Angela Njeri Muathe, a Board Member and the panelists were Dr. Dorcas Asiago, a WERK member and TEVT lecturer and Ms. Lucy Munyao, a youth and enterprenuer. The webinar in mid July exposed some dynamics that hitherto were unknown across generations. First, there are just a tone of institutions that take in and train youth on various technical skills. These should not only help young people who fail to transitory to degree and diploma courses, but also those who have gone through that system and failed to secure employment. These enriching skills help them leap forward from almost zero to some significant independence. Secondly, we have a generation of young people who have not grown a spine. They need the courage to stiffen up and just launch and go out there. These young people have been spoonfed for probably an entire life, they can barely make it on their own. We need to encourage them to step up. This leads us to the third point; Young people need to step up and go to the table, and set it and be part of the discussion. The only way to get into that leadership is to take initiative and keep making an effort. A young brave teenage girl, Malala Yousafzai, became a Nobel Laureate. It was not through being timid and cowering and curling up and running away. She stepped up, and the world listened. This should be the attitude that gets things done for the youth. On the flipside, as parents and older generations on the other side of the divide across the table, we need to adjust our mindsets and be willing to create a space for young people to express their ideas and challenge our own. This will help them grow, but also help us pass the baton. Through this and mentorship, young people will believe in themselves and do great exploits.

The second webinar was held on 31st August, 2023. The Presenter was Prof. Kellen Kiambati, a lecturer at Karatina University and WERK member. Prof. Kiambati made a presentation on two topics: ***Policy Informed Research - Providing compelling and credible evidence*** and ***Supervision as Pedagogy - Rethinking Postgraduate Research***. This webinar was a thought-proving discussion on the kind of research that should be produced to inform policy at national level. Prof. Kellen challenged members to rethink about engaging policy actors across all the stages of research co-designing.

The third webinar for this quarter was held on 28th September, 2023. This webinar was a one of a kind discussion where the presentors Dr. Evelyn Njurai and Dr. Billiah Gisore discussed on ***Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Perceptions of Climate Change Education***.

Community Service Learning

WERK is collaborating 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 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.

As a home-grown industry, leather cottage industry is handy in Narok County in which Meleo Secondary is found. For ages Maasai community have been known for Maasai artefacts made of leather, beads and other material blends. In effort to equip leaners with relevant skills, learners from Melelo Secondary school, with support from WERK, visited Ewaso Ngiro Tannery in Narok County. The leaners were exposed to how the raw materials for the artefacts are outsourced, processed, value added, connected to market linkages and other value chains.

Equipped with different machineries which range from salting, soaking, fleshing, splitting, shaving, setting, buffing machines to vacuum dryers among others. Learners were exposed to real processing and manufacturing of shoes as an end product of the hides outsourced from local abattoirs.

As members of the community from which the hides and skins are outsourced they were told of what to consider in ensuring that at slaughtering point, the animal's skin extracted is of high quality. For instace, branding animals on the body sides lowers the quality of the hide. Pest infested skin and poorly fed and routinely maintained animal's skin / hide is lowly graded. This information needed to reach their parents.



The school appreciated the technology that has been put into such great transformation of the hides to high quality leather to different usage.



In the event, that a learner would be interested to be a player in the cottage industry, for raw materials this would be a low cost consideration since the factory sell end product at a rate of ksh. 110- ksh.240 per square feet depending of quality of the finished product. While the farmer gets to sell the hide to the factory as from Ksh. 25 –ksh. 65 per kg depending on the quality of the hide. A good hide can weigh up to 15 kg.

The local cottage industry was depending on family labour and traditional tools of which they could organize themselves as a school community and get empowered with skills on designing and referred to where tools could be found.

Narok County provides a good proximity to market for such artefacts since most visitors to the county prefer at least an artefact for memory.

With modern technology, the schools can help the young learners to advance and improve what has been there traditionally by so infusing dynamic themes in the very traditional products for competition and advancement.



A display of some of the leather made from hide skin on the left hand side and shoes manufactured from the hides skin on the right hand side.

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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