

**P2.6. SHE-CAN-DO-IT: The Impact of Girls' Sports & Health Capacity Building Project in Gucha District, Kenya - Job Siekei Mogire, Moi University, Kenya & Gucha Youth Volunteers; Grace Momanyi, Nairobi University & Gucha Youth Volunteers**  
*E-mail: Jobsm2005@yahoo.com*

**Background/Significance:** Adolescent girls and young women are a special group, with unique needs and abilities. However, they have limited involvement in leadership and even in the making decisions affecting their lives. They also have very limited access to basic information especially about sexuality and HIV/AIDS. She-Can-Do-It is a community-based youths' initiative of rehabilitation and capacity-building for girls and young women in the resource-limited rural setting of Gucha district. This initiative was set up in 2002 by Gucha Youth Volunteers, a local youths' NGO working with both young men and women to equip them with pertinent life skills. The spirit of the initiative is, 'None of us is as smart as all of us'. She-Can-Do-It gives girls and young women an opportunity to learn from each other through games activities aimed at the development of skills: teamwork, leadership, initiative, and decision-making.

**Intervention/Activity Tested:** This initiative targets non-school-going girls, pre-college/pre-university students, and unemployed young women; from poor families, with no access to basic recreational facilities. All of them belong to the Gusii tribe in which leadership is traditionally a reserve of the males; hence most of them hardly experience any leadership challenge. In recruiting its membership, a new cohort of about 40 prospective participants is identified, parents' consent sought, invitations made. The cohort is taken through series of preparatory induction and teambuilding meetings, and then introduced to games such as football, handball, volleyball and badminton; they form teams, draw their own training timetable and manage the training. They assign each other responsibility, meet thrice every week and submit weekly reports to their preceptors about their activities. Alongside the sports program, there is an educative health program addressing the health needs of the girls (adolescents) and young women; under it they hold moderated weekly discussions on various health topics including reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

**Objective:** This paper examines the impact of She-Can-Do-It on the lives of the girls and young women.

**Methodology:** The study population was 400 past participants; sample size 80; sampling technique was stratified random sampling. Two strata: girls (13-17 yrs) and young women (18-25), 40 from each stratum. Inclusion criteria: must have participated actively in the program for at least 3 months uninterrupted. Data collected through: 80 self-administered questionnaires, 10 focused group discussions of 8 participants each, and in-depth interviews of 10 participants (5 per stratum).

Case studies have been collected to demonstrate the She-Can-Do-It on the lives of the girls and young women. Informal feedback from parents, teachers, local employers and a writing competition yielded useful information.

**Findings:** The leadership of each cohort consists: Cohort chairlady, Young women's leader and assistant, Girls' leader and assistant, 2 team captains, 4 peer educators, 2 secretaries, 2 store-keepers, tribunal of 4 (2 girls and 2 young women).

The study revealed:

- For 80% of them, the organization was their first chance for active participation in consultative decision-making and leadership
- 100% reported improved confidence, leadership competence and better communication and teamwork skills
- About 100% had accurate and sufficient information about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health issues
- Over 50 girls who have participated in She-Can-Do-It have found formal employment, 46 have returned to school, 37 for further education, about 100 are active in the program.

When faced with responsibility and leadership positions, they demonstrate confidence, initiative and decision-making abilities. Most of them adapt easily to the roles assigned. In a single sex set-up where

girls have to take the leadership responsibilities, they demonstrate that they are able to, unlike in mixed settings, in which most of the key leadership positions are taken by boys with girls playing subsidiary roles.

However, capacity building of adolescent girls and young women from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds is very challenging: they suffer from inferiority, poor communication skills, in-fighting, lack of a clear vision of what they want to achieve; erratic attendance, shortage of training materials among other challenges.

**Lessons Learned:** Girls and young women have inherent leadership abilities which if developed may enable them to make significant achievement. Given information, they are able to make rational and progressive decisions. She-Can-Do-It promotes girls/women participation in leadership and is therefore achieving its objectives. Sport is a practical way of bringing girls and young women of varied backgrounds together in a resource-poor setting. The initiative is reproducible in similar settings elsewhere.

**Recommendations:** Organizations that promote girl/women leadership should be supported  
Communities should be encourage girls/women to participate in leadership  
More capacity building initiatives should be implemented to rehabilitate and capacity-build vulnerable groups