

CAMS Interest Group

News from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Interest Group

Newsletter

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Health for Life Kenya

By Cecilia Emma Jakobsson

Health for life Kenya is a youth driven project that is advocating for the adoption of a health education course in the Kenyan national school curriculum. We prepared a policy proposal in this regard, which was accepted by the Kenyan Ministry of Education in October 2014. We are currently conducting pilot classes in Kenya and consulting with relevant authorities. Our work is exploratory and aimed at making recommendations. The final syllabus, curriculum, and program will be the responsibility of the relevant Kenyan authorities.

The Health for Life Kenya project is inspired by the Canadian Ontario Health for Life school curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of physical education, nutritional diets, and balanced lifestyles for mental and physical health.

The Kenyan curriculum does not include a comprehensive health education course. Students learn about health related issues

and disease in their biology courses, but the information taught is very limited. Moreover, since the Kenyan school system is designed in such a way that the final exams determine whether students pass or fail, many teachers and students end up skipping sections on health that will not be featured in the final school exam.

At Health for Life Kenya, we believe that health education should be a vital part of all students schooling in Kenya. We want to avoid Kenyan youth sacrificing their health so they can avoid paying for it later in life in gyms and medical attention.

Since I am particularly interested in mental health, I am personally focused on helping the Health for Life Kenya team and relevant Kenyan authorities that we are working with to develop the mental health component of the curriculum. I would be so grateful for the support of NYU students and faculty in doing this. I would especially welcome

the following help:

- Input on what mental health curriculum is appropriate to teach at various ages.

- Input on best practices to address stigmatization and taboo for those inflicted with mental health issues.

Get involved:

If you are interested in contributing to Health for Life Kenya's mission to develop a Health and Physical Education curriculum to inculcate life long positive attitudes towards healthy and active living please contact me: cej292@nyu.edu

For more information on Health for Life Kenya, please visit our website www.healthforlifekenyac.org, read the policy proposal we prepared and presented to Kenya's Ministry of Education, which we are implementing in Elgeyo Marawket County and will be introducing in Nairobi and Isiolo Counties shortly.

To read more, go to:

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/260439492/Health-for-Life-Kenya-by-Cecilia-Jakobsson>

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Facts about Kenya and Mental Health:

- 25% of Kenyans are living with a mental health disorder
- Most of these disorders stem from problems with anxiety and depression
- According to WHO, 12% suffer from depression and/or anxiety
- 10 million attempt suicide, 1 million commit suicide
- Most suicides are attempted through poisoning

