



Meru Educational Outcomes Evaluation

Project: Meru, Kenya

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Program background: In 2000, Meru project conducted an evaluation of the sponsorship program benefits following the project's restructuring. The findings indicated that the primary benefits were food, toilet construction and livestock purchases. Education as a benefit was not a priority. At that time, the project staff, with the help of sponsored members, prioritized the potential benefits and education was given first priority. The key responsibility of the program is to make sure that all sponsored members go through high quality education to make his or her future better with informed career goals and choices. The project began budgeting, tuition payments, tutoring programs and career counseling to improve educational outcomes.

Purpose of the evaluation: Determine the educational and empowerment outcomes for CFCA sponsored members and understand barriers to these outcomes.

Methods:

Measure educational indicators such as performance and attendance

Archival data collection: review of student school records

Questionnaire: performance and attendance indicators measured among a random sample of 293 secondary students

Measure qualitative data related to empowerment, motivation and identify barriers to the same.

Questionnaire (sample of 293)

Focus groups with teachers and parents

Key findings and Conclusions:

- Eighty-one percent of sponsored youth (11 and older) are budgeting at least 50% of their benefit dollars for the support of education.
- Sponsored members and their families now have a choice in their education options. Sixty-four percent of sponsored youth are attending boarding schools and 82% attend private schools. Youth are both obtaining higher levels of education and families have resources to choose higher quality education offered by boarding and private schools.
- Many families are also able to enroll non-sponsored children due to reduced economic burden. This has increased literacy rates in the community.
- School teachers and administrators generally rated the performance of sponsored members in their schools as "good" in comparison to non-sponsored students.
- Performance of girls in school has improved and girls are well represented in secondary school. Some are reaching college and university. However, girls still miss or skip school more frequently than boys for reasons including lack of school fees, sickness, and hunger.
- Some cultural practices remain hurdles to improved education. FGM, early pregnancy and marriage, and circumcision were identified as the most prominent barriers. However, over 90% of sponsored members questioned said they felt they had the confidence and power to speak out against harmful practices.
- Seventy-six percent of sponsored youth have specific career goals and many related these goals to role models, staff motivation and personal confidence.