

**Project:** We Live For Us by the [International Mental Health Association \(IMHA\)](#) East Africa Programs Office



### **Project Background**

The We Live For Us (WEL4U) Project was designed, planned and implemented by and for, young people in Kenya. For our purposes, we are defining "young people" as those aged 18-25. The first phase of the training focused on mental health literacy, psychological first aid and emotional resilience. It took place in Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Counties of the coastal region.



1. Damian Juma, Youth-leader and mental health champion facilitating a session under the We Live For Us Project.



2. Ongoing workshop in collaboration with Kenya Red Cross under the We Live For Us Project.

## Project Outcomes

This project was implemented in partnership with Kenya Red Cross - Youth Department (KRC). Recruitment was accomplished using social media call for applications and was coordinated by KRC with support from IMHA. Implementation took place in March 2021, during a time that was uncertain for most young people not only in Kenya but also globally. We kicked-off the initial training in Mombasa with messages from The County Government of Mombasa, The Kenya Red Cross, and members from the private sector who participated in the spirit of kindness, community and supporting mental health. Over the course of two weeks, our facilitators spent nine days training 60 participants in our three pilot counties.

Those selected to participate in the initial WEL4U trainings opted-in to giving feedback through a web-based pre-post survey as well as in-person with IMHA and KRC facilitators. Survey results highlight key points of success, as well as areas for improvement.



## Survey Results

89.3% said that mental illnesses were common in their communities in the pre training survey. In the post-training survey, this number shot up to 97.8%. Notably, only 19.6% of respondents said that they were “very knowledgeable about mental health” before the training. After the training, 67.4% of the respondents said that they felt very knowledgeable about mental health. There were clear changes in participant attitudes towards suicide, as well as beliefs surrounding spirits and/or demons as contributors to mental illness. Respondents also demonstrated an increase in understanding surrounding chronic stress and the impact on mental health. Respondents rated the WEL4U training highly, with over 60% of respondents giving a 10 (using a scale of 1-10) on rating how helpful the training was.

Most significant to our team was 100% of respondents reporting they would talk to their friends about the training. While this does not indicate an increase in knowledge, it points to a cultural shift in the attitudes of young people towards mental health in their peer groups. While mental health has been highly stigmatized, a willingness to share about this training with friends demonstrates progress towards stigma-reduction.

## Areas for Improvement

Survey results showed that some clarification was needed in the wording of specific questions, to clarify meaning for the respondent. Survey results also demonstrated the need to focus on larger concepts and reinforce new knowledge throughout training. As the original training was designed to be five days in-length and this was shortened to three days during the initial roll-out, we learned that although a three-day training is possible, five days would've allowed for better absorption of material.

## Key Learnings

1. **Young people in Kenya are ready and willing to learn about mental health.** For the initial 60 training spots, we received nearly 900 applications from enthusiastic young people across Kenya.
2. **Training young people works.** Fighting stigma is key to improving mental health outcomes in Kenya, and having conversations is an important step in this process. 100% of participants reported they would speak with their friends about the training.
3. **Multi-level marketing can work for mental health.** Since the conclusion of the initial trainings, several participants have conducted follow-up activities with their families, friends and community organizations. Trainees have essentially become ambassadors for mental health in their communities, spreading their knowledge and leading the charge towards a stigma-free society where mental health is valued by all.



### Next Steps

Due to the overwhelming enthusiasm from trainees and community partners, plans are underway to continue WEL4U in three additional counties in coastal Kenya.

Pending training accessibility during the ongoing pandemic and available funding, the WEL4U Project will expand later in 2021.

To partner, support or learn about this project, please email us at [team@imha.ngo](mailto:team@imha.ngo) or [damian@imha.ngo](mailto:damian@imha.ngo)