

SAFE Pwani Family Planning Project
Sponsored by the Romilly Walton Masters Scholarship Programme

Introduction

SAFE Pwani's Family Planning Project, funded by the Romilly Walton Masters Scholarship Program, uses theatre to break down the taboo around sex and family planning in communities where there is a large unmet need for contraception. The project responds to the increasing prevalence of early and unplanned pregnancies which not only negatively affect the futures of girls and young women, but lead to surges in population size, putting a strain on resources.

The Scholarship Programme mentors young aspiring actors from local drama groups, providing drama training and peer education skills.

The project targets young women and men, inspiring them to take better decisions in order to prevent unplanned pregnancies. It seeks not only to educate girls on the contraceptive options available to them, but also creates an enabling environment, where girls are supported to access these services. This report covers the second year of the project, focusing on Mtwapa, Kilifi County.



Uamuzi in full swing

Kilifi County Population Information

Kilifi County has a population of 1,453,787, and this is projected to increase by 13% in 2022, putting pressure on the county's resources, affecting job opportunities, equitable land ownership, education opportunities, and health care.

According to a survey conducted from January to June 2016 it was found that out of the 20,066 pregnancies recorded, 185 were from girls between the age of 10–14 years and 3671 were between the age of 15–19 years. This trend has been attributed to a low uptake of contraceptive services; only 30% of those eligible use contraceptives, and only 3.4% are youth aged 15 –19 years.

SAFE Pwani Family Planning Project Objectives

1. Mobilize...
 - ...the community to come together and talk about the need for Family Planning.
 - ...the youth to have peer to peer conversations about the different methods of contraception.
 - ...the youth to seek contraceptive services within their area.
2. Educate
 - ...the community especially the youth on the importance of family planning and contraceptives as a tool the youth can use to plan their futures, and to avoid pregnancies and unsafe abortions.
 - ...on the myths and misconceptions around family planning
3. Provide links
 - ...between the youths and the Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services.
 - ...between the youth in the community and the youth groups who are peer educators.
4. Advocate
 - ...for youth friendly and confidential services which target young people.

Project Activities

Venue research and mobilization

Three team members lead by Project Manager David Kalume explored Mtwapa and its environs, assisted by the youth from the drama groups, to look for possible sites that were:

- Highly Populated
- Had a suitable performance venue that ensured high audience turnout
- Were easily accessible

As part of research and mobilization, the team identified services and partner organizations that would be the referral points promoted to the community. They also identified the challenges faced by the service providers, as well as the number of young women accessing their services. This research served as part of the baseline, helping the team to measure their impact after the project.

Rehearsals

Before the outreach tour, there were five days of rehearsal lead by SAFE Pwani's newest member, Youth Mobiliser Asha Mpole – also a beneficiary of the Romilly Walton Masters scholarship. Asha is a young actress and activist who previously worked in journalism, reporting on news that affected youth. Asha came to SAFE Pwani in order to develop her acting, directing and community engagement skills. Having taken part in SAFE Pwani's water performance supporting the creative lead Ali Mlatso, Asha was given the opportunity to lead the first two days of rehearsals to prepare the youth group actors for the rehearsals with Nick, the Creative Director.

The Outreach Tour

On each day of the performance, after SAFE Pwani's arrival at the venue, the PA is set up and the latest hit music is played. The Simbaropa (Lion drummers), who play drums and trumpets, tour the local area to mobilize the villagers for the outreach. The Simbaropa stop at intervals to make announcements about the outreach. When the audience has been mobilized, the MC plays games to break the ice, including soda drinking competitions, dancing competitions and blindfolded treasure hunts. These ice breakers help to integrate the community with and the actors, creating a mood where the audience can share freely. After creating an interactive environment, the actors take to the stage to perform Uamuzi (Choices).

The girl's uncle giving guidance to the audience members.



The Uamuzi Play Synopsis

Uamuzi tells the story of four sisters and the challenges they face due to a lack of sexual health education. The play opens with a single father who has four teenage daughters. Having pressurized his wife to keep having children in his quest to have a boy, she had died giving birth to his lastborn. Faced with the task of parenting alone, he does not know how to deal with the subject of sex as his daughters become teenagers. Without guidance at home or at school, the eldest two girls fall pregnant and another one becomes infected with HIV. Their prospects appear bleak until the fourth and youngest daughter intervenes with the help of her uncle they get to go back in time and create different futures for themselves by making good FP choices.

Attendance

DAY	DATE	VENUE	ATTENDANCE			TOTAL
			MALE	FEMALE	CHILDREN	
Day 1 morning	3 RD Dec	Kwa Mwarabu	20	55	250	325
Day 1 afternoon	3 RD DEC.	Bomani Mtwapa	30	55	350	435
Day 2 morning	4 TH Dec	Takaungu	32	47	97	176
Day 2 afternoon	4 TH Dec	Mwendo Wa Panya	25	40	182	247
Day 3 morning	5 TH DEC	Uhuru Gardens Mtwapa	31	42	124	197
Day 3 afternoon	5 TH Dec	Lango La Sifa	39	57	156	252
Day 4 morning	6 TH Dec	Miami Mtwapa	40	60	140	240
Day 4 afternoon	6 TH Dec	Mikanjuni Kwa Mnandi	10	30	350	390
Day 5 morning	7 TH Dec	Kwa Mzigo- Mtomondoni	30	43	250	323
Day 5 afternoon	7 TH Dec	Mzanbarauni	30	60	240	330
			287	489	2137	2915

Community Discussion

Immediately after the play, the MC lead the audience in a discussion on the key messages of the play, and there is a SRH talk by the local FP nurse in attendance. The nurse highlights the importance of Family Planning, and the benefits of spacing pregnancies not only for the mother, but the father, other children and the entire community. This session is interactive and the audience is invited to ask questions, comment and share their personal experiences if they feel comfortable doing so.

The most common questions asked by the audience:

1. How do men partake in Family Planning, why are all of the methods geared towards women?
2. How does a vasectomy work? Is it permanent? Will I still be able to get an erection after the operation?
3. What should a couple do when the woman wants to start using Family Planning, but the man doesn't?
4. What effect does Family Planning have on your periods? It is rumoured that some people don't get them at all and some people seem to have endless ones?
5. Will taking contraception make me put on weight and make my stomach swell?
6. If I take contraception now, as a young woman, will I still be able to have children later in life?
7. Why has my partner lost interest in sex since she began using contraception?
8. What age is a person meant to use Family Planning – is it just for married couples?

At the end of the session, the audience was asked to feedback on key lessons they had learnt:

- Most importantly, all the audience were keen to acknowledge the importance of Family Planning, having the number of children that you can afford using the necessary spacing.
- Most accepted that FP prevents early and unwanted pregnancies that can help the youth stay in school and achieve their goals.
- All children are important. They have an equal chance of excellence if they are given equal opportunities and good mentorship.
- Abstinence is good for the youth because it helps them achieve their dreams.
- Couples should discuss issues around Family Planning together to make an informed decision, reducing the chance of conflicts caused by this topic.
- Parents should discuss FP with their children, and youth should be assisted to make the right choices around SRH, including FP. Parents must listen to their children's experiences and challenges and respond.
- Not all people are the same, therefore the success of a family planning method will not be the same from one person to the next. Therefore, people should seek professional / health assistance to find the right FP method.
- The youth and the mature minors have a right to access services which respect their rights and dignity. Their needs should be treated as a priority.

Outreach Successes

- The Mtwapa Health centre reported that the number of young women seeking family planning services improved by 21% in the month after SAFE Pwani's intervention. There was also an 81% increase in the number of girls opting for long term methods of contraception following the intervention.
- The outreaches reached 2915 people with family planning messages. M&E from S.A.F.E.'s interventions shows that the majority of audience members speak to at least one other person about the performances, therefore the messages would have reached around 5000 Mtwapa community members.
- Parents appreciated that the play accurately reflected the behaviours of their youth.
- Post show feedback made clear that the messages of the intervention are being heard and understood fully by audience members.
- Connections were made between the health centre and women. Women were able to talk to the nurse, building trust, and were then referred to the health centre for an appointment.

Challenges Faced

- As the population density increases, venues are disappearing. Most of the remaining spaces are owned by individuals meaning that SAFE Pwani has had to pay for the venues on occasion. There are also some areas that needed the outreach but with nowhere to perform the residents missed this vital education.
- The hot weather made mobilization challenging, and there were some venues with no shade, which put the actors at risk of becoming dehydrated.
- The presence of many children in the audience made it hard for the facilitators to speak openly about the sensitive SRH issues. The demonstration of family planning methods was a particular challenge.
- The Family Planning nurse, though well informed on her subject, lacked skills to communicate clearly and colloquially with the audience. This challenge was exacerbated by the number of children in attendance. Project Manager Ali Mlatso had to step in to assist her on a number of occasions.
- The youth do not think that Family Planning conversations are for them. It was a challenge to get them to ask questions and contribute during the health talk in the presence of older members of the community.

Conclusion

It was observed that there are low knowledge levels on Family Planning, with people relying on information provided by their peers. This information is often exaggerated, and does not take into account that the different methods of contraception affect women differently. The misconception that everyone on Family Planning gains weight and has endless periods is putting women off seeking out the services.

For men, the worry was that a vasectomy will cause erectile dysfunction. A common myth is that it can lead to a build up of sperm in the system, leading to health problems. Men also voiced concern at their partner's potential weight gain, or loss of sex drive, if taking contraception. This attitude unsurprisingly causes tension between couples.

Additionally, the community members often expressed the belief that Family Planning was only for married people, and not for the youth. This is perpetuated by the staff at the health facilities, who are known to treat girls and young women with disrespect, often telling them that they are too young to be requesting FP.

Parents and health workers do not engage the youth in conversations about sex and sexual health, believing that education around SRH encourages promiscuity. SAFE Pwani's outreach was unique because it looks specifically at youth access to family planning, for many audience members this had been the first time that they were able access this factual information.

Way Forward

- Responding to the perception that Family Planning is for families and married couples; SAFE Pwani are to change the name of the project on the ground, moving the emphasis away from Family Planning, and onto general youth sexual and reproductive health in order to bring more young people into the conversation.
- SAFE Pwani are currently seeking additional funds to further engage the youth through peer to peer activities, allowing for a deeper discussion of the issues.
- The continued lack of local friendly services is a huge barrier to the uptake of FP. SAFE has begun a partnership with the [Triggerise platform](#), a mobile phone SMS service which links girls to friendly services and provides information. The platform also allows girls to rate services, ensuring the ones promoted through the platform are friendly and confidential.



Two of the sisters discuss contraceptives and whether it will make them loose their figures