

Transforming Education in West Pokot through UNICEF's 'Come Twende Shule' Campaign

In the rugged terrain of West Pokot County, a transformative wave is sweeping through communities, reshaping the education landscape and igniting hope for a brighter future, all thanks to the innovative 'Come Twende Shule' campaign initiated by UNICEF. This initiative has become a beacon of hope, illuminating the path to education across 16 counties in Kenya and heralding a future of transformed lives and empowered communities.

Mary Chenangata, a resident of Nang'ori in Kacheliba Sub County, stands as a testament to the program's profound impact. Through the Cash Transfer program facilitated by UNICEF, Mary found herself empowered to provide for her children's education essentials. The direct transfer of funds to her phone relieved her of the burden of struggling to access financial assistance. With newfound financial stability, Mary could afford uniforms, shoes, and even food for her children, ensuring they could fully engage in their studies without the worry of basic needs. Her joy radiates as she expresses gratitude for the seamless assistance, a sentiment echoed by many others benefitting from the program.

Regina Komolinyang from Kibengi village shares a similar sentiment, emphasizing how UNICEF's support enabled the education of their girls. The "Makala ya Tumaini" weekly show, a program of hope has challenged prevailing norms, encouraging families to prioritize education for both girls and boys. In a region where cultural barriers and economic hardships often deter parents from sending their daughters to school, the 'Come Twende Shule' campaign has emerged as a catalyst for change, breaking down barriers and fostering inclusivity in education.

Despite these remarkable successes, challenges persist in West Pokot County with the high cost of living compounded by recent drought has left many children without basic needs, threatening to derail their educational aspirations. However, in Suam sub-county, the 'Come Twende Shule' campaign has seen remarkable success, with 200 children re-enrolling in school. This achievement is attributed to the implementation of various interventions such as the cash transfer program. Families, now financially supported for uniforms, fees,

and other essentials, are increasingly seeking education for their children, marking a significant shift in mindset and priorities.



Shaban Akide, Area Chief of Suam Location, West Pokot County.

Chief Shaban Akida of Suam sub-county acknowledges the deep-rooted challenges hindering education in West Pokot. From lack of school fees to early marriages and entrenched cultural practices, the road to education is fraught with obstacles. However, positive shifts are visible, especially in parents prioritizing the education of the girl child. This shift in mindset is attributed to the impactful messages disseminated through the campaign, particularly those aired on DigiRedio's Kalya FM, which have resonated deeply with the community, fostering a culture of education and empowerment.

Ongoing follow-ups are underway to determine the precise number of re-enrolled children since the campaign's initiation in 2023. Alfred Kamuto, West Pokot KUPPET Secretary-General, credits the 'Come Twende Shule' campaign for supporting the re-enrolment of many children.

The initiative has not only revitalized the education sector but has also fostered community resilience and empowerment, paving the way for a brighter future for generations to come.

In conclusion, UNICEF's 'Come Twende Shule' campaign through "Makala ya Tumaini" is not merely a program; it is a catalyst for change, a symbol of hope, and a testament to the transformative power of community engagement and mobilization. As it continues to illuminate the path to education in West Pokot County and beyond, it reaffirms the belief that every child deserves access to quality education, regardless of their circumstances. With unwavering commitment and collaborative efforts, we can build a future where education thrives, and communities flourish.

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A public sensitization meeting with the residents in West Pokot County