

## NYUMVA NKUMVE

Nyumva Nkumve is a project run by the BEZA MAP club at Ikibondo Primary School. The main problems the project sought to address are mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness due to COVID-19, family conflicts, and the lack of supportive adults.

The main objectives of the project were to develop art-based activities to transform and rewrite stories relating to mental health, to create safe spaces for sharing stories and finding solutions for them, and to strengthen peer-to-peer support. The main methods used were group discussions for story sharing. Participants include 30 club members, 10 nonstudent children, and a focal person.



### Sharing stories

Through story sharing in groups and other form including problem tree, many problems emerged that may affect youth's mental health. The club have identified that their mate problems arose from different factors including; being an orphan, which can lead to a lack of parental affection, increasing the chances of having problems such as depression, drug abuse, or homelessness. The second problem is family conflicts, and the third is lack of material resources or poverty. The following story reported by a club's representative illustrates the first problem.

***“These factors could have a long-lasting impact on young children as their roots were from their past. For example, during group discussions, some youths shared their story. One of them said that he lost his parents when he was 3 years old. Later, the family took over the responsibilities to take care of him, but they couldn’t continue after a while. He didn’t have anyone in his family who was able to care for him by providing him with necessities. As a group experience, it was very sad to hear this story. After hearing his story, we understood better why he dropped out of school and had symptoms of depression. We also learned that children having mental health problems such as depression are less likely to receive support from significant others. They also have lower levels of confidence in other people. They feel that they are not like other children; as a result, they started to adopt maladaptive behaviors like taking illicit drugs which helped them not think too much about the struggles they faced in their lives.”***



The implementation of Nyumva Nkumve Project had several impacts as reported by the club. The first is increased interaction and engagement among students in regard to mental health. The second is increased trust among students to share their stories with others and express themselves. The third is a decrease in stigma towards children who do not go to school and an increased connection between non-student children and their peers who go to school. Finally, this project boosted children's well-being through art-based activities.

Nyumva Nkumve project used different art forms such as drawing, and theater based on young people's stories during group discussions. One of our participants, composed a short poem, called "Babyeyi nimwe dutzeho byinshi byiza", meaning "Parents, Our Hope", to encourage parents to put their children's wellbeing on top.

Some of the stories they shared were hard to listen to the young people. "It was not an easy experience for us to witness these young people's testimonies as they had to go through these experiences on their own without help from others like families, communities, or societies", a representative reported. The final challenge reported by the club is about time, where students who live far from school needed to leave early before sessions ended.

## Recommendations

The recommendations at a family level were as follows; first, parents to create a positive environment for their children, full of affection and free from the negative atmosphere. Also, parents to learn listening and communication skills to interact gently with their children. Finally, children need to learn to express their problems early before they become worse.

This research is part of  
Mobile arts for Peace

