

The Identity Documents project

A participatory evaluation | Pendekezo Letu, Kenya

About Pendekezo Letu

Pendekezo Letu (PKL), based in Nairobi, Kenya, works to empower marginalised children and youth. PKL supports street-connected individuals, creating opportunities for education, healthcare and social inclusion. By partnering with community organisations, local governments and stakeholders, PKL implements sustainable programmes which enhance the lives of vulnerable populations, through participatory approaches and advocating for changes to policy.

Project evaluated: The Identity Documents project

Through its Identity Documents project, PKL worked to address the critical challenges street-connected children and youth face in obtaining identity documents. These documents are vital for accessing education, healthcare, and legal protection. As such, the project aimed to:

- Facilitate access to identity documentation for children and youth, by simplifying processes and reducing barriers.
- Promote policy reform, through creating actionable recommendations for sustainable and inclusive documentation systems.

PKL engaged children, families and government stakeholders in the participatory evaluation of the project, ensuring that it was grounded in lived experience of street-connected youth and those close to them.

Participatory evaluation plan

Youth were engaged at every stage of the participatory evaluation, an approach which promoted ownership and empowerment. This also ensured that the process remained relevant and accurately reflected the challenges and aspirations of the target population.

Co-design of tools and goals: youth representatives contributed to shaping the evaluation framework.



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Peer evaluator training: youth representatives were trained in data collection, ethical practices, and advocacy.

Iterative feedback loops: regular sessions allowed participants to validate findings and provide additional input.

Tools selected

A combination of qualitative and quantitative tools ensured a comprehensive evaluation:

- Surveys: these were conducted with street-connected children and youth, to gather data on demographics, their access to identity documents, and their experiences with identity documentation services.
- Focus groups: discussions were facilitated with street-connected children and youth to explore their experiences and challenges in obtaining identity documentation, revealing nuanced perspectives and collective insights.
- Key informant interviews: these were conducted with children, youth, registration officers, and community partners, providing insights into identity documentation processes, barriers, and institutional challenges, as well as highlighting best practices.
- Participatory mapping: street-connected youths participated in mapping exercises to identify crucial locations for documentation, revealing service accessibility gaps such as distance from offices and perceived inaccessibility.
- Case studies: individual experiences of identity documentation were captured, highlighting barriers and success stories.

Through using these tools, PKL was able to gain a nuanced understanding of the systemic and personal challenges facing street-connected children.

Evaluation outcomes

Barriers to accessing identity documentation identified:

- Economic: fees and associated costs were significant obstacles.
- Institutional: complex bureaucratic processes and understaffing deterred access.
- Social: stigma and lack of family support for individuals compounded difficulties.

Successful interventions:

- Mobile registration services increased accessibility.
- Peer-led outreach motivated youth to participate.
- Community partnerships streamlined documentation processes.

PKL identified an overarching empowerment outcome:

- Youth involved in the project reported increased confidence, agency, and understanding of documentation processes.



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Lessons learnt

- Keep things simple: flexible documentation requirements reduce access barriers.
- Youth participation matters: engaging youth in programme development and evaluation ensures solutions are grounded in lived experiences.
- Partnerships are important: collaboration between NGOs, government agencies, and communities amplifies impact.
- Always ensure safety and accessibility: locating services closer to youth bases or providing mobile options is crucial.
- Training and sensitivity are essential: service providers need trauma-informed care training to effectively address this population's unique needs.

By involving youth in every stage of the evaluation process, PKL identified actionable solutions and empowered participants to advocate for themselves.

Conclusion

PKL's participatory evaluation of its Identity Documents project highlighted the systemic barriers facing street-connected youth, while demonstrating the power of participatory approaches. By involving youth in every stage of the evaluation process, PKL identified actionable solutions and empowered participants to advocate for themselves.

The recommendations, including simplifying processes, introducing mobile services, and fostering partnerships, provide a roadmap for sustainable and inclusive identity documentation systems. Moving forward, continued advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and iterative feedback will be essential to ensuring long-term success and social inclusion for street-connected children and youth.

CONTACT DETAILS

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