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# **Interventions in support of education during COVID-19**

The Community Service Centre in Strathmore University is involved in a number of projects whose aim is to empower individuals and communities using education, character development, and community engagement activities.

07/23/2021

These projects work with different groups of people, among them at least 10,000 high school students in Kitui, Kwale, Turkana, Kisumu and Nairobi.

Christina Garashie, who works in the Alumni Office and volunteers at the Community Service Centre, has been instrumental in promoting the education of school girls by spearheading the character education and life skills mentoring camps for female students. She speaks to us about it.

### **What does your work in girls' education entail?**

To improve learning outcomes, we work with university volunteers (SU staff, students and alumni) to support the educational experience of girls from the communities that we serve. Our program trains female university students who volunteer as mentors to the secondary school

students. The volunteers facilitate life character education, life skills and mentoring sessions for the school girls.

**Based on your response, it is evident that most of these interventions revolve around character education and mentoring. Is there any particular reason why this is the case?**

The one-on-one mentoring, carried out by SU volunteers, has been a great support to the high school girls who view them as role-models. On the other hand, Strathmore students who volunteer in this program have matured in their character, developed in virtue and some have even gone ahead to become community leaders by starting their own community projects. One example is Firdowsa Ali, who started Waridi, a project focusing on

menstrual health and hygiene for girls in Kibera.

### **Has any of this work continued even during COVID?**

Yes, We started by sharing online learning resources. However since some of our students do not have access to smartphones, we also started printing learning materials and sending volunteers to distribute them to the students especially in Kibera. In preparation for KCSE examinations, we managed to run the Saturday activities in Macheo with special focus on tutoring sessions for final year students.

### **What's the one thing you're learning from this work in COVID times?**

To help teachers and school staff take care of psychosocial needs of the girls, in partnership with SU Medical Centre we engaged 8 psychologists,

who facilitated psychosocial support sessions for 252 teachers and 165 non-teaching staff, 10 principals and their deputies in Kitui.

This article was published here on the Strathmore University website.

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(08/16/2025)