



SUCCESS STORY

Justice for Deiya

The Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative seeks to make a just world for girls in Kibera



USAID/Kenya, Nairobi – E. Onsongo

"Now I feel like a person, because I found the courage to speak what's in my heart. I tell these men how they should speak to me, if they would actually like my attention."

– Deiya Ahmed, High school student in Kibera Slum and participant of the Girls Speak out Forum supported by USAID-sponsored Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative

The Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative is empowering girls and women in Kibera, as well as changing attitudes about gender and violence against women.

"My name is Deiya and I don't like it when you talk to me like that - I feel like you are addressing a dog. I'm not a dog, I'm a girl." Before Deiya Ahmed, an 18 year old high school student and resident of Kibera slum heard about the Girls Speak out Forums, she was having a difficult time warding off constant harassment from men in her neighborhood.

"In our community people don't like to see women succeed. They use violence to keep us down," says Deiya.

Deiya is not alone. According to a recent survey, 51 percent of women (aged 15 and older) in Nairobi reported that they have experienced physical, verbal, or sexual violence. The prevalence is thought to be even higher in Kibera. But thanks to USAID's Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative, implemented by Pathfinder International, Kibera's girls and women are changing the way they view and feel about themselves.

"Now I feel like a person, because I found the courage to speak what's in my heart. I tell these men how they should speak to me, if they would actually like my attention," says a confident Deiya.

Thousands of girls like Deiya, are learning how to navigate the sometimes treacherous streets of Kibera through the Girls Speak out Forums.

"The forums give us hope because we come together, share ideas, gain courage and say what's in our hearts," says Deiya.

Deiya's older sister who left an abusive husband is now struggling to raise her children as a single parent. She is envious of the opportunity Deiya has to attend the forums. Deiya is confident she will have a different future. She is planning to become an accountant. "Now I see solutions to the struggles which people go through. If I face these issues I future, I will know how to deal with them."

Pathfinder International is coordinating the activities of grassroots organizations to change attitudes and raise awareness through community and school forums, participatory theatre, workshops on the Sexual Offenses Act, and celebrating the work of male champions. The Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative provides support for victims and strengthens their efforts to get justice.