

MY FUTURE IS TOBACCO-FREE

WORLD LUNG DAY SCHOOL SUMMIT

INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Guided by the belief that every child's life holds equal value, Art Kids Foundation works with adolescents and young people from under-resourced communities in Kenya to create safe spaces, expand access to opportunities and resources, and nurture their confidence and voice, laying the foundation for them to realize their full potential and thrive.

Our work is grounded in Positive Youth Development, a strength-based framework that emphasizes the resilience, creativity, and potential of young people, rather than their limitations and challenges. We design and implement programs that foster personal growth, build leadership skills, and support young people to become active contributors to their communities and a more just and equitable world.

OUR VISION for the future is a world where young people's rights are respected, their voices are heard, and their dreams are supported.

OUR GUIDING VALUES

Social justice: We are committed to challenging systemic inequalities that keep young people at the margins, preventing them from achieving their full potential. We believe that a young person's future should not be determined by their place of birth.

Equity: Equity, not just equality, is at the core of our work. We recognize that not all young people start from the same place, and we offer support that reflects each individual's unique needs and aspirations.

Inclusion: We create and nurture spaces where all young people, regardless of gender, background, or ability, can feel seen and valued.

Agency and voice: We believe in the value of every young person's voice and consider it a fundamental responsibility to listen to their perspectives. We do not impose solutions. Instead, we support young people to make informed and independent choices.

Community-rooted leadership: Our programs are led by young people with lived experience in the communities where we work. We hire our teams locally and work in partnership with young people who understand the context better than anyone else, co-creating solutions that are truly relevant.

BACKGROUND OF THE EVENT

Date: 25 September 2025, World Lung Day

Location: Karama Academy, Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya

As part of our commitment to promote holistic development among adolescents in under-resourced communities in Nairobi, the *My Future is Tobacco-Free School Summit* was conducted to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use among students in Kibera.

Held on World Lung Day, the event aimed to empower adolescents with accurate information and strong refusal skills to support healthy and tobacco-free lives. This campaign responds to recent findings by NACADA (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse) and APHRC (African Population and Health Research Center) that revealed an alarming rise in tobacco use among Kenyan adolescents, particularly girls, driven by peer pressure and lack of awareness.

In vulnerable communities like Kibera, tobacco use is often normalized, while prevention education remains limited. As a result, many adolescents start experimenting with tobacco at an early age, increasing their vulnerability to preventable respiratory illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis, and tuberculosis.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The event aimed to raise awareness, change attitudes, and empower young people with accurate information and strong refusal skills, enabling them to take control of their health and choose tobacco-free lives.

Specifically, the event sought to:

- Increase students' understanding of the lungs and their importance for overall health and well-being;
- Educate students on the dangers of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke;
- Strengthen students' ability to resist peer pressure and marketing tactics by building effective refusal skills;
- Promote lifestyle choices that support respiratory health and overall well-being;
- Encourage and inspire students to become health ambassadors in their schools and communities.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE

In preparation for World Lung Day, a group of selected students worked with our I Matter Peer Educator to create a drama performance that explored the issue of peer pressure and the real-life consequences of tobacco use in the community.

The event also featured a refusal skills training session, a spoken word performance, a fitness challenge and a pledge ceremony, each designed to actively engage students and reinforce key messages around lung health and tobacco prevention.

DRAMA PERFORMANCE

The students created a powerful play that illustrated the harmful effects of tobacco on lung health, as well as its wider consequences on families, education, and the future of young people. Through emotional and relatable storytelling, the performance helped students grasp the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices.

SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE

One of the students presented a compelling spoken word performance, using powerful language to express her hopes and encourage her peers to avoid tobacco and protect their health. Her performance resonated strongly with both Junior and Senior students, who responded with enthusiasm and heartfelt applause, reinforcing the powerful role of creative expression in reaching and inspiring younger audiences.

FITNESS CHALLENGE AND DANCE

We included a fitness challenge and dance to promote physical activity as a positive alternative to harmful habits like smoking. Both activities attracted enthusiastic participation and reinforced the message that staying active is key to maintaining lung health and overall well-being.

REFUSAL SKILL TRAINING

Our Peer Educator, with extensive experience leading the I Matter Positive Youth Development Program in partner schools, facilitated the training on refusal skills. This session equipped students with practical strategies and confidence to resist peer pressure and say no to tobacco and other harmful substances. The training was a key component of our campaign's preventive goals, supporting young people in making informed and health-conscious decisions with confidence.

PLEDGE CEREMONY

In a symbolic act to reinforce the day's key messages, participants made a public commitment to lead tobacco-free lives. This was a powerful moment that showed their determination and reminded everyone of our collective responsibility to safeguard lung and youth health.

AWARDS

The event concluded with a symbolic recognition of the students who participated in the fitness challenge, drama, and spoken word performance. Each awardee received a printed t-shirt bearing the slogan “STRONG ENOUGH TO SAY NO”, acknowledging their commitment and creativity, and encouraging them to continue making healthy lifestyle choices and inspire others to follow their lead.

OUTCOMES

The World Lung Day School Summit brought together over 250 participants, including students, teachers, media representatives, photographers, and community members.

Over the course of three hours, students participated in a dynamic program that featured dance, a student-led drama performance, refusal skills training, a fitness challenge, spoken word, a pledge ceremony, and an awards session. Student participation was enthusiastic throughout the event, with high energy and engagement across all activities.

Collaboration with local media platforms helped extend the campaign’s reach beyond the school grounds and amplify its impact across the wider community.

The campaign successfully achieved its primary targets of raising awareness about the effects of tobacco on lung health, engaging students in health-promoting activities, and encouraging commitment to a tobacco-free life.

MEDIA OUTREACH

To extend the campaign's reach, we used Instagram for live updates, event photos and educational messages throughout the day. The online engagement enabled us to reach a wider audience and maintain an active conversation on lung health and tobacco prevention.

Additionally, Pamoja FM, a trusted local radio station, sent a reporter to cover the event and aired a segment during their evening broadcast. The radio also published a feature on their website, which included interviews with our program team and quotes from students. This helped reinforce key messages from the event and amplify our advocacy efforts in the wider community.

The event received additional coverage from Kibera Stories, a well-known media platform that shares voices from the community, extending the campaign's reach to an international audience.

Links:

<https://pamojafm.co.ke/news/karama-academy-students-pledge-tobacco-free-future/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPit-awEaWG/>

THE WAY FORWARD

Strengths and successes

- **High student engagement:** The use of creative formats such as drama and spoken word generated strong participation and engagement from students and even teachers, making the event fun, inclusive and educational;
- **Skill-building:** The refusal skills training session equipped students with practical skills to advocate for their own health and that of their peers. This helps create a ripple effect, where young people become active ambassadors of tobacco-free living in their schools and communities.

- **Effective media coverage:** Strategic collaboration with a local radio station and community media platform increased the visibility of the campaign and ensured the message reached a broader audience;
- **Strong partnerships and teamwork:** The success of the event was made possible through close collaboration between Art Kids Foundation, the European Lung Foundation, the European Respiratory Society, local media and school leadership. These partnerships amplified the impact of the campaign and strengthened our position as a trusted partner in promoting holistic youth development in the community.

Building the impact of the Healthy Lungs for Life campaign in the future

To build on the success of the Healthy Lungs for Life campaign, we recommend the following actions:

- **Expand school and community outreach:** Continue supporting and delivering educational programs in schools, community centres and youth hubs, using participatory arts and peer education to reinforce anti-tobacco messages year-round.
- **Expand media outreach and advocacy efforts:** Produce short videos, social media campaigns and radio programs to maintain the discussion on lung health and tobacco prevention beyond World Lung Day.
- **Collaborate with health experts:** Host public talks to deepen awareness and understanding of lung health and the dangers of tobacco use among the general population, and young people in particular.

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

The *My Future Is Tobacco-Free School Summit* was a significant success in raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco and inspiring adolescents in Kibera to lead healthy and tobacco-free lives.

With over 250 participants, the event fostered strong commitment among students to choose wellness and positive behaviors, with active support from teachers and school leadership.

Moving forward, we remain committed to expanding our efforts through continued knowledge-sharing, skill-building and peer education to promote holistic youth development in under-resourced communities. This event demonstrated that a positive youth development approach combined with creative expression and student-led advocacy is an effective tool for delivering health messages to young people and inspire positive behavior change.

The impact of the event extended beyond students. It included teachers, school leadership, local media and community members, demonstrating that truly effective campaigns need to be inclusive and community-led.

We received interest from other schools and stakeholders who wish to hold similar events, opening the door for future collaborations and partnerships.

We would be delighted to partner again with the European Lung Foundation and the European Respiratory Society to expand this work to other vulnerable communities in Nairobi. We are particularly interested in strengthening the capacity of our peer educators through additional training and support, and ensuring that youth-led advocacy remains an ongoing effort, especially in marginalized communities like Kibera.

We welcome the opportunity to stay informed about future ELF initiatives and would be glad to participate in other meaningful initiatives.

Our vision remains clear:

**A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY YOUNG PERSON IS INFORMED
AND SUPPORTED TO LIVE A HEALTHY AND FULFILLING LIFE!**