

CASE STUDY:

# Junior Kudra — Best Practices in Training the Next Generation of Nigerian Leaders



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### KEY FINDINGS:

- Junior Kudra emphasizes education as a vehicle of empowerment<sup>1</sup> and transformation for girls in Nigerian slum communities.
- Junior Kudra is a strong program that empowers girls to become social, political, and economic leaders through life and skills training.
- A simple model with close ties to target communities, the program can be replicated in other low-income contexts that have relative political stability.
- Encouraging social responsibility as a common theme results in participants engaging positively and proactively with their peers and society.

<sup>1</sup> Empowerment, as operationalized by KIND for Junior Kudra, is developing the skills and tools needed to promote gender equity in the personal and public lives of beneficiaries, with the particular objective of strengthening their role as decision makers in Nigeria.

### Introduction

Since transitioning from military rule to a process of democratization in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed burgeoning economic growth. Primarily relying on oil revenues, the national income per capita blossomed from \$804 in 2006 to \$1,092 in 2014 (Trading Economics 2015). However, this progress has yet to translate into better socioeconomic conditions for women or economically marginalized communities. On average, the poor in Nigeria live on less than \$0.69 per day, well below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day (UNDP 2014). Within this context of poverty, gender imbalances are systemically wrought within legal, regulatory, traditional, and cultural structures that constrain Nigeria's women (Ali-Akpajiak and Pyke 2003). Girls from marginalized communities face compounding layers of challenges that strip them of their rights to democratic participation, including gender and class imbalances, stigma against women's leadership, and an expectation that girls should sacrifice education in order to perform household chores. Subsequently, as women they lack the skills, leadership, and confidence to influence change

in society. Programs that enhance the agency of women to participate in change through training and rights-based knowledge-sharing are critical to ensuring women a place in the nation-building process.

Junior Kudra contributes to this critical need by helping girls overcome social barriers. The program targets adolescent girls ages 11-18 from vulnerable communities with information on gender-based violence, barriers to accessing opportunities, and sexual and reproductive health to promote increased leadership and access to education at a young age. As many participants are affected by gender-based violence, polygamy, child abuse, and teenage pregnancy, such training is relevant to their own experiences. In safe school settings, the program improves skills, knowledge, and opportunities for challenging and addressing issues at all levels of society. Through grassroots education— programs designed and implemented in response to the context and the feedback of target groups— Junior Kudra is able to significantly influence the positive development of participants. This summary document briefly outlines findings published in the full case study publication *Junior Kudra: A case study of best practices in training the next generation of Nigerian leaders*, which pulls from 4 focus group discussions (FGDs), desk reviews of previous program reports, and monitoring documents.

“ [Junior Kudra] has helped me live above my economic situation and classification. ”

Eno, age 24, Lagos

## Intervention

The Junior Kudra Initiative is an innovative program run by KIND, a non-profit organization promoting women’s participation in forging a democratic Nigeria. The program offers an education-based curriculum of life skills training to empower adolescent girls from low to middle-income families in peri-urban and urban settings in Lagos, Nigeria. It is currently offered in five schools from three of the lowest-earning areas in Lagos, Nigeria’s capital city. These schools are Lanre Awolokun High School, Gbagbada Senior Grammar School, Angus Memorial High School, and Ifako Comprehensive High School. The program runs five components throughout the academic year that train the minds

and spirits of adolescent youth. Four are core components: (1) Junior Kudra leadership training; (2) Junior Kudra clubs; (3) life-skills training; and (4) mentorship. In addition, the program also offers two essential services that students can utilize if desired: (5) internship and job placement and (6) counselling.

These components are supplemented by community outreach by KIND staff, who continuously advocate with gatekeepers (typically parents or guardians) for greater enrollment and retention of their daughters in schools. Outreach is facilitated through regular community meetings as well as direct outreach to gatekeepers of affected girls. While girls can join the program through any of the components, the most common entry points for new participants are the Junior Kudra leadership training and Junior Kudra clubs. Junior Kudra is a relatively inexpensive program to run, at a cost of roughly \$488 per student each year. Serving 40 - 60 students at each of 4 secondary schools, the entire program costs approximately \$19,500 per school annually.

Activity	Target/school	Cost
Leadership training	40 girls	\$7,000
Junior Kudra clubs	9 months	\$2,000
Life-skills/vocational training	20 girls	\$4,000
Mentoring	30 girls	\$2,000
Internship/job placement	20 girls	\$3,000
Counseling	6 months	\$1,500
<b>Total cost of Junior Kudra</b>	<b>12 months</b>	<b>\$19,500</b>

Currently, KIND funds its programs through various sources, including crowd funding, foundations, and public funds. As discussed in the broader findings, the programs’ integration of alumnae volunteers allows for a competitive cost-per-student ratio.

The annual Junior Kudra leadership training is the first step in the Junior Kudra program. Participants enter the program through an application process that seeks out ambitious and enthusiastic girls looking to develop leadership skills. Through teacher and peer nominations, KIND staff also seek to identify vulnerable girls (non-applicant participants) who may benefit from the collaborative and protective nature of the program.

At each of the participating schools, the program offers these 30-40 selected girls the opportunity to participate in a 3-day leadership and life skills-building workshop. Trainings are facilitated by KIND staff who use an interactive

curriculum to educate girls on advocacy, financial management, entrepreneurialism, emotional intelligence, hygiene, and reproductive health.

This leadership training is the cornerstone of the Junior Kudra Initiative, introducing adolescent girls to basic skills that contribute to transforming them from passive roles into powerful women with the leadership skills to make change at all levels of society. The training material is reinforced and enhanced through opportunities for practical application offered via the other program components. Having completed the trainings, participants are known as alumnae and are engaged through the other program components in a continuous process of skills development through learning.

Kudra Clubs, weekly, school-based student hubs, provide extra-curricular platforms for alumnae to engage with their communities in constructive ways. Kudra Clubs are led by students while KIND staff play a supportive or facilitative role. These clubs act as meeting hubs for students to actively engage with the topics that influence their lives.

Kudra Clubs are open to alumnae and their peers. Participants receive additional training, facilitated by KIND staff. The clubs provide an avenue for girls to safely participate in identifying and addressing community issues, organizing student outreach, and carrying out community projects that include sanitation exercises or awareness and advocacy campaigns. For instance, through a club in 2014, students organized a community campaign to advocate ending violence against women in their communities. The focus of the campaign was spreading information about gender-based violence to their peers. Many schoolmates and community members were shocked by the extent of the issue in their communities, which led to constructive discussions on ways to address the issue (FGD with alumnae 2015).

Life-skills and vocational training are targeted at 80 girls each year who have an interest in working after their secondary school education. The program offers a special curriculum that pairs participants with leaders in their sectors of interest for an innovative internship. Each semester the types of training are offered flexibly based on the interests of students or participating businesses, but core classes include financial management, basic accounting, and entrepreneurial skills. The program encourages participants to pursue interests in traditionally male dominated sectors such as photography, mechanical work, or business. This helps girls challenge the stereotypical roles and responsibil-



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ities of women. These skills, in continuation of the leadership training program, endow participants graduating from secondary schools with essential technical skills to earn an income through a vocation that aligns with their ambitions.

The mentorship component is a core part of Junior Kudra's effort that utilizes KIND's strong network of service-oriented alumnae volunteers. Typically 120 girls participate in the mentorship program each year, many of whom are high school graduates who have moved on to greater things. Through wholesome relationships, this link between former Kudra participants and current pupils is incredibly powerful in encouraging generations of participants to address issues that affect young girls. Additionally, the experiences of past participants from similarly marginalized backgrounds provide real examples of success to encourage pupils to aspire beyond the challenges of their circumstances. The mentoring program is especially critical, since it shows girls through examples on an intimate level that it is possible to successfully fulfill their ambitions.

Internships and job placements dismantle the common notion that women do not engage in leadership activities, place alumnae in an environment that promotes practical skills development, and concurrently exposes girls to successful leaders within a similar community that they can relate to and learn from. The program also offers a special curriculum that helps girls break through male-dominated sectors such as photography, shoe-making, and automobile, mobile phone, and computer repair. The program also provides training in more traditional vocations such as catering, soapmaking, fashion, and jewelry-making. These skills, in continuation of the leadership training program, have endowed the over 200 participants served since 2009 with the essential skills to earn an income through a vocation that aligns with their ambitions. KIND coordinates work experiences through a trusted and known network of partners who are committed to empowering marginalized girls. This allows for close mentorship by partners and

## Change Story: The girl down the street

“I believe the program is relevant to the challenges we face today. Having gone through the training, I have acquired the experience needed to address challenging situations. For example, where I live there is this young girl who attends a public school and she often leaves the house at about 9:30am, which usually is towards the end of the second period of classes. This is not because she doesn't do all her chores on time but rather because her aunt whom she stays with does not let her go to school when her own children do. Whenever one experiences such issues, you must speak out against it and reach out to the victim also.

On a particular day, I approached her aunt and made her see her errors with regards to her actions on this girl, and she became conscious of the fact that people are watching her and changed her attitude. From that day on, the young girl has been going to school early as should be the case.

It is paramount to note that one can only effectively handle challenges facing women, if he/she has gone through such or has learnt from other people's experiences.”

Uzoma (FGD with alumnae, 2015)

monitoring progress of the students. Through this component, girls are able to practice the Junior Kudra Leadership training material while facing first-hand the types of challenges women face in a safe, professional environment while enhancing their opportunities.

A counselling clinic is available for girls seeking advice on personal issues. Face-to-face clinical hours are offered once a week at each school and a hotline to professional counsellors is open 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The clinic provides contextualized support to address the most intimate issues girls face while helping them constructively approach difficulties in shedding traditional expectations. On a basic level, counselling can help address the common challenges of adolescence, such as dealing with relationships or puberty. However, counselling can also support girls to identify and address more complex issues that affect their well-being, such as gender-based injustices and violence, complex decision-making, or deeply-rooted traumas. As many participants lack nurturing and enabling environments in which they can openly seek the advice of their families, the counselling clinic bridges this gap towards healthy personal development.

## Results

Junior Kudra employs a strong methodology that focuses on positive youth development—a process of individual growth that builds academic, personal, social, and vocational skills while also securing safety, building caring relationships, and nurturing connections to the larger community (Geldof, et al. 2015). Stepping away from traditional “deficit-oriented programming,” which focuses on molding adolescents based on what they should not do (ibid.), Junior Kudra fosters the strengths and aspirations of each participant through interactive mentoring. The program is designed in such a way that staff are trusted advisors, professionally and personally. This enhances the effectiveness of the program by engaging girls in such a way that they feel open to exploring their potential, ambitions, academia, society, sexuality, and entrepreneurship. Through this methodology, program staff constructively spread knowledge on social issues and stigmas, such as sexual and reproductive health and HIV testing, job placements away from home, and gender sensitivity. Students learn that they are participants in society, transforming their passive role to that of active agents of change within their communities.

Vitality, by participating in this program, girls no longer see themselves as victims or as being inferior to boys. Kudra girls show an increased sense of political and economic participation. Through enhanced knowledge and leadership skills, they have the confidence to contribute to the development of their communities. They recognize that, as girls, they have rights and are entitled to equal and fair treatment. They recognize that through education and other learning opportunities they can achieve their ambitions. The program instills a keen awareness that learning is not enough—utilizing the skills you learn is equally as important.

Through this message of empowerment, girls continue to participate in realizing change even as graduates. For instance, more than 40 percent of the girls that went through the program are currently enrolled in higher education, 30 percent are engaged in vocational training, while the rest are determined to continue their education and working actively to pursue this goal. Focus groups with KIND staff in 2015 revealed that 70 percent of graduates of the program have consistently shown positive developments in their professional and personal lives, significantly higher than their peers. Additionally, the girls continue to engage with their communities to address issues they see.

Chinyere Ogwuegbu and Isimeme Lucy Onome Ejodame are examples of the quality of leadership Junior Kudra develops. Chinyere and Lucy carried out training on reducing cases of teenage pregnancy in 10 secondary schools in Lagos. Lucy is also following her ambition to run for a position in the local government council in Edo State in four years. As an active member of a progressive party in her state, she is well on her way to following her ambition (Monitoring Reports 2007-2009). The intimate relationship with KIND means that staff continue to provide her, and other ambitious alumnae, with technical and moral support.

The importance of relationships in the program deserves to be noted, as it leads to long lasting results. Understanding the isolated nature of female independence in a conservative area, the relationship-based program developed by KIND offers a safe network of alumnae who return voluntarily to encourage participants along their developmental journey. It intentionally cultivates a close-knit network of service-oriented alumnae who often proactively return as volunteers or mentors to the next generation of participants. Many past participants have grown from former victims of abuse to successful entrepreneurs, academics, and politicians. Through this network of alumnae, adolescents learn from challenges faced by past participants. They also witness tangible evidence that, through dedicated efforts, they can transform their futures. Alumnae carry on this message well beyond the program and, whether or not they return, the impact of that message in their lives is crucial.

Strong relationships built with teachers, gatekeepers, and the local community result in more effective monitoring of participants' development. Tying the Junior Kudra program

## Change Story: Talent for Fashion Design

"I joined the Junior Kudra club in 2007 when I was in my first year of high school. At that time, I saw the club as a protector that taught me how to handle relationships with guys, emphasized the need for academic excellence, and keen on advancing our knowledge of how to deal with sexual abuse. I continued with the program throughout high school. In my final year, KIND staff told me to learn a vocational skill, and I first started out learning a traditional trade of bread-making. But as I learned about myself and the trainings offered, I realized my passion for the art of fashion design. Once I completed the training, KIND continued to support me in setting up my successful fashion design [business] with soft-loans and business advice. I can say the program helped me both emotionally and physically."

Damilola (FGD, 2015)

to school environments in collaboration with school authorities enhances KIND's ability to do advanced monitoring through community affiliates and strong information flows create a keen awareness of challenges each girl faces. Community members are frequently consulted in the design and implementation of the program through community outreach sessions. KIND staff maintain ties that enable them to follow up on issues at home and in school that become apparent through the program, such as girls working during school hours or experiencing abuse.

With careful education, training, mentorship, monitoring, and encouragement, pupils slowly uncover their hidden



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potential for leading a life as empowered leaders in society and their impact spreads through each student. As Junior Kudra alumna Faith Adigwe expressed of her own learning, the entire process “encourages you to stand on your own, know your rights, and even to encourage others as well.”

## Sustainability

For KIND, sustainability translates to a program that continues to have impact beyond the immediate limitations of the program. Whether this means the girls are able to independently invoke change within their surrounding community or whether they are able to contribute to building systems free from injustice for future generations, sustainability is a core component of the program. Throughout the program, KIND weaves a theme of service-oriented leadership. Girls are encouraged to reach out to and support one another. They seek innovative ways to engage with other girls in their communities. Alumnae are encouraged to continue building constructive relationships with younger girls in the program. KIND has particularly witnessed incidents where past Junior Kudra members have taken opportunities to elevate disempowered women and battle injustices in their own communities. For instance, Sylvia Eniang Essessien, a graduate of the 2004 program, now runs a community education project on HIV/AIDS among youth in her community. This service orientation, which endows a sense of responsibility for the collective well-being of girls and women, has resulted in a broad sphere of influence for Junior Kudra messages that could influence change for generations.

“The girls themselves are remarkably exceptional and only need a boost in knowledge and leadership trainings to better take on their full potential.”

Former Director, KIND  
Lagos, 2015

## Replicability

Because of the simple methodology focusing on grassroots, community-based education, building a network for vocational opportunities, mentorship, and counselling, the program is one that can be replicated with relative ease in different contexts. Specifically, the network of participants that is formed through encouraging social responsibility provides contextualized strength to participants. The pro-

gram has potential for replication in other slum and urban communities in Africa and around the globe.

## Lessons learned

Education and training are important instruments for changing society. Well-designed trainings can deconstruct discriminatory practices and attitudes that affect gender equality. The program helps strengthen the capacity of girls to collaboratively address gender-based issues in their communities by training girls on financial management, emotional intelligence, and information on rights and reproductive health. As such, girls are better equipped against HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, and sexual harassment. At the same time, the training empowers girls to become political, economic, and social leaders of change in their communities. The girls themselves are equipped to address the challenges they see and experience in their communities. The interrelated nature of KIND’s parallel programs, for instance, the continuum between Junior Kudra and university-level Kudra, plays a key role in reinforcing impact through crossover programs and experiences.

Parents, guardians, teachers, principals, and others who have significant influence over the lives of children and adolescents lack the understanding and skill to manage situations affecting adolescents. While gatekeepers are able to identify issues that hinder the holistic development of girls, they are often not adequately aware of the need for protection and support mechanisms for vulnerable girls, how to manage unhealthy behavioural patterns demonstrated by adolescents, and the impact of sexual abuse on girls. Without the skills to observe, understand, address or refer, many of the problems faced by girls remain dangerously active. Training for community members and school personnel is crucial to a more wholesome and community-centric practice.

Another key learning from the study is the sense of security students and community members feel in the program because of the school-based program design. The trusted and safe environment for participation created by the program is particularly strengthened by the school-based programming. As a result, not only are girls empowered to freely explore their most intimate challenges and ambitions, but community members feel safe allowing their young girls to participate in extra-curricular events without parental supervision.

Given that many participants come from homes that provide little support for adolescents, many girls look to their mentors, staff, and counsellors for direction. Creating

a safe space while encouraging open channels for communicating with staff is essential to fertilizing introspective and engaging discussions that can be used to support girls in their transition to womanhood. This is also important for ensuring that girls can open up about sensitive issues without fear of reprisal.

Over the years, KIND has experimented with various techniques for addressing the most pressing issues faced by adolescent girls. Some have proven to be successful, but have had to be scaled down due to funding gaps. After-school follow-up on the wellbeing of students within their homes and communities is one such programmatic component that, despite impact, lacked the donor interest to continue implementation. Without further funding, KIND

has had to limit follow-up to exceptional cases, reducing the impact of structured monitoring for students.

## Conclusion

Junior Kudra is effectively able to meet its goals and targets because of a responsive program development strategy designed with the community as its primary focus. Using methodologies that enhance positive youth development, the program has successfully empowered a number of young leaders. In the words of the former director of the program, interviewed in 2013: “The girls themselves are remarkably exceptional, and only need a boost in knowledge and leadership trainings to better take on their full potential.” With this as a foundation, the program can be successfully replicated in other contexts. ■

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Big Yellow Taxi was responsible for art direction and design. [www.bigyellowtaxi.com](http://www.bigyellowtaxi.com)