



# 2020 Binder Drive

## REPORT ON THE TRANS EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE (TEI) 2020 BINDER DRIVE

In June 2020 we began to organize a binder drive in response to an identified gap in access to chest binders among the community of transgender men, trans masculine and non-binary people in East Africa. With the support of an [international group of collaborators](#), a GoFundMe campaign, and in-house contributions, we raised the resources to receive and distribute 54 binders produced by the trans-owned company [gc2b](#).

On December 6, 2020, we held our inaugural Binder Drive Distribution Event in Nairobi - successfully distributing these binders among our community while adhering to COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. Over 20 individuals were able to pick up their binders during the event. For recipients located outside Nairobi, packages were sent including the binder, printed material on how to safely bind, plus a TEI shirt and stickers.



### PURPOSE

The primary goal of this Binder Drive was to provide free access to binders to our community. Access to binding reduces body dysphoria and can alleviate other insecurities that trans masculine people face when in public. These binders were distributed with informational pamphlets on how to safely wear a binder. This provides a safe alternative to unhealthy binding techniques used among our community (e.g. one person described collecting dirty hospital bandages, washing them, and using them to bind). Many folks shared stories of unsafe binding techniques they had used in the past. We hope that access to these binders and info on safe binding methods will provide a better alternative.

## OUTCOMES

The event was a success, with over 20 trans masculine folks in attendance. In addition to receiving a binder, attendees participated in a discussion session led by McCarty, one of our community elders. McCarty shared his journey and guided us on ways to bind safely, and folks were able to share stories of their lived experiences as trans masculine people in our community. Our primary goals were achieved, with all binders given to their designated recipients while providing a safe space for trans masculine people to gather and share resources.



McCarty leading the discussion.

## TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

During the event we noted that few people knew where to access binders specifically made for chest compression, and very few people knew how to safely use the binders. While we view the delivery of 54 binders as a success, it was clear that there were more trans masculine people in need of access to safe binders.

We see the need for improved access to binders in East Africa, and educational material on how to safely bind. Currently there are no companies producing binders within Africa, and international shipping from companies in the United States or Asia is often cost-prohibitive and runs the risk of the package being held up in customs (as initially occurred with this donation). TEI considers establishing an East African binder production line as one of its foundational priorities. We need to enhance support of our donors, supporters and allies in order to make headway in achieving this goal.



Attendees during the discussion portion of the event.

## CONCLUSION

Our inaugural Binder Drive was a success, but the need for access to safe binding methods persists in our community. We at TEI are dedicated to establishing a trans-operated binder production facility on our leased land in Kajiado, Kenya, with the dual goal of providing job training to members of our community and creating a source of affordable binders for transmasculine people in East Africa.