

Kengele Children's Network (KCN) October 2010 Report



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A Partnership between Be Kids and Child Peace and the Children of Korogocho

KENGELE CHILDREN NETWORK
October Report.

I. 3rd October 2010 - Letter writing-Correspondence between Mater Dei College and Kengele Children Network.

Following the visit of Yulia Koh, a Be Kids member, the KCN children wrote letters to pen pals in Mater Dei College in Western Australia. The children also received letters in response to earlier correspondence.

The correspondence serves as a vital tool for children not only to create friendship with other children from a far away continent but also to connect and have a virtual experience of a life in another country. If the exchange of letter continues, it has the potential of broadening the worldviews of the children from both countries as they share about their unique experiences as well as day-to-day activities.

It is amazing that some children in Kengele received bracelets and other artworks –an indication of a cultural exchange-which goes a long way in making the children, feel part of a bigger world, and not separated in isolation.

Art is a main medium of cultural exchange and this can be explored to give the children an idea of how life is like in other cultures different from their own. We are really grateful to Mater Dei college students and their teacher Yulia Koh in for making the letter writing and exchange a possibility.



II. Drugs and substance abuse training by E-mentoring Africa.

E-mentoring Africa graduates started their program with the K.C.N in the month of October and they began by facilitating sessions on drug abuse for three Saturdays in Cluster B villages which include Highridge, Korogocho A, Korogocho B, Kisumu Ndogo and Nyayo. The meetings were done at the Study Centre situated in Nyayo.

The Lesson Plan First week-16TH /October

The training was on drug abuse and the topics covered included:

- What is a drug?
- What is drug abuse?
- What are some of the most commonly abused drugs?
- What are the local names used to refer to these drugs
- Have anyone of you ever used a drug?

The following week-23rd /October- the focus was on the some of the most abused drugs including:

- ❖ Cigarettes
- ❖ Sniffing Glue (This is basically an adhesive glue made with carbon elements which when sniffed has capabilities of causing hallucinations. It's mostly used by street boys .
- ❖ Khat (Miraa-green leaves chewed are capable of causing hallucinations)
- ❖ Marijuana

The participants were taken through a session in which they gave the local names of the drugs .Boys were particularly responsive and they seemed to know about ten names in local slang for many drugs.This they said helps to keep the parents or figures of authority in the dark about the secretive habit.



30th October- How can we stay away from drugs.

The third and final week a recap was done and now the focus on alcohol and more specifically the cheap traditional liquor locally known as chang'aa or "Jet".It is believed that some chemicals used in its brewing include aeroplane fuel hence the name "Jet"

The dangers posed by these drugs were discussed, both physical and social consequences.

The children were taught on the ways through which they could avoid taking drugs which included:

- Keeping away from bad company.
- Don't be idle. Engage in sport activities in your free time.

-Avoid taking all kind of drugs

Observations

The topic on drug abuse opened our eyes to the reality of how exposed the children are to the drugs and the drug abusers. Some boys confessed to have tasted at least a drug (mostly a cigarette, bhang or Khat). Most of the children new a friend either in school or at home who used and is still using drugs.

Some confessed that they knew at least one pupil in their class who ran away from class to the school toilet to smoke marijuana or sniff glue. Some of the characteristics of these children as given by KCN children are that they have red eyes; they sleep a lot in class and they are frequently in trouble with the teachers because of indiscipline cases.

The children confessed to know several pubs where cheap liquor (chang'aa or Jet) is sold. The children also mentioned names of their friends whom they said that their parents sold the brew for a living. The brew costs as little as 10 shs. a glass. Sometimes the patrons who don't have money pay by offering services like fetching water to make the brew in exchange for free drinks.

This brew is such a threat that it's a national crisis where many youths are wasting their energies drinking. Most recently the government passed a law to make chang'aa legal. The move is meant to ensure proper regulations so as to make the brew safe for human consumption. Meanwhile, people continue to drink a brew concocted in "slum breweries". The chemicals used have the ability to damage optical nerves and result in blindness.

The brew is a major cause of domestic violence and distress in many households. Children observed that it is impossible to do homework at home when the father is a drunkard. Some children said they missed school for days or didn't have food because the dad drank all the money.

The most affected village is Korogocho A, according to the children. In this village and especially in a street nicknamed Mandracos, drinking is such a menace that you'll see drunken men from as early as nine o'clock in the morning!! The question now becomes, when do these people work? The village is full of what are commonly referred to as "dead men". These are men who have taken alcohol so much that it has taken so much toll on their health so much that they seem older than their real ages.

Even more scaring was the fact that children knew the drug peddlers in villages and where to find what drugs. For instance one of the boys, who lives in Korogocho A, said there were "bases" where youths meet to smoke bhang and chew khat (miraa). Khat is legal in Kenya while Bhang is not. Youths in Korogocho have resorted to these drugs either to seek temporary relief from their troubles or simply out of addiction.

There is a huge correlation between drug abuse and crime in the sense that those who abuse drugs are more likely to get into crime to sustain their expensive habit.

The other twist is that even the law enforcement agencies are involved in the chain that where they are bribed to let the peddlers carry on their trade. It not

Recommendations

When the children, as young as the Kengele children and youths, with an impressionable mind and the adventurous nature of adolescents, are exposed to drugs, drug peddlers and a drug addicts, the temptation to try a drug becomes very high. This is a potent combination to have children start taking drugs and to have them hooked, and sometimes for life. It is the first taste of drugs that causes the children to seek stronger drugs and highs and before they know it, they are addicts.

The energies should now be focused on an action plan that seeks to engage the children and now the Kengele youths in trainings with an aim to make them peer educators.

After the training, efforts are to be on education and information sharing in order to create more awareness on the subject of drug abuse.

III. Planning for the fun day with schools in Buruburu.

The visit to Shepherds Junior School in Buruburu has now been established as an annual event. The event has been held since the year 2008 and is usually in the month of November. The event serves as a community outreach event for Shepherds Junior School while at the same time KCN gets an opportunity to mingle with children from the social middle class. This year's event is intended to be a fun day and is planned by Bridah Fun World –an entertainment company ,Kengele Children Network and Shepherds Junior School.

The participants are supposed to pay two hundred shillings to take part in the fun day activities which include water slides and a bouncing castle. Other fun activities will include face painting, dancing competitions as well as crazy Olympics and teambuilding games.



The facilitators have been going round schools in Buruburu inviting them for the event to be held on the 13th of November .At the same time, the dance team and debate team in KCN has been practicing in practicing for the event. The theme of the fun day is “Education my Freedom” which is borrowed from the current phase of Kengele Children Network project.

There is an understanding that part of the collection will go towards the high school fund for two KCN children namely Raphael Kituku and Abdel Nasser who are in Shepherds Junior School and will be sitting for their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in November.The profile of the two pupils is given in more depth below

Raphael Kituku

Raphael Kituku is fifteen years old and joined Shepherds Junior School in January 2009 in class seven from St. John Informal school. This was after he emerged the first in a series of interviews that determined his chance in Shepherds Junior School. He had to go a class behind so as to get a proper foundation, so instead of joining class eight ,he joined class seven.

Kituku proved himself worth the chance as he managed to adapt very quickly to his new school and also had to get along with new friends from more affluent backgrounds. He did not let his background deter him and very quick got used to his new system.



Two years later, Raphael was leading the class in Kiswahili subject. During the mock exams he scored 399 marks out of a possible 500 marks. He is aiming at 420 marks which he says will enable him to join Nakuru High School, a prestigious Provincial high school.

Raphael’s career goal is to be a doctor so that he can help many people. Kituku is an above average performer. He is a keen student and works very hard in school. He also is a good role model for other children in Kengele albeit his calm and composed demeanor .He likes to play soccer during his free time

Raphael lives Korogocho A with is the sixth born a family of ten children .He has nine other siblings.He knows very little about his father and the mother ,Cathrine Mutinda sells vegetables in an upcountry market and then sends them upkeep money to elder sisters .The mother visits the family once in a while but when she is away his 28 years old sister is left in charge of the family. The other guardian is the eldest brother who also supports the family from his business of selling used car tyres.

Raphael is also an uncle to his two nephews and a niece. He also has one brother, namely Dominic Mtune ,in jail.

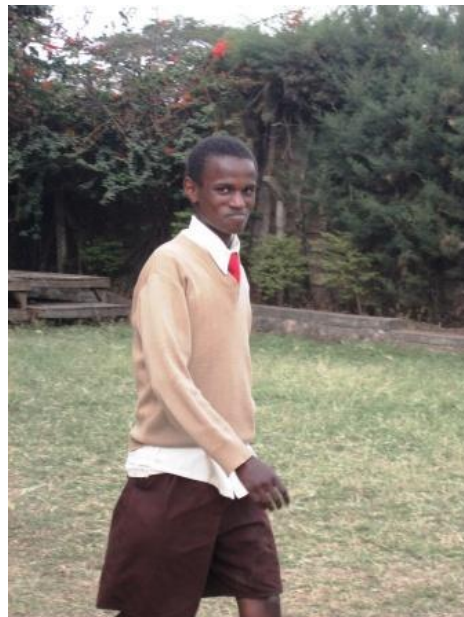
When at home, Raphael helps with fetching water and he also washes his clothes.

Abdel Nasser

Abdel is fifteen years of age and story of joining Shepherds Junior School from Daniel Comboni Primary School, is one of sheer courage and unshakable determination. During the interviews in the year 2008, Abdel did not make it through the interviews attributable to the stiff competition.

However Abdel did not despair but he kept a close contact with one of the teachers in Shepherds Junior School and he went for tuitions during school holidays. Due to his affable nature he won the heart of teachers and by the end of the year 2008 he was asked to join Shepherds join school.

He is the only student who did not have to repeat a class, as is the custom so as to give the get a proper foundation, and so he joined Raphael in class seven instead of joining class six.



Abdel has been doing well in languages and especially Kiswahili. During the mock exams he scored 358 marks out of a possible 500 marks. He is aiming at 380 marks and wants to join Starehe Boys Centre, the best high school in the country.

His ambitions do not end there; he wants to be the topmost investigative journalist in the country in years to come. His role model is a journalist with Kenya Television Network called Mohammed Ali. During his free time he likes to play football and reading story books.

Abdel is a very inquisitive boy –always searching for something-just like a journalist. He has done his best to assist in the Kengele Children Magazine, despite his busy schedule at Shepherds Junior School.

Abdel lives with his uncle, a businessman in Eastleigh, in Highridge. In that family he lives with his eight cousins. Abdel only assist to fetch water, which is his house chore.

IV. Meeting the Kengele Youths(in corporation to the facilitation team).

Kengele Children Network has been in existence for three years now. Some of the children recruited when they were thirteen or fourteen years old are now about sixteen and seventeen years respectively. The Kengele process has achieved in largely terms of empowering this children to being able to speak freely on issues affecting them.

The walk with these children has been both exciting and deeply rewarding as the children have grown from timid children to very able and promising leaders. The transformation in the children has been evident and it feels an underestimation to call some of them children, hence the use of the term Kengele Youths.

Plans are underway to have the Kengele Youths take up facilitators roles even though, in small scale, in order to prepare them to take up more responsibility come next year. The idea is to prepare the youths as much as possible for increasingly more responsibility in the near future as far as Kengele Children Network is concerned.

The current crop of facilitators should also prepare to take lesser roles in the process in order to pave way for the Youths to take over. The project should seek to have a leaner management team and involve the Kengele Youths a lot more in the process.

With the growth and development of the Kengele Youths there are various emerging needs which demands a change in strategy so to allow for fresh ideas in accordance with the principle that children ,if give a chance to participate, they can bring about the desired change ,both for themselves and their community. Some of the issues that need addressing include:

- Adolescence and young adulthood ,relationships
- Leadership and conflict resolution
- Self identity and positive self image
- Intense life skills training.

There are already some youth-friendly activities that the Youths have been involved in ,for instance

a) Visit to Lunar Park in Nairobi's Westlands on Sunday 17th October 2010.

The trip was organized to Lunar by Dennis Alphayo after the from the Kengele Youths members expressed a need to on trip out of Korogocho.The thirteen youths involved all contributed their own bus fare and the amount needed to pay for entrance in the park.

Once in the park they all had an opportunity to enjoy the the machine called the Banana ride . Its a type of a rollercoaster that the Youths enjoyed thoroughly. The ride was as scary as it was enjoyable,

according to those participated.

b) Brainstorming meetings with Kengele Youths

The Kengele Youths have been meeting with the facilitators to chart the way forward in terms of how the Kengele youths are going to share in the facilitation roles both in their villages and in club activities. The deliberations are ongoing and full report will be provided once the Youth facilitation team is ready.

V. Study centre report.

The study centre in Nyayo has now been three months in operation and has a great impact on the children. The children who cannot get a conducive environment at home to attend to their homework always come to the study centre after school.

The fact that electricity has not yet been installed in the centre has not deterred the strong-willed children, instead they have been innovative and they carry lantern lamps from home to the study center for lighting. This has been a huge encouragement and it is evident that the children are intent on using the facility in order to improve their academic performance.



The electricity has already been applied for to the Kenya Power and Lighting Company and what remains now is the installation of power in the center. The improved lighting will see increased number of pupils coming to study and even study for longer.

There have been follow-up meetings done on availability of space in both Ngomongo and Gitathuru have been productive since there are spaces available in the two villages.

The Ngomongo study center committee has identified a plot in near the chief's office in Ngomongo and on is only waiting for the container. In Gitathuru village, a youth group called Together We Can Work

has expressed interest and have availed their unutilized space beside their bio-centre facility to be used for a study center.



The group is similar in many ways to Korogocho Poverty Eradication and Development Group, the one we have partnered with in the Kisumu Ndogo/Nyayo study center. The only challenge in Gitathuru is that there are no access roads going to the place where we have the space so that getting a cargo container there is virtually impossible. But we are optimistic that with the ongoing slum upgrading project in Korogocho, there are going to enough access roads to the land in Gitathuru.

We are hopeful that we can sign the necessary agreement forms with the necessary organizations so that we can launch the next study center next year in Ngomongo/Ngunyumu villages.

VI. Radio program.

The children radio program with the community radio ,Koch F.M. yet to commence but the progress has been slowed down by the official procedures that ought to be followed in the process, especially on the part of the radio station. We are optimistic that our deliberations with the managers of the station will yield positive results so that we can have Kengele Children Network members participate in a children program.

VII. Magazine progress.

The August issue of the magazine has been delayed and therefore it is going to be produced in November so that it can be read by the children in the December holiday .After a meeting with the magazine team, it was concluded that the intention of the Kengele magazine was to have the children read the it during their school holiday, it would be therefore be unwise to produce the magazine halfway during the school term.

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