

Small Social Work and Vocational Intervention Program in Urban Kenya and Tanzania to bring the Children from a Street to School Experience in Kisumu, Eldoret, Malindi

N. Kimuli (Nicodemus Kimuli), D. Kimuli (Daria Kimuli), V. Namulanda (Victor Namulanda), T. Rusnak (Thomas Rusnak), N. Benkova (Nora Benkova), J. Holkova (Jarmila Holkova), E. Horvath (Eva Horvath), S. Revicka (Sona Revicka), M. Utesena (Martina Utesena), R. Zoller (Roman Zoller), V. Palovicova (Viera Palovicova), V. Pazitna (Veronika Pazitna), M. Karvaj (Marian Karvaj), I. Duris (Ivan Duris), P. Vaska (Peter Vaska), Z. Hajdenova (Zuzana Hajdenova), L. Vallusova (Lenka Vallusova), R. Jurciová (Renata Jurciová), I. Adamová (Irene Adamová), M. Katunská (Monika Katunská), J. Kafkova (Jirina Kafkova), A. Mamova (Alex Mamova), C. Mulama (Catherine Mulama)

Original Article

2nd St Philippe Neri Street Boy Center Kisumu, B1 Zdenka Schgelling and St. Kizito Educational Center, Nairobi, St. Bakita House Eldoret, St. Francis School Malindi, Anti-street Boy Initiative Mother St. Theresa Brothers Kibera, St. Philippe Neri Schools in Joshka, joint program of Slovak Aid and SEUC.
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E-mail address:

nicokimuli@safaricom.ke

Reprint address:

Nicodemus Kimuli
St. Philippe Neri School Foundation, Jopshjka
1012 Kenya

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Reviewers:

Lenka Pandya,
Pannuir Jesuit School, Manwi Karnataka Prov. 45588, India
Pawel S. Czarnecki,
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Abstract:

Joint programs combining full board and education (housing and school) in Kenya are more and more popular. Results of the 15 year history of 5 programs focused on shelter and education to combat social pathology as social work intervention are presented. This communication is dedicated to Dr. Mimi Bihariova, former SEUC and SCM PhD Programs and MSc programs who died tragically in Tanzania having devoted her life in support of orphans and street children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

In 1999, the Sisters of Mercy started a large intervention to help street children suffering in the slums and streets of Nairobi led by Sister Mary Kileen, called „Nairobi Mother Theresa“. Over the last 20 years at least 5 independent projects similar to Mukuru Promotional Vocational and Educational Centers have been established by Slovak students of Social Work and Community Health PhD Programs in Kenya, Uganda Tanzania and Somalia, and currently running at least 5 centers where a combination of vocational education with sheltering and full board prevents street children from social pathology and brings the children from streets to schools. (1-5) The aim of this short communication is to present a brief overview of aims and effectiveness of some of these programs in the Republic of Kenya.

Overview of the programs and their history and effectiveness

1. Eldoret

St. Bakita House is the oldest project to bring children from the street to school outside of Nairobi. Established in conjunction with St. Lesley Clinic in poor parts of HI Spiris Parish by the Parish Priest Fr. Martin Cingel, the clinic was transferred to the Diocese of Eldoret after 15 years of continuous work. But St. Bakita House, built in 2006, is still operated by the SEUC Tropical Social Work Program; empowered by the NGFO Biloroal World; supplied by a primary grammar school established by a Bicolored World Slovak Aid Grant. The vocational school in St. Bakita House serves from 18-24 orphans or female street girls who receive 2 years vocational training in waiting, cooking, tailoring, hairdressing programs.



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2. Kisumu

2nd St. Philippe House Kisumu, established by the Salesian Brothers in 2015, cover housing and shelter together with sports training and basic education for about 20 „low threshold“ street boys from streets of Kisumu (about 200,000 population).

3. Muhuroni and Naivasha

The anti-malnutritional program converted to education and sheltering, was again converted to an outreach nutritional program since the children have been returned to their original families. After 10 years of history, it is currently supervised by SEUC MSc Social Work students and the Sisters of Mercy. The *Naivasha Shelter* was converted to a Mother & Child Healthcare Clinic; then developed to a full Maternity Ward served by a Slovak Medical Doctor, sunned by Sisters of Mercy in Kenya who were founders of the program „Bring the children from street to school“ in 1999.

4. Malindi

The Malindi Program was established together by the St. Francis Sisters of Mercy plus the Franciscan Parish, and served originally as a Healthcare Center. Later, it was converted into a school plus anti-malnutrition program; then to a project supporting shelters and housing for poor families in the outreaches of Malindi. This is one of the most multifunctional programs supporting sheltering, housing, HIV program outreaches; anti-malnutrition program; primary school program to help poor families and their school children; has 12 years history. After being established it was given the name *Ushurikiano* (Place of Joy) currently serving financially handicapped households (support to about 24 children and school children) in cooperation with Healthcare by St. Francis Order Nurses and Franciscan Parish Priests in Malindi.

5. Nairobi

St. Kizito and BI Zdenka Vocational Center

Two small vocational full board shelters serving approximately 15 boys and 15 girls are run separately by SEU as joint interventions with St. Elizabeth University, Catholic University of South Africa and the Slovak-Kenyan BSc Program. Amalgamated after a 20 years history they

are the oldest full board shelters for street children in Nairobi. Nowadays, students are receiving education either separately in the largest school project in Kenya, the St. Philippe Neri School in Joshka founded by Kenyan MSc and PhD students. It is currently funded by Slovak Aid Grants, and a small Healthcare Center with a Slovak Physician from the SEUC Tropical Program from Bratislava SK EU.

6. Kibera

The Kibera Program is not a typical vocational or educational project. Some street boys are receiving special attention from the Street Boy Team chaired by Fr. Ivan Duris from the Missionaries of Charity Brotherhood a male order founded by HI Mother Theresa. It is taking care on street boys in the greatest slums in Africa Kibera having more than one million overcrowded population. The primary intention of this program is to provide food and to separate the street boys from substance abuse (mainly glue, etc.). Those successfully reintegrated from the substance misuse are offered several long term programs in a Vocational School nearby including those above mentioned. *The Bosco Boys*, the Salesian Project for reintegration of street boys is empowered by many EU Salesians co-working with social work students and volunteers.

Conclusion

To bring the children from street to school requires tremendous effort, where the students of social work and volunteers together with local community try to prevent social pathology related to street substance abuse, prostitution, crime, etc. (6-8) If the children receive proper housing, nutrition and basic healthcare, they can be included in some of the educational programs (vocational school, primary schools, etc.) to build their futures. After completion of secondary school, the best students are offered a BSc Social Work Program - a joint degree program of SEU and CUEA (Catholic University of East Africa and St. Elizabeth University Program) established in 2001. Many of the graduates work with street children within international or national NGOs as part of circular social work and health interventional strategies in large urban environments in East Africa.

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