

Promoting Psychosocial Support through Creative Arts Workshops in Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement

Introduction:

Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement are located in northwestern Kenya. Home to over 190,000 refugees, the population continues to grow as families flee political instability and violence from neighboring countries, including South Sudan, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Somalia (UNHCR). Through a fellowship with IsraAID, a non-governmental humanitarian aid organization, I worked in Kakuma and Kalobeyei for two months over the past summer, conducting impact assessments and designing programs in various sectors of humanitarian aid, mainly Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). Having formed close connections with families in the camp, I am well aware of current community needs.

Over half of the refugees in the camp are children; for most, the camp is the only home they'd ever know. Sustainability is crucial to their well-being; lack of safe spaces exposes them to various protection risks such as violence, exploitation and human trafficking.

Project and Anticipated Outcomes:

I propose to establish a weekly structure for a designated Child Resource Center (CRC) in Kalobeyei Village 1. CRCs host children below school age, children who have no safe place to stay after school and out-of-school children ranging between the ages of 4-17. Children can access the CRC any time during open hours. Before joining the CRC, all children must complete the registration process, and parental consensus must be obtained.

In this CRC, I aim to:

- provide refugee children with access to appropriate psychosocial care through a weekly creative arts curriculum based on my own extensive experience as well as Kalobeyei community needs
- support Child Protection facilitators, volunteers and coordinators through trainings designed by us and the community (i.e Journaling and Self-Reflection)
- provide job and volunteer opportunities to adult refugees in the community who are qualified to work with children in the CRC
- use the CRC to administer workshops in other sectors of humanitarian aid, including Women's Empowerment (i.e Menstrual Hygiene Management) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) information sessions led by NGO-trained refugees

The CRC will serve as a safe space for children in the community and will minimize the potential for trafficking and violence, while providing them with a space to interact, play and engage with trained facilitators. This serves as a benefit because it allows them to interact socially as well as artistically; opportunities to do this in safe spaces in the settlements are scarce. These workshops, trainings and programs will provide children and youth with leadership and collaboration skills; through different aspects of the curriculum, those accessing the CRC have the ability to explore various artistic activities that aim to reduce stress, boost self-esteem and enhance problem-solving skills. In the context of the refugee camp, these benefits will serve as a significant advantage. The curriculum is expected to reach 300 children in the community.

Impact, Logistics, and Sustainability

In partnership with a local CBO, I will design various workshops that abide by humanitarian sustainability standards to achieve psychosocial support. I maintain regular contact with Peter Loching and Betty Zekira, South Sudanese refugees who lead the CBO and run a local church which supports children, orphans and youth. They are trained by IsraAID in the sectors of Child Protection, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support as well as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and are well-equipped to operate a CRC. IsraAID plans to implement a mobile CRC in Kalobeyei Village 1 in early June 2020, to be operated by the

CBO; the beginning of this project aligns with my proposed arrival in Kalobeyei. After speaking to members of the community and assessing their current and future needs, I plan to assist with the establishment of the new CRC, as well as design and implement a weekly creative arts curriculum. These workshops and activities require minimal supplies and can be completed in two to three days. I expect the demographic reached to be mainly South Sudanese refugees; while Betty and Peter welcome all into their community, their outreach focuses mainly on connecting South Sudanese refugees.

After speaking to the IsraAID Field Coordinator, I have confirmed full support and approval to implement my project. In partnership with Peter, Betty and the aforementioned grassroots NGOs, my curriculum takes into consideration the needs of the refugee community, particularly children and youth. By working to establish the CRC with Peter and Betty, I ensure that my program will outlive my time in Kenya, as it will be sustained by community volunteers long after I return home. I will take great care to assess the effects of the CRC through focus groups and surveys, as well as my own observations.

Pre- Departure

In collaboration with the CBO and community members via email, I will pre-plan and design programs and workshops and compile them into an accessible print format which will later be distributed to the facilitators working with the children.

Proposed Time Frame [Mid June - Early August]

1. **Week One** -Introductions and adjustments. CRC construction is expected to finish in early June
2. **Week Two** - Mobilize children in the village and raise local awareness about the CRC
3. **Weeks Three to Five** - Implement designed and approved activities, including:
 - a. Writing / Journaling Workshop
 - i. Youth and children acknowledge that their voices hold merit
 - b. Visual Art
 - i. Painting, drawing and crafts encourages children to perceive, respond to, and create images. It also allows them to express their emotions and thoughts in a productive way
 - c. Women's Empowerment
 - i. I plan to recruit NGO-trained refugees to lead Menstrual Hygiene Management workshops for youth accessing the CRC
 - a. Physical Activity
 - i. Teach yoga, sports and other forms of fitness in order to promote physical health and awareness
 - b. Public Speaking
 - i. Teach youth accessing the CRC how to properly communicate their ideas and engage in relevant debates.
 - c. Improv Classes
 - i. Establish confidence and collaboration

Experience

I strongly believe that my experience in writing, visual art, education, music and humanitarian aid qualifies me to design workshops that provide structure and support to the children and youth at the resource center. I am an English and Political Science double major and hope to pursue a career in international humanitarian aid after graduating. My skills in writing and communication are constantly improving, thanks to my position as the *Collegian* Features Editor and a Kenyon Review Associate. I am writing this proposal not to emulate the work I completed in the field last summer, but rather to focus on other areas in the community that are in need of support. Having worked with several NGOs in Kakuma, my relationships to the people I met will make this project not only possible, but sustainable as well.

I will be on campus during the Fall Semester to produce a Final Report and give a presentation.