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How Kesho CBO is Changing Lives in Kilifi

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Ms Rachel Kiti, a beneficiary of Kesho. She is currently attending Hillsdale College in the US

File Photo

By Mwakwaya Raymond Mwakwaya

Email, thecoastnewspaper@gmail.com (<mailto:thecoastnewspaper@gmail.com>)

Websit www.thecoast.co.ke (<http://www.thecoast.co.ke/>)

When Rachel Mbuhe Kiti, a first born in a humble family of six siblings in Kilifi County, completed standard eight, seven years ago, her parents could not afford to take her to high school.

She was about to give up on the possibility of ever getting further education but then luck knocked on her door; a local CBO offered her sponsorship and her dream for secondary education turned into a sweet reality.

Four years later she did so well in her KCSE that she became one among a handful of young talented Kenyans selected to benefit from a skill enrichment programme conducted by the Equity Bank every year.

Fast forward, Ms Rachel is today attending her university education at the Hillsdale College in Michigan, US.

She owes most thanks to the local community based organization (CBO) known as Kesho for literally taking her hand and linking her with other people and organizations of goodwill that have seen her reach where she has so far.

Rachel is just one of about 11,000 young persons who have benefitted from Kesho CBO, an entity founded in 2004 by a small group of five women and a man living in Kilifi.

The five shared concerns over the lack of educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged families. Kilifi County being one of the poorest in Kenya, Kesho saw the need to have an organization that offers education support to children in this county.

According to Evans Odhiambo, the Executive Director Kesho Kenya, the organisation runs a wide range of education, youth development and family support programs which continue to impact in great ways on the lives of many people and families in the semi-arid county where quite a huge chunk of population survive on less than two dollars a day.

In 2008, Kesho Kenya was invited to become a Cooperating Institution of Rotary international, he says upon which funds were pledged for 50 secondary students and this doubled the organisation's sponsorships. Kesho then became a registered Community Based Organisation (CBO) and moved into an office.

Currently located at Jacob's Kilifi sideway store, Kesho has grown over time from office to office as the staffing team grows steadily too. Besides the financial support, Kesho Kenya offers Basic Life Skill Enrichment program to aid students into being independent and all rounded.

Basic Education

As part of the organization's endeavor to enhance child access to education, its basic education program has benefitted 1,100 children with 99 per cent of them transitioning to secondary school and 62.5 per cent joining national schools in Kenya.

A literacy support project in 10 primary schools in Kilifi County has reached out to 48 teachers, 744 parents and over 2109 children in Grade 3.

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The highly successful program has also enlisted 25 adult learners with five on them having completed Kenya Certificate of Primary School. The program has also established a fully equipped resource center accommodating over 220 children during school holidays while its basic life skills enrichment trainings reaching out to over 400 children a year.

Secondary Education

After students successfully complete KCPE and are asked to join High schools, Kesho Kenya supports them through their secondary education so as to ensure they are given an equal access to education just like every other child.

Currently the program boasts of resource center activities attracting over 100 children during school holidays. Also offered are enrichment and training activities such as career talk and life skill trainings.

Youth Development

About 73 per cent of youth at Kesho Kenya have gone through Training and enrichment programs with 60.3 per cent of Secondary sponsored students having joined tertiary institutions and 66 per cent of those in tertiary colleges engage in give back activities to their community.

Child Support & Family Support

Protecting a child from harm or abuse cuts across all Kesho Kenya interventions. Guided by the child protection policy, which states that child should be protected from exploitation, neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu

This program entails supporting marginalized girls in primary, secondary and TVETs education. This project benefits over 11, 563 girls in Kilifi County.

Its other achievements include bursary disbursement to over 200 girls joining TVETs; travel grants once per year to about 50 per cent of the girls; child- to- child clubs reaching out to 2,200 pupils; and reach out to 810 pupils through inspirational and motivational events such as mentor talks from community models.

Kesho's vision is to ensure all young people are educated, fulfill their potential and broaden their experience to the world, irrespective of their poverty, ethnicity and religion and gender or special needs.

Its mission is to advance access to education and employment for vulnerable young people living in the coast of Kenya, through a long-term holistic approach.

All that is guided by six core values: a belief in education; putting children first; integrity and transparency; inclusivity; relevant and rooted in the community; and finally strong governance.

"These trainings are organized to aid both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries become independent, all rounded and broaden their understanding making it easy to adapt and fit in new environments," says Evans.

He said after students complete school, they are encouraged to give back to the community through the Kesho Alumni Youth program as peer educators or role models.

He added that the organisation values working with other institutions to enhance its effectiveness. For

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instance, after it sponsored Ms Rachel up to form four, the organisation linked her with the Zawadi Africa which sent her to the American college where she is studying.

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