

JARIDA LETU

 *Kesho Kenya*

Quarterly
Newsletter

September 2020



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KESHO KENYA

Working in the COVID 19 Pandemic



As the pandemic persists, communities in Kenya are being pushed further into vulnerability with everyone full of uncertainties of when this nightmare will end.

Kesho Kenya staff have had to minimize on field activities for ongoing projects unlike in the previous years. This is all in a bid to ensure the safety of staff, our beneficiaries and partners against the novel

Corona Virus Pandemic and also in adherence to the MoH guidelines for safety.

In May, our Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu project with the support of Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) conducted house visits to beneficiaries to establish how they were fairing and the challenges they were experiencing so as to come up with solutions to address those challenges.

Despite the government lifting most of the directives put in place to contain the virus, families, more so of those working in the informal sector are still experiencing the negative effects of the pandemic. To support them through these difficult times, we have through our partners, provided donations in form of food and sanitation equipment's to our beneficiaries and surrounding communities to build their resilience amidst the pandemic.

Back to the office

Kesho Kenya employees resumed working from the office in July after complying with the Ministry of Health guidelines on health and safety for workplaces during the Covid-19 period which included; installation of hand washing stations, provision of hand sanitizers and masks to employees, taking temperature measurements for all persons coming to the office, registering everyone including details and ensuring adequate social distancing from one another. Our resource centre, although open, is only limited to a number of beneficiaries who either come to study on their own, hold group discussions or attend trainings to keep them engaged as they continue to stay at home.

Slowly resuming activities

To establish how our beneficiaries were fairing amidst the pandemic, we felt the need to conduct home visits and to determine how we could support. This was to make sure that our children are living in environments that are safe, happy and that they are respected and empowered. The household visits were also geared towards assessing beneficiary level of vulnerability to benefit from our weekly cash transfers.

Chance to grow and develop

The current health situation has given us an impetus to adapt to the new normal and all staff are now conversant in using communication and collaboration tools such as Zoom and Slack to ensure work does not stop and to check on each others well being.

Our communication department has incorporated into the communication strategy internal communication activities aimed at increasing employee engagement and productivity.



SHINE PROJECT EXPANDS

“In a problem, we can find the solution to it”

SHINE (Students Acting for Honesty, Integrity and Equality) project, empowers students to identify problems existing in their school communities and come up with possible solutions. At the beginning of the year, the project added 30 secondary schools totaling to 45 project schools they were to work with in implementing the project. The pandemic brought with it the paralysis of all activities in the project schools as institutions of learning were closed indefinitely and students asked to go home.

To ensure continuity in project implementation, we changed our interventions to focus on highlights and lessons learnt from our 2019 project schools and scale this through media engagements.

In the media

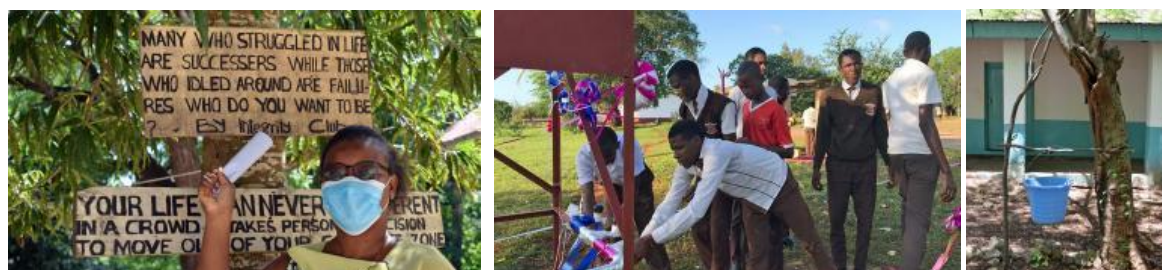
We did a documentary featuring projects done by integrity clubs of Bahari Girls' and Sokoke Boys secondary school. Here is the link to the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1usuUp8_gM&t=44s. An excerpt of that documentary featured on prime time KTN news.

Since we were no longer able to reach students in schools, we decided to engage youths within communities of the schools we had anticipated to work with beginning of the year. We still felt there was need to engage the youth on their role in integrity building within communities. To achieve this, we participated in a one-hour live radio interview.

Case studies

We also undertook case studies for eight SHINE project schools to ascertain how integrity clubs have transformed the schools and influenced positive behaviour change. While visiting these schools we interacted with a few select students, patrons and principals who shared about the successes of the integrity clubs in their schools. Some of the notable examples of the projects done included; a school that solved a water shortage by drilling a borehole, one that constructed new laboratories, dormitories and toilets and one that established clean and healthy school environments by using props to beautify schools.



Honest and responsible future leaders

Feedback from one of the principals, "we no longer have problems with students or experience unrests. When students point out an issue, we sit down with them and discuss how to work through it. We teach students that in a problem, you can also find a solution to it."

A teacher also says, "I have always been passionate about the SHINE project, and desire to nurture honest students who demand integrity, so that when they are grown, they will become responsible leaders who manage public resources with integrity."



BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Activity snapshots

Our Basic and Secondary departments had to re-strategize on how they engage beneficiaries. Before the pandemic, students would come into our office for a one-on-one appraisal but this time, they contacted them on phone to establish how they were fairing, and to sensitize on Corona Virus and how to prevent it as they continue to stay at home.

From the phone interactions: we learnt that most of our beneficiaries struggle with lighting at their homes thus making it difficult for them to study at night. Others are assigned a lot of household chores leaving them with very little time to study. While others stated that they lacked revision materials and stayed hungry all day.



To bridge gaps identified from the challenges, we distributed revision materials to students both in secondary and primary school for them to keep on revising while at home. We held sensitization sessions with parents and enlightened them on the importance of giving their children ample time to study. Additionally, we provided weekly cash transfers to very vulnerable beneficiary families to provide them with an income they could utilize to purchase seedlings for farming besides meeting other basic needs. We were lucky enough to receive donation from Read to Feed programme and Ms. Crompton through which we provided food bags to 56 beneficiary families, and funds from Mission Inclusion Foundation courtesy of the Oliff family to provide cash transfers weekly to 96 families for a period of six weeks.

Dada and boys talks on Sexual Reproductive Health

In matters mentorship, we were not left behind as we conducted sessions aimed at equipping young people with life skills so as to become independent thinkers.

Through leadership training, students learnt how to be responsible, confident and manage their time effectively more so, during the pandemic.

Male and female students through separate focus group discussions were able to talk about their challenges as teenagers and how to overcome them. Female students stated that they are subjected to fend for themselves by their guardians as the male grumbled that they are reluctant on reporting GBV caused by men for the fear of backlashes.

Resource Center Sessions

Our Saturday resource center sessions have resumed, but only limited to a maximum of 15 students who must adhere to the government directives. We determine their temperature as they come in, they must wash their hands and wear masks at all times during their interactions.



WASICHANA WETU WAFULU PROJECT

Learning has not died

“Wasichana Wetu Wafulu” (WWW) means “Let our girls succeed” and is a holistic project funded by *UKAid under the Girls Education Challenge Fund*. The aim of this project is to ensure successful retention and transition for girls in primary school to secondary schools or other learning pathways.

Using learning platforms from home



One of the groups most affected by this pandemic are students as for the first time in history, they have been out of school for over nine months. To leverage on online learning and to ensure students tune in to KICD content being aired on radio and TV, we conducted beneficiary tracking where we were emphasizing on the importance of tuning in to such platforms. Through WhatsApp groups, we also shared revision materials with our beneficiaries to ensure continued learning while at home.

Educational curriculum in radio stations and TV

Those closest to our beneficiaries are the Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) who from time to time conduct house visits to check on their progress and wellbeing. To ensure their safety, we provided them with facial masks and sanitizers for them to use during their visits. From the visits, CHVs consolidate reports and send to our team for support and action where required.

Solar radios and cash transfer

From the June CHV reports, we were able to establish that most of our project girls lack a source of power to study at night and radios to tune in to educational content being aired. To curb these challenges, we in the month of July distributed 228 solar powered radios with a lighting function to beneficiary families to ensure continued learning from home. We also distributed 412 solar powered radios to our student beneficiaries in Kwale as part of our CSEC project to ensure continuity of learning.



Additionally, we issued weekly cash transfers to 115 beneficiary families in the WWW project for parents to invest in sustainable income generating activities to cushion them in these difficult times.



SAFEGUARDING

Identifying risks and achieving child justice

As an organization, we endeavor to provide safe spaces for children where they are safe, healthy, happy and have time to read and play. Since children have been at home for months, they risk experiencing domestic violence, defilement, child marriages which are cases on the rise by day more so, in this pandemic.

Training on child protection



It is saddening to learn that most parents are settling for informal ways of resolving such matters other than the judicial system, which are mostly disadvantageous to the child. This is as a result of mistrust by parents in the justice system and law enforcers. For this reason, we felt the need to empower police officers through a training facilitated by our safeguarding

department on child sexual exploitation and safe justice since they are key role players in ensuring children acquire justice. They also discussed investigation and preservation of evidence, proper reporting structures and role various stakeholders play in ensuring child friendly justice system is attained.

We didn't just stop at that, but further reached out to parents and new beneficiaries to enlighten them on child rights, child protection and parental obligation to ensure children's wellbeing at home and in the community. Additionally, we trained Community facilitators and school representatives on their role in ensuring child safety. For instance, protecting children in child headed families who in order to fend for their siblings seek job opportunities that make them susceptible to extreme levels of vulnerability such as commercial sexual exploitation of children among others.

Home visits to identify potential risks for children to any form of abuse

Kesho Kenya more so, our safeguarding department is deeply rooted in the community, listening and responding to needs as they arise. Through a home visit conducted by the team, they were able to identify potential risks making children vulnerable to any form of abuse be it emotional, physical or sexual and strategized on providing necessary support .



To support the Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu project team, our safeguarding department has in addition worked closely with Community Health Volunteers, to ensure safety of our girls in project clusters. They trained them on how to fill the child protection incident reporting forms, before handing them over to the safeguarding department for recommendations and referral. They were also made also aware of the right reporting mechanisms to guide parents in communities.



DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE MOST AFFECTED

Coming together to contribute

Hygiene packs for 150 girls

We did not only limit our support to families' beneficiaries, but also stretched out to community members within Kilifi County through donations from various programmes and individuals. In June 2020, we partnered up with Kudzecha Women Initiative to distribute hygiene packs to 150 girls in Magarini, Kilifi North and South as the pandemic made it more difficult for girls from vulnerable backgrounds to afford such essentials. This initiative restored our girl's dignity.



Food baskets for 91 families

The County Government of Kilifi made a call for support to lessen the impact of Covid19 on Kilifi families as a result of the uncertainties that the pandemic had presented. Through a donation of food bags, we were able to provide 91 families in Kilifi with a meal.

We also managed to visit two rescue centers and issued out food items to cushion children in the centers through these difficult times.



Support for a family who lost their home

Charity begins at home, the same applies to us as Kesho Kenya. Out of her personal initiative, our board Chair; Zainab Salim came to learn of a vulnerable family in Katsungwini who had lost their home due to heavy rains leaving children without food, bedding and a roof over their head. She mobilized individuals including Kesho Kenya staff to contribute towards constructing them a home, purchasing bedding and a solar powered radio for children to tune in to educational content being aired on radio as they continue to stay at home.



TACKLING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

In the media and in the field



During the last months, TCSEC project has maintained its momentum on following up and providing services such as psychosocial support to existing beneficiaries to support their welfare. The project strived to strengthen the resilience of 26 more families through IGA and entrepreneurship training. The families were also supported with business kits; startup capital or business stock boost.

TV news segments and radio mentions on risk to CSEC

The project promoted community awareness on CSEC with reference to the current COVID 19 pandemic. The awareness was created through TV stations and radio mentions. The TV news segment sought to bring to the public the growing risk of CSEC within the community and empowered the members on the best ways to safeguard their children from all forms of abuse. The radio mentions relied on children messages and voicing to highlight their concerns. In reference to child protection issues, the children were reminded of their rights and made aware of what to expect from their caregivers, community members and the general public during this COVID Period. The children were also assured of their safety.

Two victims in care and protection

The project brought on board a pro-bono lawyer who together with the team managed to make a follow up plan for six pending CSEC related cases and a further two new ones that are in courts. The project managed to enroll the two victims in to care and protection. In both cases the victims were rescued with support of the sub county children office and placed in a rescue facility as law enforcement officers investigate their cases.



Supporting teen mothers

There has been a rise in teen pregnancies in the Country during this period more so in the Coastal region. Among our beneficiaries, one girl delivered successfully after her pregnancy came to term. The project is currently facilitating and supporting the teen mother to access post-natal services and baby clinics as required.

In August activity implementations have been made easier by the easing up of restrictions that have been limiting group interactions and movements. However, safety measures are still in place to ensure that the spread of coronavirus is managed.



CHANGING THE WAY WE CARE

Support children to reunite with families

Kenya is moving away from placing children in orphanages as a form of child safeguarding to reuniting children with families or finding alternative families for every child to give children the opportunity to thrive in an environment that is loving, nurturing and familiar. *Catholic Relief Service* with *Lumos* and *Maestral International* formed the initiative "Changing The Way We Care" with Kesho Kenya as one of their implementing partners in the Coast of Kenya.

The Corona Epidemic resulted in the shutting down of several Charitable Children Institutions (CCIs), which sent beneficiaries back to their homes. These actions exposed the children to numerous safeguarding challenges as no proper re-integration was undertaken. The project's aim is to identify children in CCIs and work towards re-integrating them back with their families or foster homes through a structured way that has the best interest of the child at heart. With the CCI abrupt shutdowns, this was no longer possible. The Initiative had to quickly re-strategize and adapt to the new situation to ensure the children who went home are guaranteed of a proper re-integration.

To manage the situation, we conducted rapid assessments of families in Kilifi North, South, Rabai and Kaloleni where these children went to, to check on their economic status, health, living conditions and psychosocial well-being which are among the factors that pushed the children out of their families and into care institutions in the first place. We provided support based on the needs identified.

76 beneficiary families were registered with the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) to ensure they access quality health care services at no cost. Additionally, masks, hand washing stations, sanitizers, soaps and sanitary towels were distributed to various CCIs in Kilifi North, South and Malindi



Income Generating Activities

To support families in the pandemic, we issued cash transfers to 121 families to enable them afford a meal. The CTWWC team members teamed up with counselors to offer children who had been in CCIs psychosocial support to be able to freely interact with other children. 107 children in 77 households benefitted from this initiative. Furthermore, caregivers in these families were issued with start-up capital to invest in sustainable Income Generating Activities to generate income for their families.

To create awareness in the communities

We also saw the need to enlighten community members especially those in our target sub counties of the project's objective before it kicks off so that they would accord us support. To achieve this, we attended a 1 hour live radio talk show where we discussed our interventions and responded to concerns and queries about the project.



WE IN THE MEDIA

Radio talk shows, TV interviews and a documentary

As a support function to various Kesho Kenya programmes and projects, the communication department was very busy in the months of June, July and August with programmatic media engagements.



SHINE project:

- Documentary on the impact of integrity clubs featuring Sokoke Boys and Bahari Girls' secondary schools was developed
- Live stream on KTN TV as we responded to Cabinet Secretary's speech on school re-opening amidst the pandemic as an educational centered organization
- 8 case studies on the impact of SHINE project and integrity clubs in project schools

Safeguarding

- Interview on KTN as we virtually commemorated the Day of the African Child. This year's theme was "Access to a Child-Friendly Justice System in Africa".

Changing The Way We Care initiative

- One hour live interview on Baraka FM as we discussed the project's interventions and responded to concerns from listeners.

Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu project

- Editing and recording a 10 series radio activations that aired on Lulu FM as we sensitized parents on child safeguarding and ensuring continued learning while at home during the pandemic.
- 1 hour live radio talk show on Lulu FM where the Director of Children Services was present to discuss tackling child protection matters and the right reporting mechanisms.



Tackling CSEC

- Three radio mentions aired on radio Kaya, where children's voice overs were used to call out on parents be vigilant on protecting children to prevent them from slipping into CSEC.
- TV interview on Citizen TV that involved experts from Children's department being invited to lay out issues regarding CSEC in the wake of the pandemic.

