



Education Programming for Crisis Affected Youth: Case Study

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Organization: Hope and Homes for Children

Location: Sudan, Khartoum

Date of programme: January 2005- July 2006

Context: Conflict/Post Conflict

Case Study Themes:

- **Vocational training provision**
- **Life skills Programmes (education about HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, etc)**
- **Provision of micro-credit with an educational component**

Background:

Sudan has been in a state of civil war since independence in 1956 (excepting the period 1972 – 1983). This has decimated communities and resulted in the displacement of over 4 million people. The displaced population is mainly from the South/Nuba mountains and, more recently, Dar Fur.

Amongst Sudan's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), children who are orphaned or separated from their families are extremely vulnerable. Approximately 40,000 lone child IDPs live on the streets of Khartoum or in government children's camps/IDP camps. All these children have suffered trauma as a result of war and loss of families and, due to displacement and concomitant alienation from their communities many have also lost the traditional networks that usually provide support and shelter to orphaned or separated children. In order to survive the brutal life of the streets or camps, children are often forced to beg or steal, or are exploited sexually or for their labour, in order to feed themselves.

These children have developed a set of coping mechanisms, which are often at odds with the mainstream community who view their behaviour as antisocial and/or criminal. Thus these children are further marginalized, stigmatized and discriminated against, making them more vulnerable still.

Details of the Intervention

Hope and Homes for Children (HHC) began working in Sudan in 1998, setting up small family type homes (SFHs) for children who had been orphaned or separated from their families as a result of civil war and migration. Hope and Homes for Children currently supports 170 children and young people living in 14 small family type homes.

Many of these young people are now approaching an age of independence and require support with independent living skills, integration into their local communities and support towards gaining employment. As a result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement it is anticipated that some of these children and families would want to return to their places of origin. Some of the children have completed their basic schooling but others have missed school for long periods finding it hard to reintegrate into the formal schooling system. Vocational training has been provided for the majority of these “out of school youths” however this has failed to generate substantial employment. More children from the SFH would be leaving school in the next few years, thus creating the need to prepare these young persons for independent living. Even if families and children choose to return to their places of origin, returning with skills and work experience may give them an opportunity to both integrate and contribute to their local economy.

To this end HHC has initiated an 18-month pilot project, working with local partners Sabah and Amal, with two components:

- To provide skills development and work placement opportunities for young people who have left school and support them to move into independence.
- To provide vocational and life skills for displaced school going young people in preparation of their future

HHC’s staff and local partners carried out developmental assessments for all the young people living in the Small Family Homes to identify beneficiaries for the programme.

Target group

The project targeted two groups of young people, children out of school and all children above 14 years in full time education living within SFH. The total number of beneficiaries was 80 young people (between the ages of 14-24) 50 boys and 30 girls.

Challenges to Programme Implementation

- Securing employment for some of the young people was complicated by the lack of identity documentation required by employers. Many of the young people did not have birth certificates and it is difficult to acquire birth certificates without parental consent. Through HHC’s advocacy some young people were able to obtain identification papers and others were given letters from the Ministry of Social Welfare to present to their employers.
- Program staff had limited technical ability for individual care planning and case reviews. This was addressed by the provision of training. Practical exercises were conducted in pairs to enhance staff’s confidence in care planning and reviewing using tools provided as guidelines.

Programme Successes

- During assessments and participatory workshops young people were asked who amongst their peers they looked up to and were inspired by. Most participants were able to identify peers who were running successful micro enterprises as potential role models. A list of role models was drawn and young people were asked to organize themselves and see how they could get help from these peers. The role models were asked to share their experience of running a small

business and contributing to their household economy to their peers who were struggling to develop independent living skills.

- More than 60% of the young people enlisted in the program were able to develop clear goals for their independent living and start working towards them. Several participatory workshops were completed with the young people that focused on goal setting, visualizing the future, self-esteem building and decision-making.
- 12 young people have secured stable employment and are now contributing towards their household economy.
- Two young people were supported to set up viable small businesses through business coaching and linking them to micro loans services. For instance one boy set up a small business in play station hiring. He used to work at a play station shop, where he gained experience in the trade and saved money to buy his own play station with support from the microcredit scheme. His small business is doing well; he has bought another play station and is now actively contributing to the household economy.

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

- Staff underestimated the role played by young people in their household economy especially if they were not in formal employment. Evidence from the participatory workshops showed that young people were actively involved within the informal production sector and made significant contributions to the household income. Through individual assessments and group sessions it was observed that over half of the children are involved in some form of livelihood activities during the holidays. They range from part-time casual work, painting, electrical repairs, art, making and selling crafts, plaiting hair and knitting. The last three activities are particularly associated with girls and their foster mothers.
- The concept of independence was difficult to define and this made the setting of general indicators problematic. It was accepted that the understanding of this concept varied amongst stakeholders who took into account different economic, social and sometimes religious criteria. The key therefore was to involve all the young people in life goal setting workshops which helped to refine indicators and emphasis was then placed on individual goals within the framework of the project purpose. Through assessments of the dependence/independence levels of the young people, HHC program staff were able to develop a classification system, the Pyramid of Independence that grouped the young people into 3 levels of independence. The team was encouraged to observe how young people may move up or down the pyramid and emphasis was put on ensuring young people move up the pyramid as they got more exposed to the programme. The pyramid was used as a monitoring tool as young people found it easy to classify their levels of independence throughout the programme.
- During visits to some of the vocational training centres, the team noted that the courses were very theoretical and the centre had too many students, creating an environment not conducive for all learners. Young adults became frustrated after finishing vocational training and found themselves without employment.
- Support plans for independent living should integrate economic, physical, psychological and social needs of young people. Youth must be given an opportunity to develop a relationship with competent and caring adults who can

advise on livelihoods and personal decisions. Foster parents or biological parents/relative if practical can take this role, in the absence of both the social worker or project workers can take the role of mentor and case manager. However there was need to prepare staff (through training) for this multiple role of being a mentor and case manager.

- During sessions on self-esteem building, the participants were encouraged to explore in different ways the concept of “self worth”. Most young people defined self worth as linked to their social, economic, cultural and religious background. For example “I’m important because I’m a Dinka” and for some “I’m important because God loves me”. Negative self worth perceptions were often associated with bad experiences from childhood, war and more recently life in the streets of Khartoum. When participants were asked to describe the positive attributes of their peers during an exercise called “Pat on the Back,” some young people were surprised and excited to learn how their mates positively viewed them.
- During workshops with some of the young people it was observed that certain individuals had difficulties in learning and concentration. It was recommended that it would be better for them to engage in on-the-job training and vocational training part-time. And workshops with the young people should be carefully designed to enhance learning for all learners. Social workers were advised to contact vocational training centers and assess their appropriateness to serve the different needs of the young people. In some cases vocational training centers were willing to offer flexible training programs in terms of time and content and young people were given a choice to contribute to their learning outcomes.