

2021 REPORT

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23TH SEPTEMBER 2021

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SUMMARY.

This report explains the various activities that have been done at the shelter and outside from May 2021 to September 2021. It is aimed at giving an update on the children's welfare in terms of health, education, rehabilitation, community works among others.

INTRODUCTION.

In May, the country was plunged into another strict lock-down following the second wave of the pandemic that had skyrocketing numbers of COVID-19 infections. Strict measures to curb the spread of the virus were put in place among which was the indefinite closure of schools. Several of our pre-planned activities were instantly halted.

Much as the pandemic put such a heavy strain on our functionality, however we have been able to register a number of successes and accomplishments.

GENERAL.

Our society is deeply divided along the wealth line with a section of the haves and the have nots. The COVID-19 situation has further widened this disparity where people that have for a long period of time relied on daily income were hit hard.

This was because a lot of sectors came to a standstill and most people couldn't work to even afford a single meal a day. Uganda's economic recovery is largely pivoted on bailouts in form of financial assistance extended by either government or civil society organizations.

EDUCATION.

- Schools were closed as cases of the virus kept increasing rapidly. Our school going children had to stop attending immediately and resort to home schooling through revision exercises and intensive tutoring. Luckily, prior to this closure two of the girls (Desire and Bridget) had completed their Primary Leaving Examinations (P.L.E) and were awaiting their results. Kenneth had completed his final secondary school examinations.
- The rest of the school going children had also finished their last terms of the previous school year and had been promoted to the next classes (Cynthia had a first grade with 7 aggregates, Brian and Brian had 13 aggregates which is a super second grade. Didas and Brenda are graded differently. Brenda was the 8th and Didas was the 14th in their classes) Those that had completed one level, for example Primary would assist in teaching others that were still students of that particular level, an idea that has gotten interested in acquiring education. Lucky and three of Hajara's former teachers have been teaching the primary children and Hajara teaches all the secondary students.
- Learning is a continuous process and shouldn't be stopped or hindered. The more learned the children become, the brighter their days get. We are glad to report that learning has not stopped for a single bit and the children continue to register good progress at home.

HEALTH.

- The major health concern during the months aforesaid was prevention of contraction of COVID-19 amongst the children and shelter staff. Measures were also put in place to close any loop holes that might be avenues for infection of the children. We had a scare when Hajara tested positive for Covid-19 briefly after she had spent a couple of nights bundled up with inmates from all walks of life when she was arrested returning from a night outreach. The children had to be tested to find if any of them had contracted the virus and if so institute measures to isolate them from others. Staff movements were also limited and a strict disinfection mandate was put in place with several hand washing stations and a 'No mask, No entry' policy.
- In June the health officials in our municipality advised us to first scale down on the number of children at the shelter and have some of them at a different location so as to reduce the incidence of infection and put all lives of children at risk. A temporary arrangement was put in place and half the number of the children had to be sheltered in a different place.
- During the months of June, July, August and September we had a number of kids that fell sick. Some had minor cases whereas others had serious conditions. Kenneth and Fred suffered from pneumonia, Suzan was diagnosed with Tuberculosis.
- Some of the children maintained their regularly scheduled appointments to the hospital given the chronic nature of their ailments. Darius has to go to the hospital every month to have his blood work done and to see if his body weight and skin condition are improving. In our care we have Lydia, Isiah and Messiah who suffer from sickle cell disease, their immunities are so weak and have to be in the hospital very often.
- Following Abdul's surgery, his doctors recommended to have physiotherapy and perform an x-ray at the end of every month to monitor how well he is healing. Given the fact that he spent a long time on the streets, we had to bring in a number of people like counsellors to talk to him to prepare not only his physical wellbeing but also his emotional side. This

in turn would facilitate a faster recovery and bigger chances of settling finally.

- We held a medical camp in August for all women and children in some of the most vulnerable communities in the slums. At the camp we provided medications to treat preventable diseases and conditions like malaria, diarrhea and malnutrition. There was free HIV testing and we provided general body check-ups and wrote recommendations for those that attended the camp to seek further treatment in cost friendly facilities. All this was done under strict observation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as mandated by the Ministry of Health.
- As part of our extended program, we have incorporated helping a group of elderly people that are struggling with no mobility, hunger and sickness notwithstanding. All throughout the entire lockdown, we have rendered medical attention to these elderly people some of whom are bone disease prone, diabetic and also suffer from ulcers. We are very proud to be part of a program that reduced the suffering of such a vulnerable group of people.

DISCIPLINE, BEHAVIORAL CHANGE, RESETTLEMENTS AND FOLLOW UP.

Discipline and Godliness are key and central to the shelter and we pride ourselves in having these as part of our core values. A well behaved child is welcomed by the community and one that is badly behaved is shunned. There have been limited, close to no cases of heightened indiscipline among the children and those that occurred were only isolated to children newly brought to the shelter.

As part of our rehabilitation program, we have incorporated counseling to better understand children's varying character traits and best know how to deal with them. We have had three counselors visit on different time intervals to speak to the children.

We have and continue to hold counseling sessions for children that have been highlighted to have behavioral challenges like anger, disregard for others, disrespect that hinder their harmonious coexistence with their fellows. We are keen about discipline and behavior because sometimes the children altercations tend to get physical.

A child's best place to be is with his or her own family. We strive so much to create change within these children and have them restored back to their homes so that they can be with their families. Resettlement is a crucial step in the rehabilitation process and it happens after pre visits are done to determine if a family is ready to welcome back their child and reintegrate them into the family. We have resettled over 26 children majority of whom have been gotten from the hideouts centers. I am glad to report that most of these have been successful. Only a handful of cases have proven difficult with hostility from the parents and unwillingness of children to be back home.

Following a number of resettlements, there is always room to usher in more children that might be in need of help. We receive several cases of new

children on the streets on a daily and work towards giving the best help that we can.

We had had to do quite a number of follow ups on children that we resettled. About eight children of them and five of them are doing brilliant and it is just a few who still struggle with Drug challenges. It is however on a good note that their parents have been encouraging and welcoming to co-operate with us so that we work together on the betterment of the children.

New children, we welcomed two more boys to the shelter the twins (Jovan and Jovis). We carried out their resettlements this year after discovering them during the feeding program. Sadly, they lost their grandmother who was solely taking care of them and this necessitated it for us to take them in. It was a huge process to have all the needed documentation but we managed to get it all sorted.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The children we meet have different passions and aspirations in life. While they attain a formal education, we ensure they never forsake polishing or even acquiring a new skill. To foster this initiative, a skills development program was initiated at the shelter to enable them excel in other spheres away from academics.

Some of the things taught in skills development include Poetry, Music, dance and Drama, poultry keeping, crafts making, carpentry and wood works.

The children have since helped and maintained a built chicken house with a few chicken and a rabbit hutch. They feed the chicken and rabbits and are eager to learn about their growth processes and how best to take care of them.

Some of the older boys have been integrated into a wood carving store as apprentices to learn on the job as they gain carpentry skills.

The most exciting of them all is Poetry, music, dance and Drama which allows them to express themselves freely and joyously. The children have trained in and learnt a number of traditional folk songs and dances. They have also learnt about individual tribal costumes, norms and cultures. They have recited and written lots of poetry in English and vernacular too. In August they took part in a music competition where they emerged second out of a number of other competing groups. There was joy and celebration upon such a milestone.

STREET PROGRAMS.

- Street outreaches are a key channel for connecting with vulnerable street children every day. Through direct engagement with them we are able to show them care and concern by involving them in a variety of programs such as sports, crafts, skills, learning, bible study among others.
- The past months (July – September) we have had to carry out more outreaches due to the closing up of many organizations. Many children have had very few places to go to and hence we couldn't have one program but three per week so that we would provide food and other necessities needed such as the medical care which was the most vital to them. These programs have been highly demanded with each need following the other and given that many of the children differed in the needs, a challenge rose of which needs were to be prioritized, children had to be handled according to common need and were put into groups. This way, means of how to solve the different matters they were facing were properly adapted.
- Giving clothes: With the changes in the weather, we have had to deliver strong jackets and sweaters which were donated to Hajara by her former students. We added more that we bought for those kids who had not gotten.
- Hide out centers: These are extended centers that Hajara created due to the effects of COVID-19. The increased police brutality due to the curfew time that was instituted by the President made street children unable to observe curfew as they sleep on the different street roads in the city.
- These hide out centers, (started in garages of friends' houses) were emergency drop in and out centers for the children who needed attention. However, with the severity of the problems such brutality, beatings, sickness, sodomization and hunger which were highly faced challenges for

all of the children, we had to come up with the center. These centers responsibility out grew the plan Hajara had designed them for and she took on the role to rehabilitate the children.

Hajara started in two garages one for boys and another for girls, however with the increase in number she needed to find other places to re-locate these children to. She divided them according to age, drug addiction use, level of interest of behavioral change and adaptation to the regulations and significantly it yielded positive results. At the start they were 38 children and the increased up to 58 and other children basically came around for medical treatment and care but eventually asked to be resettled back to their homes which was the initiative that Hajara had set the centers up for.

- The norm started with Brushing, showering, checking up for drugs and burnt those drugs that some children had with them, breakfast, learning, spiritual growth program (use of games to propagate to their hearts).
- The centers were very demanding and a few volunteers came up however this was eased by the more interns (32) that Hajara took in and supervised through their two months' internship program where they are to learn and experience field works.
- A program out line had to be drafted and maintained so that children would have activities to engage in and create a more proper gate of them opening up and letting us know more of their stores and hence know how best to help them.

LEGAL AFFAIRS.

- The NGO registration process has dragged way longer than anticipated because of the current political situation in the country. The government has not been very welcoming to the registration of new organizations and has put in place even more requirements that need to be fulfilled before an organization is granted a certificate of registration. The process is worsened by the high level of bureaucracy, where documents have to go from one office to next all in need of a stamp or a signature and this takes a lot of time.
- Since we are dealing with children and they are one of the most vulnerable groups, the state monitors who gets to help them. As such, we have had several impromptu visits from child welfare officers and probation officers. These come in to check on the environment the children are living in. They check on the sanitation, safety, meals and comfort of where the children are staying and continue to give recommendations about what needs to be put in place at the shelter.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Through this program we have had a number of activities done successfully such as sanitation (Pit latrine emptying), women and teenagers being transformed from prostitution among others.

- COVID-19 Relief program: With this program, we were able to provide food supplies to over 70 families for a week and a few days' food depending on the number of children that the family had. Women were the majority during our feeding programs and this all comes as a result of many of the women being sole providers for their families.
- More counseling needed to be extended to the girls as most women were intensively demanded for them and this was eased by a girl's program Hajara put at the hideout where all girls were supposed to come every morning through the afternoon so as to be kept busy with the intent to preventing early pregnancies.
- The sanitation drive rallied around eradication of causes of easily avoidable diseases like malaria, cholera, diarrhea and any other diseases that could arise out of a poor sanitation. During this drive we cleared stagnant water that acted as a breeding ground for mosquitoes and also sprayed insecticides to kill off the mosquitoes. We emptied a number of pit latrines too for the communities as women and the youth were suffering from much of its effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

- Strict adherence to time frames slated for the achievement of certain goals and tasks. This will help the smooth running of the shelter. Volunteers have also adhered to strict time keeping and there is a big improvement in a number of things.
- More emphasis on discipline and good behavior for the harmonious coexistence of both the new children at the shelter and those that have been there for a while. This can be done through continued counseling and meetings with the children.
- Monthly visits by counsellors have allowed us notice a number of differences in the children. These counsellors are friends of Hajara from different centers that they often partnered with.

CONCLUSION.

Through our different programs, we have registered many achievements and promising stories of children that we worked on especially with the hide out centers. Shelter children continue to change and do better behavior wise and focusing properly on their home studies as we await the reopening of schools. We continue to register more success stories.

“We are able because God is able”.