



THE DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

The Advocacy Project and the Undugu Society of Kenya

MID- TERM REPORT

Kristina Rosinsky

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Undugu Society Kenya (USK) is over 34 years old and is one of the oldest development organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. USK was founded by the late Father Arnold Grol after he observed a growing and disturbing phenomenon of children living on the streets of Nairobi, who were then been referred to as *'parking boys'*. USK envisions a just and economically empowered society where every person has access to a decent livelihood. Our target groups comprise of children and vulnerable youth living and working on the streets and those from poor and marginalized communities. Lobbying and advocacy is mainstreamed as a key strategy in all of USK's social programmes. The programmes are both curative, preventive and rights-based. They are:

- a. **Children and Youth Programme**, which employs the Street Association Model to transform and empower the vulnerable children and youth.
- b. **Education and Training**, which increases access to education and training opportunities to vulnerable children and youth, through the Undugu non formal education centers and the informal skills training program.
- c. **Undugu Community Empowerment Programme**, which employs a self help approach and capacity development towards socially, economically and politically empowering poor communities from both urban informal settlements and rural areas.

The Advocacy Project (AP) is a nonprofit organization that helps its partners become better advocates for their social justice mission through the production, dissemination and use of information. The partnership between USK and AP began in 2007 and has continued into this year. In June 2008, USK and The Advocacy Project (AP) partnered to realize a 3 month pilot project on digital storytelling. The objectives of this project are to raise the voices of vulnerable children so as to create awareness on issues affecting them, change negative perceptions and empower them to advocate and hold their own rights. Additionally, USK will use this opportunity to advocate with and for the children's rights. The project was designed to impart basic photography, blogging and computer skills to the children. USK provided 2 staff, a workshop hall and 17 learners for the project while AP has provided the project trainer Kristina

Rosinsky. The project is currently successfully running and after one and half months, outputs, outcomes and challenges have been experienced as outlined below.

2.0 THE DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT- JUNE- AUGUST 2008

The Digital Storytelling project is well underway. 17 learners were initially selected at the onset of the project. The learners were placed in two groups. One group (*referred to in the report as Group A*) comprises children and vulnerable youth living and working on the streets (from USK Street Associations). Workshops for this group are carried out on Mondays and Thursdays. The other group (*referred to in the report as Group B*) comprises children attending USK's Non-formal School located in the Pumwani informal settlement and children in vocational training. The workshops for this group are carried out on Saturdays. For this latter group it was necessary to choose Saturday so as not to interrupt the children's studies and training, which take place during the week. All the learners are considered vulnerable children and youth as they either live and work on the streets or live in informal settlements. Presently, 17 learners are continuing with the project. One learner was unable to continue with the project because of personal problems. This student was replaced with a new student to bring the total back to 17 participants.



The children, with the help of project trainer (Kristina Rosinsky), have completed their first blogs and taken their first photographs. The children come from different backgrounds and have had different experiences, which will make their blogs and photographs diverse. Each student has made a blog on Wordpress, which hosts the student's written blog entries as well as their best photos, and photo blog (telling a story through photos). In addition, each student has

made an account on Flickr to host the photos that they take that do not necessarily relate to a specific blog or photo blog.

Thus far, the project trainer has given each group two written assignments. Both groups are completing a blog on a theme that they chose on their own. Some of the themes chosen include: *police harassment, life on the streets, post-election violence, death of a friend, environmental degradation and drugs*. In addition to aforementioned blog, 'Group A' was asked to write a blog about their girlfriend (past or present). This blog was purposely given to them to gauge their understanding of reproductive and sexual health. Interestingly, one learner wrote of his friend's dilemma of being infected by the HIV virus through his girlfriend and reconciling this reality with living positively with the virus.



'Group B' was asked to write a blog about a day that they would never forget. Some examples of days they would never forget include; *the day they learned that they were going to school, the day they had an accident, the day they saw a man being beaten in the post election violence, and the day that they were discriminated against for being Muslim*. The first blogs and photographs have been posted online and links are available in the index.

In addition to the blogs, we have also been working on photography with the learners. The learners were asked to illustrate their blog with photos and each group has had a chance to take photos for their blog. Despite the fact that their photos need work, since it has been the first time the children have handled a camera, we are pleased with the results. There will be more shooting sessions to come and more one on one support to enhance their skills.



Once the workshops are complete and the students have posted at least three blogs and two photo blogs, USK, in partnership with The Advocacy Project, plans to hold a local exhibition/auction to display their work to stakeholders such as government officials, civil society, development partners and the broad public. Additionally, the learners will have an opportunity to sell their best photos and only 10% of the total proceeds will be ploughed back to USK in support of its interventions towards empowering vulnerable children.

Finally, once the workshops are complete we envisage holding a Training of Trainers (TOT) to equip the best students and at least 3 employees of USK with the skills necessary for the continuation and sustainability of the project. However, due to time limitation, the TOT and a regional exhibition to showcase the children's work is planned to take place after August and thus USK and AP are currently undertaking fundraising initiatives to ensure the continuation of this project.

2.1 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Development of workshop curriculum
- Weekly Workshops (3 days a week)
- TOT (Training of Trainers)
- Local Exhibition/Launch of the Project (towards the creation of awareness and perception change)

2.2 ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS TO-DATE

- Selection of 17 learners. 8 from USK Street Associations (children and youth living or working on the streets), 5 from USK's Pumwani Non-Formal school and 4 from USK's vocational training program. The students are between the ages of 14 to 22 and 5 are girls.
- The 17 learners signed consents to participate in the project. The learners were first taken through the objectives and rules of the workshop before signing the consent forms. For those under 18, the student's parent or guardian signed as well (when possible).
- Purchase of all project equipment.
- A project curriculum and a master calendar developed to aid effective planning of the workshops.
- Three-quarter of the scheduled workshops completed. 17 Students are currently attending classes and actively participating in both theoretical and practical lessons on blogging and photography.
- The learners have created email accounts, blog accounts and accounts for online photo sharing. The learners have also posted their first blogs and photos as well. Links to these websites are available at the end of this report.

2.3 OUTCOMES

- The learners are able to better express themselves especially on issues affecting their lives.
- The learners are able to operate a computer at a basic level.
- The learners are able to use cameras at a basic level.
- The learners are able to focus on and spend time on positive activities.

2.4 CHALLENGES

- Availability of only three cameras has posed a challenge as the learners have to share them amongst themselves.
- As the children do not handle the cameras and computers on a daily basis, the learners have only been able to develop very basic photography and computer skills.

- Slow and unreliable Internet connections at Internet cafés has slowed the process and frustrated the students.
- As the project was a pilot, the resources have had to stretch to meet all necessary needs of the project.
- Limited resources to hold a local exhibition.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The project will continue until the end of August. We envision that all the planned activities of the workshops with learners and the local exhibition/launch of the project will be carried out by the end of that period. However, we plan (depending on availability of funds) on extending the project for another 3 months so that we will be able to better develop blogging, computer and photography skills of the best students.

APPENDIX

Below are links to the student's blogs and photographs. Note that you can find Kristina Rosinsky's blog at <http://advocacynet.org/blogs/index.php?blog=110> and her photos at www.flickr.com/photos/krosinsky/.

Amina is 19 years old and is a student at USK's non-formal school in Pumwani.

www.aminakombo.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/aminakombo

Dominic is 20 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.dominicmuia.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/dominicmuia

Eliud is 18 years old and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. He is learning mechanics.

www.eliudkinyanjuichege.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/eliudchege

Elvis is 16 years old and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. He is learning spray painting.

www.elvisjamesmajani.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/elvismajani

Grivinson is 15 years old and is a student at USK's non-formal school in Pumwani.

www.grivinsonmagomere.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/grivinsonmagomere

Harrison is 18 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.harrisonnjoroge.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/harrisonnjoroge

John is 18 years old and is a student at USK's non-formal school in Pumwani.

www.johnkioko.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/johnkioko

Joseph is 18 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.josephgachira.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/josephgachira

Martin is 21 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.martinndugu.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/martinndugu

Mavish is 15 years old and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. She is learning hairdressing.

www.mavishjepkemboi.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/mavishjepkemboi

Nancy is 14 years old and is a student at USK's non-formal school in Pumwani.

www.nancyanyango.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/nancyanyango

Patrick is 22 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.patrickmwema.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/patrickmwema

Peter is 20 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. He is learning hairdressing.

www.petermwatha.wordpress.com
www.flickr.com/photos/petermwatha

Piliphan is 14 years old and is a student at USK's non-formal school in Pumwani.

www.piliphankanana.wordpress.com

www.flickr.com/photos/piliphankanana

Raphael is 18 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. He is learning mechanics.

www.raphaelngugi.wordpress.com

www.flickr.com/photos/raphaelngugi

Rispar is 16 years old and is involved with USK's informal skills training program. She is learning dressmaking.

www.risparrusimbu.wordpress.com

www.flickr.com/photos/risparrusimbu

Robinson is 20 years old and is a member of a USK Street Association.

www.robinsonmunene.wordpress.com

www.flickr.com/photos/robinsonmunene