

CHILDREN IN MOVEMENT

CASE STUDY FOR WAR AFFECTED CHILDREN IN EASTERN DRC/BENI REGION

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Organization	ESADER (Ensemble pour la Santé et le Développement holistique en milieu Rural et périurbain)
Name of program/project (If other than organization name)	1.Scholastic support to war related orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Beni region 2. Vocational training for youth
Location of the project (s)	Beni region (Kamango, Nobili, Beni town, Oicha, Eringeti)

Beneficiaries of the programs?

In the scholastic support program, the beneficiaries are pupils in primary and secondary schools as well as students at the university level, who lost their parents or foster family supporters due to repeated wars. The children may be homeless or living with village families that take them in. Due to limited funding we have so far 61 pupils and students in the program. Many more are in need.

Concerning the vocational training program, the beneficiaries are mainly those young people who did not get the chance to go to school due to the extreme poverty of the parents exacerbated by recurrent wars and repeated massive displacements. These youth are exposed to solicitations to join rebel and militia groups. So far 9 young people have been trained in motorbike and generator repair, while 17 young people have been trained in masonry and are already using their skills building houses mainly in Kamango health zone.

Religious affiliation of the beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the programs are of various religious affiliations mainly Catholic, Protestant, revival, and Muslim.

Partners and supporters

Our partners are mainly the local religious and community leaders who guide the orphans and vulnerable children to us. The religious leaders follow up with the beneficiaries in spiritual ways. School teachers provide teaching to the pupils and students. Local FM radios help us with sensitization of the communities, passing on information regarding the programs, etc. We have a special program at Umoja FM radio to sensitize the community on how Christians and the Church can look after the orphans and widows.

OJC (Offensive Junger in Christen), a German NGO helped buy tools to use for the training in motorbike and generator repair. GodCares, another German Christian

organization, helped buy tools to use for the training of masons. Both OJC and Godcares have helped with school fees and tuition for the OVC pupils and students.

Major activities

For the scholastic support for war OVC, the main activities carried out are :

- Identify the beneficiaries: we collaborate with local church and community leaders to identify the OVC who have no support to continue their studies
- Pay the school fees or tuitions and school materials: our supervisor visits the schools (primary and secondary) and universities to know how much the pupils have to pay, and then we pay for them.
- Follow up the pupils and students' school performance, physical and spiritual status: every 3 months our supervisor visits each of the beneficiaries in their foster families to monitor the relationships between the orphans and their foster parents and see whether they are doing well in terms of health and school performance. The supervisor visits also the schools or universities of each of the beneficiaries to confirm the school and academic performance.

As for the vocational training program, the main activities carried out are:

- Identify the candidates for the training: Most of time , the local church and community leaders come to see us to inform as about the children who have lost their parents due to war. We have a list of more than 500 orphans and vulnerable children to whom we should attend, but due to limited funding we have been supporting only a few of them.
- Recruit a trainer: For the training of masons, the only engineer in construction in the area was identified to be in-charge of the training. She (the engineer) works with 2 senior masons to help in the training of the trainee masons. As for the repair of motorbike and generator, an A2 senior mechanic was recruited to carry out the training of the trainees.
- Purchase the tools for the training: The trainers made the lists of the necessary tools that were needed for them to perform the trainings, and then we purchased them
- Carry out the training: The training for masons is being done with a group of 6 people for 6 months each. As for the repair of motorbikes and generators, it is done with a group of 3 trainees for 8 months.
- Provide exit equipment to groups of trainees: At the end of the training, a kit of basic tools is provided to the group of trainees to help them start their own business.

Results

Due to limited funding, we recruited and have been supporting 61 OVC since 2014, of whom 46 pupils and students are still in the program, and 12 have already graduated for bachelor degrees in different fields. Unfortunately 3 orphans left the program (one girl got pregnant while at the university, one boy at university died, electrocuted by lightning as he was in year 2 at the university, and one boy just dropped out of school due to disappointment in life while in primary). However, more than 900 orphans, guided by religious and community leaders or by their large family members have registered in our office, seeking for support for their studies. All of them are in foster families, these are either the large family members of the orphans or members of the local churches who accept to welcome and live with the children in their households.

143 young people who need to undergo the vocational training have registered in our office. But due to limited funding, we have trained so far 9 young people in motorbike and generator repair, while 17 others have been trained in masonry and are already using their skills building houses mainly in Kamango health zone area.

Challenges and successes

The challenges to the program are mainly the recurrent insecurity that continues to create more orphans and vulnerable children and exacerbate poverty in the communities. The very limited funding does not allow us welcome more needy orphans in the scholastic support program, and more young people for the vocational training. There is lack of personnel with counselling background training and experience. There is lack of lifeskills courses.

However, saving the life of one person is serving the whole humanity. So, though our work is like a drop of water in the ocean, we feel at least happy that we have been able to contribute in enabling 58 orphans to access education. We are also happy to contribute in enabling so far 12 young people to acquire vocational skills that will help them become autonomous and avoid being recruited in rebel groups.

Lessons learned

- Recognize and work to understand the different reasons orphan pupils and students drop out, and address them in ways that respects family status, local culture, educational level, and gender.
- Need to adopt a comprehensive approach to work with orphans and vulnerable children. We need to offer more than a traditional classroom education. This meant packaging career guidance, life skills, alignment of training with the job market, internships, job placement services, and entrepreneurship training.
- Sometimes we forget how few possessions we need for us to be happy. What may seem a top prize to you may be a treasure to another.
- Sometimes what need the OVCs and can change their lives is what we need less

Advice

If one needs to start a program like ours, I could advise him or her :

- Dream big but start with what you have because what matters is the heart we have for the needy orphans.
- Have in mind that "saving the life of one person is saving the entire humanity"