

BLENDDED LEARNING, THE WAY TO GO...



By

Annah Tusiime

For over 6 years of implementing the Girls' Education Challenge Project (GEC), Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE)'s Creative Learning Centres have been and continue to help schools and communities develop their capacity to use creative approaches and digital technologies to support learning of critically vulnerable children.

CRANE runs 15 creative learning centres set up in 15 local communities. 2 of these 15 centres are specifically supporting children living with Special Education Needs (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdE-iaUfu8M&list=PLkmjQBKkMBOjRm1i_lFx10TDWFWllBB4Y&index=12).

At the inception of the GEC project in 2013, CRANE appointed over 30 Mentors who live in these local communities whose major role was the targeted recruitment of girls considered likely to fail in education. Our Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) approach provides targeted high-quality teaching that helps girls to go into or continue in school.

Over the past 6 years, CRANE through this approach has helped

9890 girls get back into school. A good number of these girls have graduated out of school and are now in formal employment.

<http://blog.viva.org/2021/05/21/samanthas-story/>

The years 2020 and 2021 were heavily defined by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. This led to global social and economic disruption, worldwide lockdowns and in addition an economic recession in most countries. The lockdowns left schools in Uganda closed for several months. Many children countrywide were not able to continue learning because they had no access to education resources or people to offer them the support they needed.

However, children in communities where CRANE works have a different story to tell. After Ugandan schools closed due to coronavirus pandemic, it was unclear how and when in-person learning could happen safely. CRANE with support from its network partners opened learning hubs across communities to offer in-person and safe spaces for small groups of children to continue learning during lockdown.

Our teachers who are trained to deal with a diverse and ever-changing world were able to navigate a distance learning model together with the CLC model to offer support to learners bringing the number of girls reached to 9908. The increase in number follows several months of lockdown as many children were stuck at home. We saw many learners embrace the use of technology.

The location of project staff, particularly the Mentors and Learning Support Teachers (LST), in these local communities where GEC Girls were based made it possible to respond to school closures and lockdown restrictions with a range of activities that allowed some form of contact with the Girls to continue.

Our CLC model works really well and as proof CRANE recently sampled 1,098 out of 9908 Girls and their Primary Care Givers

to assess the progress the girls are making in school. The girls and their caregivers were interviewed separately using a household survey. The Household Survey was based on the same surveys carried out at Baseline and Midline 1 two years ago. Most of the Girls also carried out short learning assessments in Numeracy and Literacy.

When the caregivers were asked what the most useful intervention had been for the GEC Girls during lockdown, meeting a teacher was the most popular response with a big majority (over 50% of all responses mentioned meeting a teacher).

Also, recent findings show that the project through this model has been very effective since Midline 1 despite the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost of all (96%) Girls who were in both the Midline 1 and Midline 2 surveys have increased their scores in Learning.

And as schools begin to reopen this year, our teachers will continue to provide support for the deep academic and emotional needs of the children who are returning to school after the coronavirus threw their lives into disarray.

CRANE thanks all its partners working tirelessly to support and keep critically vulnerable girls motivated to keep on learning.

What Works

What Works

The CRANE team have compiled a series of short introductions to various topics, detailing what we do and why it works. We want to share the knowledge and experience we have gained so that more children can keep safe and well and fulfil their God-given potential.

April 2022 – Street Rescue

May 2022 – CLCs and Catch-up Learning

May 2022 – Transitioning to Vocational

May 2022 – Baby Day Care

May 2022 – Mobile Library

May 2022 – Learning Support

May 2022 – Cluster Community Centres

May 2022 – ICT Intern Support in Schools

May 2022 – Mobile ICT

June 2022 – Child Friendly Rooms

July 2022 – Life Skills Empowerment

August 2022 – Dance Advocacy

August 2022 – Sharing Stories of Change

October 2022 – Creative Arts in Advocacy

November – December 2022 – Building a Culture of Family Based Care in Churches

January 2023 – Psychoeducation Assessment

AND A CHILD WENT HOME...

By

Annah Tusime

CRANE network is all about children and ensuring they are well and thriving in God's plan. As a network, we believe the safest place for any child to grow and thrive is family. Looking at the two past years, we would like to acknowledge that they have been rough on everyone especially children. COVID'19 was and still remains a huge challenge for many people. The disease created such fear and anxiety amongst the young and old alike. Children were out of school for nearly two years and social distancing left them feeling isolated, vulnerable and bored as is the story of two cousins, Mark and Peter. The two boys strolled away from home unnoticed only to get lost. They were picked up by a motorist hours later and taken to the nearest police station for further assistance. The police got in touch with CRANE and through our social workers was able to trace the family and had the boys reunited (<https://www.viva.org/2020/11/09/a-heart-warming-reunion/>).

Street connected children were terribly affected as well. Following the president's directives on total lockdown, streets of Kampala were once again left empty with the children living on the streets stranded with no place to stay and subjected to severe hunger due to the starvation since they mostly ate food remains from the garbage bins at the restaurants that were now closed due to the lockdown. Since Health insecurity was still a big threat in the country and the entire Globe, the lives of these children were at more risk because of their vulnerability and exposure on the



streets. Street children generally do odd jobs to sustain themselves. They beg, sell small items and collect garbage. Sexual abuse and addiction are rampant among them. Their vulnerability often lands them in the net of addiction and criminalisation.

In Response to the above situation, CRANE with its members and government partner Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) team headed by the Deputy Director for Gender at KCCA, in collaboration with the non-governmental child focused organizations working with street connected children like Uganda Child Rights NGO Network-UCRNN, Dwelling Places Uganda, Hope For Justice/Retrak, ABAANA Ministries Uganda, Rescue Foundation, Mengo Youth Development Link -MYDEL, Kawempe Youth Development Association- KAYDA among others collectively gathered over 180 children from Kisenyi a Kampala slum and the neighbouring areas to ensure that the children were kept safe by placing them under Quarantine. As CRANE, we believe children are the key to a country's prosperity and should not be allowed to be wasted.

While in quarantine, the children received free COVID testing, emotional, psychosocial support and the team used that opportunity to prepare them for reintegration. Over 50 children were placed in alternative care and 50 more reunited with their families and later reintegrated back into mainstream and vocational schools.

Nakiru is one such a story among the many children that were reunited with families. At only 12 years old, Nakiru was trafficked and brought on the streets of Kampala to beg for a living. Her family had been lied to and empty promises made. Being underage and undocumented meant she was particularly vulnerable. She was subjected to sexual harassment by men on the streets. Through CRANE's collective action, Nakiru was rescued from the streets, reunited with her family and reintegrated back into mainstream school. Nakiru is happy to be back in school and has big dreams for the future

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqJAVN4Bm0w>).

For Nakiru and many other children, returning home allows them to return to a stable, environment, with routines they know and understand. A large part of a child's self-esteem comes from feeling that they have a place in the world where they belong to and matter to others. Children who feel like they belong have a source of emotional support, warmth and nurturing, protection, help and security and in turn become better adults.

CRANE continues to do this by engaging with other members of the network and has provided a forum where members can share learning, pray and plan together. The desire is to make a bigger impact in the city as we work together than we would have been able to do by working in isolation and to ensure every child belongs to a family.

CRANE would like to thank all its members working tirelessly to ensure children are kept safe, so that they are able to thrive and be fulfilled, according to God's plan for them.