Breaking the cycle of dependency in Korogocho, Kenya

When Esther Munene and Lilian Kamigwi founded Destiny Shapers, a community-based organization working to provide literacy training to young children in the Korogocho slum in eastern Nairobi, Kenya, they had to work hard to convince the families of the 23 children to allow them to attend the daily classes. Five years later, the organization has 150 children aged 3 to 9 enrolled and 60 of their parents or guardians participating in its programme – and a website, brand identity, social media presence, new partnerships with local NGOs and a micro-grant to teach math and computer skills to the young Korogocho residents.

Bordering the city’s largest dumping site, Korogocho is crowded, poor and has a reputation for violence and crime. “We started the project after seeing so many children out of school, and set up an initiative offering basic education, a warm meal, guidance and more,” Esther says. “The project is important because it not only offers training to the children, but also changed the mindset of their family members. Many have changed their negative lifestyles and have re-gained feelings of self-worth through the programme and exposure it offers to life outside Korogocho.”

Using mostly WhatsApp and video calls, Esther first set up a team of UN Online Volunteers to develop a communication strategy for the organization, followed by a new logo, website,
Facebook page and brochure. Online volunteers also researched funding opportunities and drafted proposals.

“The contribution [of the UN Online Volunteers] has been great because it has increased our organization’s visibility, and this has led to more partners and donors. We have worked with amazing volunteers, and our communication and friendship continues beyond the task.” — Esther Munene, Destiny Shapers

Aditi Varma is one of Destiny Shaper’s UN Online Volunteers and has drafted website content on the organization’s work and its beneficiaries for promotion and fundraising. “I liked that Destiny Shapers not only works with children but also with their parents and guardians, and takes a holistic approach in working on the issues of the community. They were good in helping me understand their needs, the situation of their community and providing me with adequate information to be able to work on the discussed goals.”

UN Online Volunteer Anjana Srikanth developed the organization’s communications strategy and marketing package. “Esther and Lilian are a pair of committed, persevering, patient individuals who are continuously striving to better the lives of children in Korogocho. Even after I completed my volunteer activity, they keep me posted on what is happening and their progress on a regular basis.”

“I would definitely recommend online volunteering to anyone who is thinking about it. It is a learning experience for the person and an opportunity to build on his/her skills and knowledge. It will help broaden your world view and make you aware of some of the problems the world is grappling with without having to travel to that location.” — Aditi Varma

Aditi Varma holds a Master’s degree in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in India, and is currently working on pursuing an Master’s in Sustainability Management from Columbia University, New York.

Anjana Srikanth holds a Master’s degree in Physics and an MBA, and heads the marketing and communications team for a company in Bangalore.
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