

ST PATRICK'S SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROGRAMME, DISTRICT OF EAST AFRICA AND COVID-19.

1. TRAININGS AND CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS:

As 2020 started we had our schedule for adult trainings and children workshops drawn up. A few trainings took place in the first two and a half months of the year. In the wake of COVID-19, we have been unable to carry out any physical trainings. As most of our children workshops and activities are done during the school holidays, we were unable to do any due to the COVID-19 situation, closure of schools and government directives of no meetings and gatherings.

We have however kept in touch with our 14 Parish Safeguarding Committees through electronic communication. Most committees have established WhatsApp groups and through these groups discussions are done and ideas shared for the benefit of the children and keeping them safe during this time of covid-19 when there is no school and there are new dangers for them.

Messages communicated through the committee WhatsApp groups have in turn flowed down to the parents and children through the Small Christian Community WhatsApp groups within the parishes.

But in many of our rural parishes there are no whatsapp groups to pass on the message. So in those parishes the gap left by the cessation of physical meetings has not been filled.

Through the committees, in early April soon after the COVID-19 situation had caught up with us, the programme office was able to distribute grants of ten thousand Kenya Shillings to each committee to help ease the situation of children in the parishes. This was mostly used in providing handwashing soap, sanitizers, facemasks while a few others received food items. One parish committee also used these funds to secure a radio slot for creating public awareness on COVID-19 and child safety.

2. DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD. 16TH JUNE 2020.

The Day of the African Child (16th June every year) is one event that we have always looked forward to each year. It has served as a feast day of the programme, marked with colourful celebrations and big numbers of both children and adults participating. This year's celebrations were unique because no gatherings were allowed for the reasons of COVID-19.

This year's theme decided by the African Union was "Access to Child Friendly Justice Systems in Africa." A number of ways were used to communicate the theme message and celebrate this annual event.

<p>Donations</p>	<p>A cash donation of 10,000 Kenyan Shillings was given to each Parish Safeguarding Committee to help them reach out to needy children and their families within their respective parishes on the Day of the African Child. Working in collaboration with the parish priests, the committees identified the need in their parishes and the number of children and families to benefit from the grant. Most of the beneficiaries received food items and soap. One committee provided sanitary towels for its girls. There is growing hunger in the community because of the economic effect of covid-19.</p>
<p>Radio Outreach</p>	<p>Since we could not reach the people physically, local radio was a good option of communicating the message of the Day of the African Child as well as a general child protection message for children in these times of COVID-19. In total we used 8 Radio Stations both before and on the very day of the African Child. In Kenya, 6 Diocesan Radio Stations belonging to Mombasa Archdiocese, Nairobi Archdiocese, Nakuru Diocese, Eldoret Diocese and Kitale Diocese were used. In Lodwar Diocese, a local Diocesan Radio Station that broadcasts in the local language was used. For S.Sudan, Torit Diocese, a local radio station broadcasting in the native language was used as well as Emmanuel Radio, a Diocesan Radio station.</p>
<p>Compendium</p>	<p>We sent out a call to the Parish Priests, Committees and Children themselves to share their reflections on what it is like to be living in lockdown in these frightening times. We received an overwhelming response from many of them. All the reflections were compiled into one document. This document has been electronically shared with all the priests and committees back in the parishes. It is also included in this website.</p>

Visit to a Borstal Institution	<p>In line with this year's theme for the Day of the African Child, "Access to Child Friendly Justice Systems in Africa," the programme organized to visit Kamiti Borstal Institution within the Nairobi area, Kenya. We felt that the child detainees were the immediate relevant group of people having already had an experience with the justice system of the country. This institution holds 180 child detainees.</p> <p>The visit was done on the actual Day of the African Child. One of our programme staff, accompanied by a Committee Member from Holy Family Parish, Utawala, visited the Institution. A donation of ten thousand (10,000) Kenyan Shillings was made towards the visit. The funds were used to purchase assorted toiletries for use by the child detainees</p>
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3. CAPACITY BUILDING

Online Child protection Course	<p>In 2019, 6 parish volunteers completed an Online Child Protection course, offered by The Centre for Child Protection of the Gregorian Pontifical University, Rome. 3 of the volunteers are from Holy Family Parish, Utawala, Archdiocese of Nairobi and 3 are from St. Michael's Parish, Kiamaina, Nakuru Diocese. One programme staff member is also enrolled for the same course which is currently on-going.</p> <p>We are hopeful that the knowledge gained in the course will help strengthen our committees in those parishes and thus help in keeping children safe.</p>
Other Courses	<p>Our programme administrator has also completed a course in Financial Management offered by CORAT AFRICA.</p> <p>One of our programme staff is currently taking an online course on Result Based Monitoring and Evaluation offered by KODE, Ireland.</p>
Refresher Course	<p>Another of our volunteers, from Christ the Redeemer Parish, Kapsoya, Eldoret Diocese attended a One Week Child Protection Course at CORAT AFRICA, Nairobi. This is what she had to say about the training, "the training gave me knowledge about children issues including children with special needs who I rarely considered while working in the parish. The sharing done by fellow participants continues to help me better my approach to safeguarding issues."</p>