

TITLE OF PROJECT: PEER TO PEER FOR PEACE
COUNTRY WHERE THE PROJECT TOOK PLACE: NAIROBI KENYA
SPONSORING COLLEGE: BROWN UNIVERSITY
STUDENT: Chemtai Langat
HEMOCOUNTRY: KENYA
STUDENT'S COLLEGE: BROWN UNIVERSITY

The aim of Peer to Peer for peace was to empower girls from the Samburu community in Kenya by providing mentorship, a host family program and sanitary supplies. To do this I collaborated with Samburu Girls Foundation (SGF), an organization that rescues girls from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriage. I organized a camp for 40 girls rescued from FGM and early marriage with 15 other girls from Alliance Girls High school. The three-day camp was held at Alliance girls high school during which the girls from both sides interacted and had informative sessions team building activities as well as games. Nine girls out of the 15 from Alliance Girls took girls from SGF to their homes for the host family program.

I did not do any fundraising but during the course of the sessions we had donors. One of them offered to provide sanitary towels for the 169 girls rescued for a period of one year.

When I first arrived in Kenya I had plans to work with five high schools but I ended up working with one school because when I went to the first school there was very positive response and many girls than I had anticipated wanted to participate. It was also challenging to deal with five schools because they went on recess on different dates.

I held several meetings during the first three weeks with the volunteers working with SGF to plan the project. I learnt that they were lacking a place for 65 homeless girls to stay during the August holiday. After so much deliberation I thought it wise to rent a house for the girls in Nairobi city where they would get to experience a whole new culture and get to travel out of the rural Samburu area where most of them schooled. I therefore got a three bedroomed house for the girls for a period of one month. The greatest challenge was feeding the girls but we had well-wishers who donated food once in a while.

One hundred girls benefited from the program. They got the opportunity to visit Nairobi City for the very first time in their lives. Some of them had never seen tarmac road before while others were seeing a woman drive a car for the very first time. Forty of them got the opportunity to have a camp in the best girls' school in Kenya and interact and form long-lasting friendships with girls from this school. Nine out of these girls were lucky to get hosted by families in the city. For the first time they lived in a modern family where both the wife and husband go to work contrary to their communities where the wife's role is to bear children and take care of the family. Two of them got to travel with the families and one of them boarded a plane for the first time in her life to go on vocation. Sixty girls who would have otherwise had no roof on their heads got a home for a month. On top of that I also hired tutors for them. One teacher taught elementary school while another high school.

For the girls from Alliance Girls who participated in the program including hosting the girls from Samburu Girls Foundation it was a turning point in their lives. They realized how privileged they were to go to the best school in country and to have a supportive family. Most of them offered to volunteer with SGF in the future.

Samburu Girls Foundation benefited from the project a lot. They lacked housing for the girls but this project relieved them the burden. The Foundation had never had a chance to bring their rescued girls together but for the very first time they were able. The girls interacted together and with that they formed a strong supportive system for one another.

I was able to establish a club in Alliance Girls that will be fundraising towards holding another camp in August 2015. I am also in the process of establishing clubs in 47 other top schools in Kenya to facilitate fundraising towards building a rescue center for SGF. In December five of the girls who participated in the host-family program will be going back to their host families as the host parents want to keep hosting them over the holidays.

The girls I interacted with over the summer are girls battling with their pasts. Their parents married off most of them at a very young age. Out of the 169 rescued girls 23 of them have babies. These girls lack internal peace. When they first arrived in Nairobi they were all shy and could not stand before a crowd to talk about their past experiences. Through this project the girls had time to reconcile with their pasts. In the end they were able to share their stories of how they were married off and rescued. Through the project the girls knew that they were loved and cared for by the society even though their own parents had neglected them.

Never will I view the world in the same way again after working with this Peer to Peer for Peace. I have learnt to appreciate the little things in life that I did not appreciate before. But most of all I learnt that everyone can contribute to making the world a better place in their own small way.

This project made me realize that as many people strive to live good lives, many others struggle to survive. A child should be made to feel loved and appreciated that is all it takes to make them happy.

Chemtai Langat



1)Chemtai, right, in a conversation with the girls during one of the sessions
3)Group photo
4)Chemtai,left talks to two of the girls from SGF.