

The @Home Learning Pilot Project

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Before the COVID-19 pandemic our organisation ran four programmes to accomplish our mission of reintegrating primary school learners at risk of dropping out, back into the school system:

- **Reintegration of children** – to promote regular school attendance by supporting absent, at-risk learners and their families.
- **In-School support** – to provide foundation level academic and psychosocial support to reintegrated learners from grade R to grade 7.
- **Primary Caregivers** – to encourage primary caregivers to accept the responsibility to ensure their children attend school every day.
- **SAGO2school** – to promote a culture of regular school attendance and impart the value of education.

With the easing of Lockdown restrictions, we reached out to learners and primary caregivers in their homes through an integrated approach. Staff teams were focused on addressing social issues, building relationships in the home and community and promoting an **@Home Learning** initiative to prevent school disengagement. This caught the attention of the Western Cape Education Department and the **@Home Learning Forum** was formed. The WCED in collaboration with The **@Home Learning Forum**, NGO's including Khula Development Group, Hope through Action/SCORE and Love to Give and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism have undertaken to launch a pilot project that promotes a culture of learning at school and at home.

Khula Development Group is currently the lead in this five-month community-based pilot that will run between November 2020 to March 2021. The aim of the pilot is to test a model where interns are placed to work with primary school learners in vulnerable communities in close relationship and under mentoring of an NGO. The goal of these interactions is to promote the value of education by supporting learners to connect with learning through play based educational activities. While the pilot is focused on **@Home Learning**, it is also a youth employment initiative. There are currently 59 matriculants enrolled in this work skills program sponsored by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT).

The commencement date of the pilot could not have come at a better time. Compared to 2019 where KDG received 198 new referrals for the whole year, we received 145 new referrals between

September and November 2020. This rapid increase keeps us motivated to find new ways of intervention.

The target audience of the pilot is Grade R – 6 children in selected community areas close to allocated primary schools. Specific streets known to have a high density of children who have challenges with school attendance and at home learning were identified. The pilot is open to all who want to participate, especially absent and learners at risk of dropping out of the school system. We would also like to encourage primary caregivers to participate in the activities and engage with their children's education.

The following schools and areas are included in the pilot:

NGO	Area	Participating Schools And Language
Khula Development Group - Paarl	Paarl - East	Amstelhof Primary (A) New Orleans Primary (A) Orleansvale Primary (A) Magnolia Primary (A) Paarlzicht Primary (A) Nederburg Primary (A)
Khula Development Group - Stellenbosch	Cloetesville	Cloetesville Primary (A) Pieter Langeveld Primary (A) Rietenbosch Primary (A)
Hope Through Action - Mbekweni	Mbekweni	Mbekweni Primary (X) Imboniselo Primary (X) Langabuya Primary (X)
Hope Through Action - Franschoek	Franschoek	Wes-Eind Primary (A) Groendal Primary (A) Wemmershoek Primary (A) Dalubuhle Primary (X)
Love To Give - Kayamandi	Kayamandi	Kayamandi Primary (X) Ikaya Primary (X)

The pilot is scheduled to continue throughout the school holidays between December 2020 and January 2021. Hope through Action/SCORE will host the interns during the time that our offices are closed. All the interns will take part in sport activities and other holiday programmes. The Holiday Programme aims to keep learners entertained and safe throughout the festive season. All activities and programme schedules will be announced on KDG's social media pages. Interns can be identified through their uniforms and identification cards.

THROUGH LOVE AND EDUCATION, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Statistics and achievements between
1 September 2020 – 30 November 2020

Active in **22** schools in **5** areas
in and around Paarl and Stellenbosch

938 active cases
in Gr R – Gr 7
in **22** schools
between Paarl and
Stellenbosch

145 new referrals
AND **4600**
interaction and
home visits

26 Form 22's
completed and sent
through as Child
Protection Cases

We reached out
to **284** primary
caregivers of
the learners
that are part of
our intervention

We engaged with **779**
learners by handing
out **@Home Learning**
toolkits or engaging
in learning activities
based on the material
packs

We provided training
to **59** interns as part
of a pilot program
in collaboration with
Dept of Economic
Development and
Tourism and the
WCED



An @Home Learning intern interacting with learners.

Reintegration

Even though we have had success with ensuring at least the initial return to school we have observed a definite increase in disengagement in school in terms of regularity of attendance as compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. In our reintegration programme we experienced a large increase in the referrals of absent learners from the schools.

	April 2020	November 2020
Paarl	462	663
Stellenbosch	236	275

Our reintegration team, consisting of our fieldworkers, Social Workers and Social Auxiliary workers were faced with enormous challenges in order to get children safeguarded. They had to

offer assistance to DCPO's in removing some of the practical stumbling blocks to place children in safe care. Some of these tasks varied from getting birth certificates for children, arranging transport, finding foster placements, allocating and applying for Safe Houses for abused women. It demonstrated that Khula is willing to go the extra mile to help children in need. In addition, one of our Social Workers even arranged animal therapy by Amado for some of the traumatised learners.

The Reintegration programme also joined hands with our Primary Caregivers Programme in getting community-based Primary Caregiver Support Groups facilitated by our fieldworkers up and running. These groups are facilitated entirely by our fieldworkers without office staff being present. It is only an emotional support group where they spent some time on devotions and general emotional support. They received training in group facilitation by the Primary Caregivers programme and our Social Workers.



Lozanne Venter, SAgo2school Programme Coordinator created an SAgo2school interactive boardgame that can be enjoyed by the whole family. In creating awareness about the value of education and the importance of school attendance, we are in the process of handing out 2200 boardgames between Paarl and Stellenbosch. Here one of our interns is playing the SAgo2school boardgame with children during an @Home Learning session.

SAgo2school

SAgo2school has a community-, teacher appreciation- and child participation focus. This year, the programme's community awareness focus took place outside the homes of learners within the communities of Paarl and Stellenbosch. Through this method, our **@Home Learning** activities caught the attention of the broader community. They became aware of the importance of staying connected with learning and participated in activities that focuses on school attendance, **@Home Learning**, COVID-19 awareness and child protection.

Through virtual engagement with Go2teachers, topics like well-being and school attendance under COVID-19 regulations were discussed. In conclusion teachers found smaller classes and the phased return of learners more manageable, but not realistic as learners are struggling to catch up with school work. Go2teachers are looking forward to continuing their partnership with KDG during 2021 and thanked the team for their support and encouragement.

The same Go2captains that were selected at the beginning of 2020 will continue with the programme during 2021. We also decided that the mentoring programme will resume in 2021 with a focus on **Community Development and Attendance Awareness**.

Primary Caregivers

Our interns received the necessary training to work with our primary caregivers every Wednesday on a weekly basis.

Themes covered thus far:

TOPIC	PRACTICAL
Working with the primary caregiver	Interns had the opportunity to spend time with Minnie Fisher, a former fieldworker and founding member of Khula Development Group. With thirteen years' experience in the community, Minnie highlighted the culture of the primary caregiver.
Emotional Needs of a child	How to express love towards a child.
Love Languages of a child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A discussion of The Five Love Languages of Children. • How to identify your child's love language. • How to demonstrate love towards your child's specific love language.
Routine at home	A discussion around the importance and advantages of routine in the life of a child and how to establish one at home.



Interns praying with Minnie Fisher. Minnie was a fieldworker at KDG for thirteen years.

Through weekly sessions with primary caregivers, interns concluded that there is a lack of connection between them and their children. Children have a need for quality time and affection. To address this, interns advised and demonstrated how primary caregivers can use the

@Home Learning Toolkit and recyclable materials to make toys with their children. This activity addresses The Five Love Languages of Children.

- Physical Touch like hugs and kisses.
- Quality Time by being together.

- Words of Affirmation like "you are doing well".
- Gifts like making a toy together that can be a symbol of love.
- Acts of service like helping your child to make or fix something.

The @Home Learning Toolkit

"Play is a child's first language" according to our In-School Support Coordinator and qualified Occupational Therapist, Linda Zietsman.

Linda believes in the importance of learning through play and children continuing with meaningful activities at home while they are not school. This will ensure they are still learning and reaching age appropriate developmental goals. To introduce the benefits of play in a fun and interactive manner, Linda and her team developed a toolkit to engage learners in **@Home Learning**. The content specifically address child development, school readiness and learning through play. It also aids in developing gross-motor, fine-motor and visual-perceptual skills. The majority of children residing in under resourced and rural communities present with foundational developmental delays. Therefore, learners struggle to pass grades in school. The **@Home**

Learning Toolkit is specifically formulated to address some of the challenge's learners experience. It is also designed to promote whole-family engagement for the benefit of siblings and primary caregivers with a contextual environment in mind. **For example:** drawing a hopscotch set on the pavement with the chalk will be accessible to all children in the neighbourhood.

Materials used to fill the **@Home Learning** toolkit are sponsored by various NGO's and donors. KDG's In-School Support team and volunteers also recycle plastic and paper products to create toys like frisbees, balls and rackets. Reading material in these toolkits are multilingual including Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa.



These @Home Learning Toolkits are distributed and used in the community during @Home Learning sessions.

Staff & Training

We wish both Sian and Christopher the best of luck in their future endeavours.



Sian Oostenbrink worked at KDG's Stellebosch branch for the past eighteen months as an In-School Support Facilitator. Sian has a passion for children and will continue to serve the community in her new position as a Teacher.



Christopher Willemse worked at KDG's Paarl branch for the past three years and six months as a Fieldworker in the Simondium Area. Christopher decided to pursue his dream of studying towards a qualification in Social Work.

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Staff & Training

To our volunteers 

The compassion you show to the people we serve is an inspiration for us all. Your kindness and presence are comforting during difficult situations and your volunteer work makes such a difference in the lives of others. **Thank you so much for your dedication and hard work.**

To our donors 

There is no way to fully express our gratitude for your loyalty. We are continually inspired by the dedication and generosity especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your continued contributions make it possible to reintegrate vulnerable primary school learners back into the school system. **Thank you for your commitment to our cause.**

Training presented by Khula

We successfully trained **59 interns** as part of the **@Home Learning** pilot program in collaboration with Dept of Economic Development and Tourism and the WCED. These interns are from the communities where we are actively involved and are now instruments of change. Here Linda Zinda Zietsman, In-School Support Facilitator is busy demonstrating learning through play activities. →



We hosted a **Train the Trainer** session for NGO's involved in the **@Home Learning** Pilot Programme. Hope Through Action and Love To Give leaders attended alongside KDG staff where the SAgo2school approach and **@Home Learning** practical activities were the sole focus. These attendees joined us for the day. →



"The interns brought a new breeze of hope, excitement and joy! Working alongside them in the community is so exciting. The children are really enjoying these young people. They are working hard to implement the theory and practical activities that they have been taught".

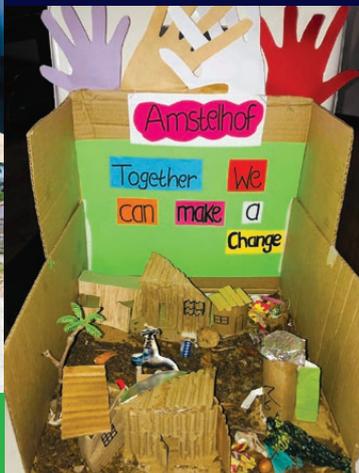
Alta Bester Programme Facilitator after spending time with the interns in the community.



Interns at work in Mbekweni ↑



@Home Learning interns depiction of making a difference. ↓



↑ Interns ready to start the @Home Learning Pilot in Paarl and Mbekweni.

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