

QUARTERLY REPORT

Khula Development Group

December 2020

“Thousands of primary school pupils across the country are unaccounted for due to disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. More than 300,000 pupils have potentially dropped out of primary schools across SA over a six-month period during the lockdown.” – 23 November – Sowetan Live.

This was confirmed by basic education minister Angie Motshekga in response to questions in the National Assembly by DA MP Nomsa Tarabella-Marchesi. KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of suspected dropouts at 126,553, followed by the Western Cape with 114,588, Gauteng with 55,571, the Northern Cape with 10,290 and Eastern Cape with 8,153. It's believed that 5,482 pupils may have dropped out in the Free State and 4,390 in Mpumalanga. The least affected provinces were Limpopo with 800 and North West with 370”.



Funding purpose

Khula's mission is to *reintegrate primary school children in poor and disadvantaged communities, at risk of dropping out, back into the school system.*

To accomplish the mission, the organisation ran four programmes:

- **Reintegration of children** – to promote regular school attendance by supporting absent, at-risk learners and their families with the aim of reintegrating them back into the school system. This programme's service is delivered by social workers, social-auxiliary workers and field workers.



- **In-school support** – to provide foundation level academic and psychosocial support to reintegrated learners from grade R to grade 7. This programme's services are delivered by an Occupational Therapist, facilitators and volunteers.
- **Primary Caregivers** – this programme helps the main caregiver of the child with parenting skills and encourages them in accepting responsibility for their children's school attendance. The programme is hosted by facilitators who convene groups sessions at different venues in the community or conducts home visits to encourage primary caregivers to accept the responsibility to ensure their children attend school every day.
- **Sago2school** – aims in promoting a culture of school attendance and imparting a value for education by the means of child participation, teacher's collaboration and community engagement.

With the onset of Covid-19 and the subsequent school closures Khula had to reinvent ourselves to continue to promote learning and school engagement. Khula's approach since May 2020 was to integrate all programmes (**Sago2school-, Reintegration-, In-school support and Primary caregivers programme**), to implement @home learning activities through play and to include primary caregivers, other household members and learners in fun carefully selected activities.

Each programme kept their focus, but the entry point for engagement with the learner and family was @home learning. The aim of this adjusted approach sought to continue to ensure that, even under the unusual circumstances that COVID-19 presented us with, the connection with school and value for education was maintained, school attendance promoted and enabled (for children returning to schools in phases) and psychosocial concerns addressed. Please refer to our previous report for the aimed achievements of the integrated approach.

Beneficiary Reach

Khula Stellenbosch currently works with **275** Gr R to Gr 7 learners and their families living in 4 areas (Cloetesville, Klappmuts, Idasvallei, Kayamandi) and attending **6** different schools. **Khula Paarl** works with **663** Gr R to Gr 7 learners and their families in **16** schools situated in Paarl East and Simondium. **4600** Clients visits were done and **26** Form 22's was completed and sent through as Child Protection cases. In the last three months we received **145** new referrals between our two branches. If we compare this number to our referral's in 2019, we received **198** new referrals for the whole year. This is a staggering number that helps us and keep us motivated to find new ways of intervention.

For the reporting period Khula reached out to **284** of the primary caregivers of the learners that are part of our intervention. As part of our @home learning strategy we engaged with **779** learners either by handing out @home learning packs or engaging in learning activities based on the material packs. Our fieldworkers received @home learning toolkits in which they received training from our in-school support team, to engage both household members and learners in activities.



Khula also trained **59** interns as part of a pilot program in collaboration with Dept of Economic Development and Tourism and the WCED. All these interns are from the communities that we are actively involved with and are now instruments of change.

In our SAgo2school programme, we continued to support and reach out to **10** teachers that forms part of this programme. We held virtual as well as in person meetings. We also continued with a WhatsApp group during the reporting period.

Results/Outcomes to date

Adjusted approach

Starting from August the adjusted approach as outlined was tweaked again to accommodate the fact that all grades had returned to school and we were now having to focus again on absenteeism and ensuring regular school attendance. We had to stay relevant and continue to prevent school disengagement without the schools being fully functional since the second term this year. Since learners had to be back in school (Aug – Nov) the challenge increased as school routine looked different between schools and the interrupted routine of one day at school and one day at home posed an even higher risk for school drop-out due to the lack of continuity. Our staff also found it difficult to know which children is supposed to be in school and who isn't.

Collecting data

In Paarl we were unable to collect attendance and academic performance data as usual and was only able to collect some school reports with restricted access to some schools. In Stellenbosch due to the smaller case count we had more success in collecting attendance and academic performance data. By the end of July **43%** of learners who should be back in school had partially or fully returned with **53%** not having returned at all. Measures were taken to address or mitigate these concerns and by the end of August the average return to school rate for Khula children had risen to **79%** for all grades due back. By the end of September that number had risen to **86%** finally settling at **97%** by the end of October.

It is our contention that the rate of successful return as we saw in both service delivery areas, was influenced by a number of factors including the fact that more children were due back at school and society had been more normalised in terms of day to day activities. This was due to a gradual ease in lockdown restrictions. Our team has also worked extremely hard and faithfully on promote school attendance at homes and helping with practical concerns to remove barriers. In some cases, fetching children from home initially to ensure that the children are supported to return to school.

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 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

The reason for the **substantial increase in our caseload** is due to several reasons two of which being:

- Our Intake and especially case closure criteria are depending on attendance data provided by the school. We regard a learner that was absent from school for less than 3 days per term as being low risk for permanent drop-out. Our criteria for closure are that a learner need to be seen as low risk for 2 consecutive terms before Khula can handover services to the school and possibly the designated child protection organization if necessary. We were unable to get the attendance data and are therefore unable to report on children being completely reintegrated back into school.
- The pandemic had a devastating impact on school attendance and drop-out. The referrals from school started to pick up as teachers become more aware of learners that are not returning to school as per their schedule.

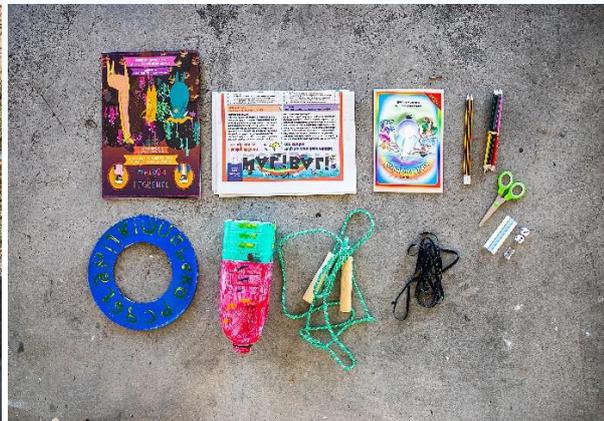
Programme collaboration

Although all the programmes worked in an integrated manner, specific aspects can be highlighted from the different programmes as well as from the different contexts.

- Our Social Workers were and still are challenged and frustrated with very rare responses from statutory partners. 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 to some of the organisations that Khula is willing to go the extra mile to help children in need. In addition, one of our Social Workers arranged animal therapy by Amado for some 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. We also focused on family wellness by way of round table discussions with the families called family conferences. Drug addiction remain a very big challenge and forms part of most of the child protection referrals being made by our Reintegration team. In response we started a substance abuse support group in Simondium.



- Our **In-school support** services (ISS) was taken to learners' homes by our whole Khula team under guidance and assistance of our In-school support team. At first, we were denied access to schools due to the Corona Virus. When schools became more open to our presence, it was not in learners' best interest to withdraw them from classes, as they have missed so much work and only attended school every second day. In this way more learners and their families got the opportunity to be exposed and have part in learning through play. Our In-school support team was responsible for the compilation and organising the distribution of the @home learning packs with materials from Nali-bali, word works and After school's Florence and Watson range. Our own recycled material educational toys, elastic, chalk, work sheets and boardgames were distributed.



- In Stellenbosch our In-school support team of two facilitators continued with a modified integrated approach to visiting clients at their homes in the community during the period under review. As children were due back at school according to the schedule for their grades, the focus shifted to their return to school. Individual sessions were held to address any latent concerns and to ensure that they were aware of the COVID-19 protocols at schools. For some this included a mask making activity.



- School schedules were obtained from schools and the days of the month that children were due to attend school were marked on a calendar they could put up with the children and discussed with them and their caregivers.
- Thereafter the focus shifted further towards assisting children with their homework and away from the @home learning packs which were used before lockdown. This was to help ensure that children were properly connected to school and used to doing homework again. The team was careful to avoid inadvertently promoting staying out of school by continuing to provide stimulating activities.
- The team also started to work more with groups as the need for assistance of multiple community children – not just our referred clients - increased. This different approach to group learning sessions in the community was tried successfully with older children and their friends/siblings/cousins/other children on the plots. By creating an intimate, intentional and group learning environment, positive results in the work ethic and attitude towards work has been observed. The facilitator stays to facilitate working through some of the work and mark and help as they go along, using the next week's 'lesson' as incentive for them to complete and incomplete worksheets from that day. The facilitator also includes a fun activity to keep the children engaged and stimulate creativity and other ways of learning and development. These weekly sessions have become something that the children really look forward to and the caregivers really appreciate. So far it has proven to be an effective way to create more involvement and promote learning at home.
- By going to the houses of the children in the ISS programme, there was more room to engage with their primary caregivers. Khula ISS staff have found it meaningful to be able to introduce themselves to many more of the primary caregivers and encourage them. This opportunity provided the staff with the chance to gain insight into the child themselves and the way that they behave.



- Some of the children in the programme, who are not performing well at a mainstream level and struggling behaviourally have shown positive improvement in their demeanours and attitudes



as we find them in the comfort of their own homes and communities and being given activities at their level which they are proud to be able to do.



- There were anecdotal reports from the team regarding several girls in the ISS programme – grade 4 especially – who have been displaying a greater hunger and enthusiasm for school attendance and learning. “...As if lockdown gave them a new confidence”. We speculate that perhaps the work of Khula as well as own realisation about the value of school played a role.
- During the course of their work at the homes of clients in the community and engaging with their primary caregivers (PC) and encouraging them to engage with their children it became clear that a number of them were not aware of the level to which their children are struggling to read and engage with school work.
- This was an opportunity to encourage the PC to engage more regularly with their child and to assist them with suggestions of how that might be done in a way that may be helpful and enjoyable. This again made clear the need to structure programmes such that engagement between PC and child can be observed and encouraged.
- Over the reporting period several clients in the Primary Caregivers programme came to the point where their children were fully re-integrated and doing so well that their cases could be closed, and they could move on from Khula services. It was heartening to see these clients take up their parental responsibilities and actively engage with building better futures for them and their children. They have been referred to the Reintegration team for monitoring and closure before the end of the year.
- **Sago2school** has a community-, teacher appreciation- and child participation focus. This year, Sago2school programme’s community awareness focus happened naturally in the following way:
 - All Khula’s programmes worked outside learner’s homes within the community and as a large number of residents, living in the areas surrounding the schools we work in, did not keep to social distancing and lock-down regulations, our @home learning activities caught many more community members’ attention. The surrounding community became aware of



the need to stay connected with learning. The by standing community members took part in activities and enjoyed the boardgames and other activities that focussed on school attendance, @home learning, Covid-19 awareness and Child Protection.

- The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) & Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) intern pilot was sparked because of this initiative and expanded the community collaboration focus of Sago2school.
- Khula's other programmes had no other option but to join in with this approach and it created positive energy internally and in the community with positive results.

@Home learning pilot program

The work that Khula did through our integrated approach caught the attention of the WCED and a @home learning forum was formed where a collaborative (Whole of Society) forum worked together on a plan to develop @home learning strategies in the most vulnerable areas of our province.

Currently the organisation is the lead in a five-month pilot of a community-based model that runs from November 2020 to March 2021. The pilot employs 59 unemployed matriculants in a work skills program sponsored by DEDAT, working through 18 primary schools located in Mbekweni, Paarl East, Franschhoek, Cloetesville and Kayamandi. Other partners in the pilot are Hope through Action/SCORE, Love to Give and BPO Academy. Depending on the results of this pilot program, DEDAT and WCED in collaboration with the @Home Learning Forum will look to rolling out this model throughout the Western Cape, targeting over 800 schools in impoverished communities who desperately need assistance to keep flame of wanting to learn alive under these most challenging of circumstances.

The aim of the pilot program is to test a model where 59 DEDAT Funded 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.

The mission of the pilot is:

- To promote a culture of community learning, whether at School or at Home
- To promote a desire to attend school for those learners not attending due to Covid-19 related challenges.
- To interact with the child at their educational level
- To promote a positive connection between the caregiver and learner and encourage family involvement
- To raise awareness to begin a culture where learners are eager to self-engage with learning material.
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Target groups are:

- Grade R – 6 children in the selected geographical /community areas close to allocated Primary schools - specific streets identified and known to have a high density of children who have challenges with school attendance and at home learning.



- Absent and at-risk children of dropping out of the school system, are identified in the community and encouraged to participate in the programme activities and to reengage with school. Programme open to all who want to participate.
- Primary caregivers in the identified streets encouraged to participate in activities and engage with their children's schooling. The aim is to also engage with other adults, older children, friends and family members in activities with the children.

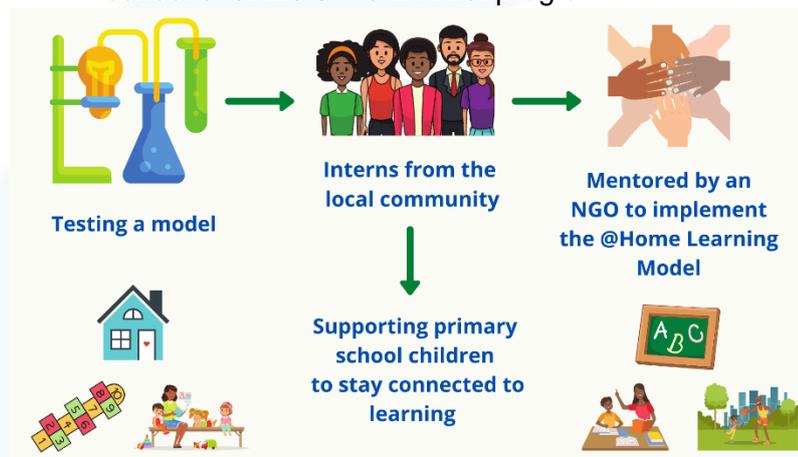
Criteria for selection of Learners:

Primary

- Specific geographical areas selected in close vicinity to the school – streets assigned to interns.

Secondary

- Learners identified by the interns and community members as not attending school and/or in need of @Home Learning support.
- Self-reported/self - selected learners in specific areas who are eager to engage.
- Target to work on a one to one basis with a minimum 2,200 learners currently not attending school over the 5-month Pilot program



Progress on the pilot

The ISS team has been involved with planning and development of the Intern Pilot Project, especially on the operational side. They have extensively been involved with the planning and organisation of the materials for the Intern Pilot Program, as well as the Monitoring and Evaluation. From October 2020, the whole In-school support team became involved in the training of the other NGO's in the @home learning approach.

- The Recruitment Phase was finalised with 406 applications, 156 matriculants interviewed and 59 recruited.
- Training Phase – Week 1 (9 - 13 Nov)

Training week conducted successfully for all interns. Full attendance of all interns for the duration of the training.



- Induction Phase – Week 2 (16 – 20 Nov)
All 59 interns at their host organisations
- Induction Phase – Week 3 (23 – 27 Nov)
All 59 interns at their host organisations

The focus during these first weeks with the interns has been on ensuring proper relationship building and development of trust with the facilitators and amongst the team, ensuring thorough training and induction and getting them comfortable to work in the communities. It has also been important to set the tone and culture of this programme ensuring that the interns will work with empathy, excellence, integrity, passion and commitment in a joyful way that seeks to serve and not dictate.

Key achievements of the @home learning Pilot program thus far:

- We have made it through conceptualization, development, planning phases and recruitment with a lot of partners forming part of this pilot.
- The training went exceptionally well with a good balance of personal and professional development, theoretical training, practical implementation, learning about social issues, child protection, community work and psycho-social support.



- The interns are like sponges. They take in everything they are taught and mention how they enjoy the devotion and reflection sessions. They have already demonstrated substantial personal growth in the past 4 weeks.
- Khula's team went above and beyond call of duty to make this pilot happen. They adapted and made use of the opportunity we were presented with. They are always willing to give what it takes in the best interest of the community and children they serve.
- The interns completed their Community Analyses and did the most amazing presentations of their communities. The achievement being that they reported how differently they now look at their own community and that they now see things they have never been aware of before. They have already come up with wonderful initiatives to remedy some of the needs of the children in their community. We plan for them to present this to the schools as well as Drakenstein Municipality.
- The group collectively decided to make a declaration that they will not tolerate child abuse any longer.
- We have deliberately taken more time investing in their personal- and professional development as well as the "why" behind what we do for their hearts to be captured by the cause. They are also getting more comfortable with the "how" and are making excellent progress on all levels.
- The interns have developed substantially in self-knowledge, self-presentation, public speaking, presentation skills, reflection skills, planning and creative problem solving.





- Implementation phase – Week 4 (30 Nov - 4 Dec)
 - Child Surveys (Interns to complete)
 - Intern Interview
 - Wordworks Activities (Interns engage with children using the Wordworks Materials)
 - SAgo2school Boardgame
 - Received donations of Children's Reading Books from DGMT to distribute

Anecdotally the reception of the project in the streets and community has been very positive with children asking for more 'play time' and for the interns to come to them on weekends as well. Several volunteers have been recruited in the streets already to become involved in activities and reading.

Monitoring methods

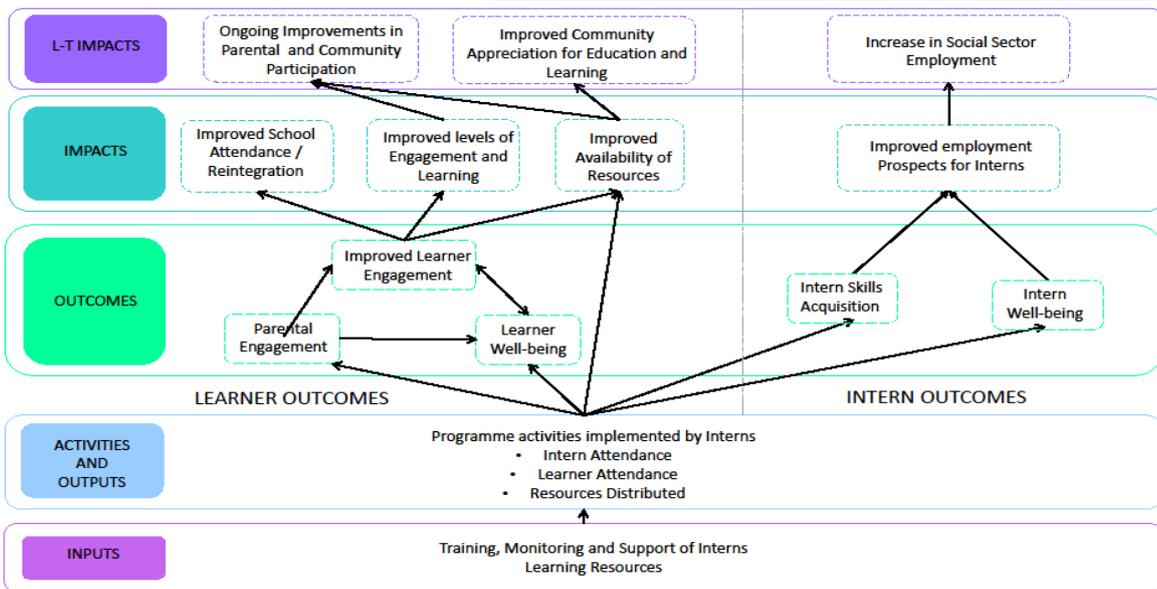
Our standard programmes (Reintegration-, ISS, Primary Caregivers and SAgo2school programme) are recorded on our tailor-made interactive web-based database. It is a case management system that offer a platform where all work with relation to the learners, their families and schools are recorded. The data we capture then gets exported into reports that we use for case management, monitoring and evaluation, donor reporting, newsletters, presentations and advocacy purposes.

For the purpose of the pilot, we are privileged to have Angela Biden as our M&E consultant. Angela Biden has extensive experience in the field of school drop-out. In her introduction to the outcomes of the pilot she writes: *"This pilot aims to explore the possibilities of employing community members to facilitate at home learning, as the South African education system faces uncertainty around learning delivery at school due to COVID-19. Dropout is already significant in the South African context, and the DBE has reported that it expects increases in dropout due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this pilot could uncover critical learnings in terms of suitable policies and programmes which might assist in supporting learning, and keeping children engaged and interested in their learning during this critical time. As shown by the Programme Design/ Theory of Change for the pilot, the work entails outcome areas differentiable across two key beneficiary*



groups. Firstly, this review will explore the outcomes of the community members, or interns, as relates to their own skills development, employability and wellbeing. This is explored elsewhere in this report. This section explores the indicators for the second impact area – that of learning and engagement, where children are key beneficiaries of the @home learning pilot.”

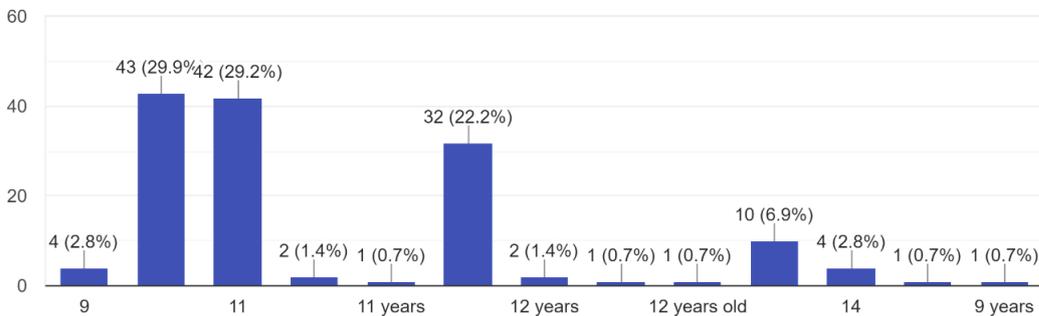
Please also see below the Theory of Change for Pilot:



She has worked closely with us in developing google forms to track all the aspects important for the pilot. Please see below some of the examples of information that is captured that will help us to plan activities and to report important information to the schools and partners on the forum.

Child's Age

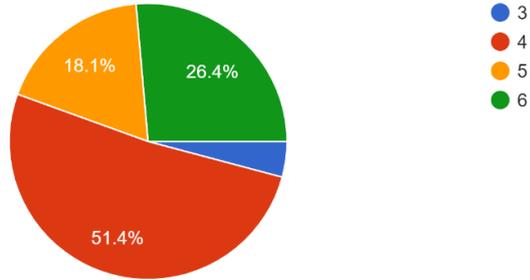
144 responses





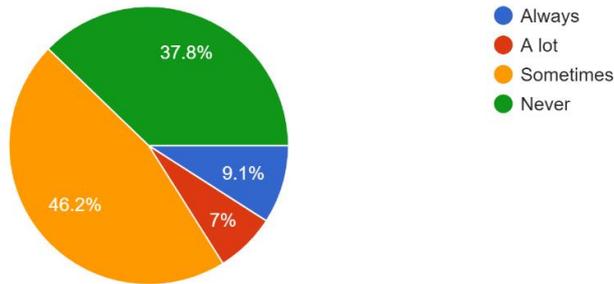
Child's current grade

144 responses



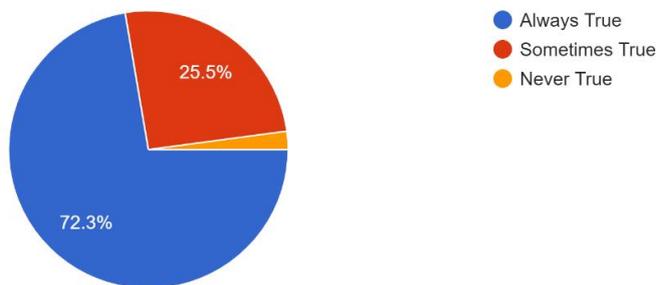
My parent/caregiver is away from home.

143 responses



Is the following statement: I was coping and passing at school:

141 responses





Future plans (Next months)

- Currently Khula's model puts the reintegration team consisting of Fieldworkers, Social Auxiliary Workers and Social Workers at the centre of Khula operations with all Khula cases managed by this team and then referred to other Khula programmes as appropriate. We need an improved approach to get more of Khula's human resources working preventatively while child protection issues are being addressed according to our child protection policy but not turn our organisation into a pre-statutory organisation. A possibility is that child protection and wellness issues can be addressed by a child protection team consisting of Social Auxiliary Workers and Social Workers who will be working in a supportive capacity to the Khula programmes.
- The following is also being considered as a potential more effective and sustainable approach: Different profile of fieldworkers/community workers – younger and with matric to be providing services in the community based on the @home learning model that is currently being piloted. These workers will be taking on combined roles working with children, primary caregivers, community members and schools considering recent and long-term learning and will be supervised by what are now the In-school support and Primary Caregivers facilitators.
- A review of the term 3 report cards of Khula clients including new referrals has revealed many more children requiring In-school support services, which is something that we anticipated in previous reports. This will have to be addressed strategically and in conjunction with the new proposed changes to Khula structures. Applying volunteers could also assist with addressing this concern as several new volunteers were recruited during COVID-19 for our Community @home learning project
- The In-school support team in Paarl plan to start with In-school support in 2021. They are currently all involved in the intern pilot programme and have been assigned to oversee them 3 days a week. The team have 2 days a week for their In-school support and other Khula work.
- Our In-school support coordinator, Linda Zietsman, feels that regardless of the shape or form of in-school support in future, an @home learning plan should be in place for all learners in the programme and home visits will form part of the service in future as it assists the team to understand the learners' context and to guide the primary caregiver in assisting the learner at home.
- Another model that Khula is currently thinking about might also being considered: Focus shift towards prevention and younger grades:
 - Grade R – Gr 3: Use school readiness assessments to identify children with developmental delays and therefore at high risk of becoming dropouts later.
 - Group work with these children – developmentally focussed by ISS facilitators and encouraging teachers with fun ways to stimulate in classroom.



- Initial home visit done to assess home circumstances – then if severe, becomes a Khula referral for PC programme activities and other services by reintegration team.
- As things are returning to pre-COVID-19 normal and PC's are obtaining employment, unsuccessful visits are increasing, and it is more difficult to access them in the way that we could during lockdown. This is an ongoing challenge. Plans are being considered around activating community members and other responsible adults around them to engage with children in meaningful ways.
- During a planning and feedback session we identified that it would be ideal to have a simple set PC programme which other Khula staff members could present to PC's so that we can harness the success of the PC programme. In this way we are hoping to assist more PC's as well as provide an additional toolset to the rest of the team and now the @home learning interns for meaningful engagement with PC's. This would incorporate the play based/fun approach initially starting with practical sessions to establish trust and build relationship with the PC's. The second section will concentrate on 'Padlang's' (a simple life skills course that we have used successfully in the past). Thirdly we would like to equip PCG's to be able to assist their children emotionally and with basic academics.
- The pilot programme has provided many new opportunities to implement different ways of working and to address deeper rooted and systemic issues within communities on a more preventative and pro-active basis. More will be made clear about what of the pilot should remain and how Khula programmes should be adjusted after the conclusion of the project at the end of March.
- Regarding our SAgo2school programme a strategic planning meeting was held with Junior Town Council Coordinator: Thana Hancock. It was decided that the mentoring programme will go ahead again in the new year with a focus on Community Development and Attendance Awareness. Details and programme content will be discussed in the new year.

Support

As mentioned in our previous report we anticipated that the biggest concerning factor for Khula will be the growing number of children that are at-risk of dropping out of school because of COVID-19 and that our services will be overwhelmed by new referrals. From our report our fears were true.

Child protection partners have continually cancelled multi-professional case discussions. This impedes progress in shared child protection cases and further service delivery. The Khula Principal Social Worker and Programme Director have been in contact with higher level management of some of the DCPO's to establish understanding and procedure. We really need prayer and support for this to be resolved at a higher level.

Several Khula learners between the ages of 13-15 years of age have refused to return to school. Social issues (lack of parental responsibility or control together with other issues such as substance abuse), academic performance and peer group influence has contributed to the challenging behaviour of the identified learners. The government programmes and statutory



systems often fail to provide adequate support to these children as a result of their age, a lack of resources and long waiting lists for available programmes as well as alternative placements.

Early intervention and the need to work more preventatively - as the most challenging issues regarding absenteeism and behaviour seem to be significantly causally impacted by children not being able to perform at their age level academically and not receiving appropriate parental assistance - was confirmed as of great importance. We are eager that this be advocated to relevant Government Departments such as the DBE and DSD.

Balancing Khula current programmes already adjusted for COVID-19 with starting the new pilot program at this time of year and ensuring that effective and professional service delivery continues, and enough human resources are available whilst keeping morale up has been a huge challenge.

Success Stories & Beneficiary Feedback

- The majority of PC's in the programme have been engaged and working well with Khula towards their goals
- Over the reporting period a number of clients in the Primary Caregivers programme came to the point where their children were fully re-integrated and doing so well that their cases could be closed, and they could move on from Khula services. It was heartening to see these clients take up their parental responsibilities and actively engage with building better futures for them and their children. They have been referred to the Reintegration team for monitoring and closure before the end of the year.
- The PC facilitator has been actively encouraging PC's to find employment and assisting them with their CV's which has helped boosted their courage and confidence. This has added to their sense of accomplishment it is our hope that this confidence will carry over to other aspects of their lives.
- When doing school visits the Reintegration team received feedback that a learner's attendance is better now than it was before COVID-19. Another teacher said that it seems like lockdown gave another learner more confidence and that she is very happy and enthusiastic at school. Both PC's of these learners were referred to the PC programme during lockdown. The PC facilitator contends that PC's spending more quality time with their children during the sessions hosted by the PC facilitator make the children feel more appreciated and therefore performing better at school.
- We have noticed that some PC's are engaging in the worksheets given to their children and doing it themselves - in which case we are providing them with some extra sheets. Others help their children to complete their homework or when the homework is being delivered, they stand by and observe what is being explained. This has been encouraging in that it demonstrates a love for learning and an interest in education that has been sparked and promoted not only in the learner but also in the PC's.
- Positive connotation in the community / adults (parents) surrounding education and Khula – Khula has become a familiar name in the community as we walk around from house to



house, one that seems to have a positive connotation to it. *“It has been amazing seeing people making the link between us and schooling and then going out of their way to bring their kids to us because they want their children to receive some form of education. Kids aren’t intimidated by us anymore and our friendly faces are met by theirs along the way.”*

- “The educational toy factory from recycled goods, was a good support structure and place of meaningful involvement for our volunteers, whether it was someone who cut plates or collected plastic bottles. It made a difference in their daily lives and gave them a purpose. It is nice to see in the streets how the children enjoy playing with the toys”
- “The School@home packages was a great success and I believe that even if we did not reach all our targets, somewhere, somehow we are going to reap all our time we spend with them through the play and engagement. We are called for different assignments and the challenges will at times take us on different roads and we will be taken out of our comfort zones, but God is never hindered by our challenges. He provides us with everything we need to succeed, even if it means that we will be stretched”.
- We think the training of our fieldworkers in understanding and using the contents of the learning packets effectively went well; their body language, questions and participation during the training session were evident. Photos and video clips show that they are putting into practice what they have learnt. We think the communities in which our fieldworkers work, are getting to know Khula better and are starting to appreciate our workers. Learners are actually looking forward to receiving more @home learning packets.
- The children who engaged in the @home learning package enjoyed the content as it was easy and playful, and their siblings/friends could also participate.
- Most PCG’s confirmed that doing the @home learning package with their children improved their relationship as they now had some activities to do during quality time.
- Some Field workers were hesitant and nervous to start, but this opportunity gave them tremendous confidence and they love the experience.
- Through our relationship with DGMT, we were presented with an opportunity to become a content contributor for the Sikhaba COVID-19 Radio Broadcast. The radio show was presented in the eleven official languages of South Africa between June and October 2020. KDG contributed by sharing information, relevant questions and concerns observed and presented with during home visits in the community.



- Paarl Post recognised KDG's commitment and hard work in the local community through a publication in the newspaper on Thursday, 3 December 2020. The article gives a detailed overview of the organisations work prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Highlighting its mission, it introduces the reader to the @Home Learning Project with different collaborators.

Building @home learning culture

The Khula Development Group, who's mission it is to reintegrate primary school children in disadvantaged communities who are at risk of dropping out, back into the school system, is the brainchild of a new initiative to get children learning at home.

The organisation is active in 23 schools in five areas in and around Paarl and Stellenbosch, and the programmes of the organisation are also managed from their two branches in these two towns.

Before Covid-19 the organisation ran four programmes to accomplish its mission. Those were:

- 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.

The impact Covid-19 has had on education has been profound. Educators have had to adapt to the pandemic based on scientific and social science evidence available.

Whilst some schools could continue with distance learning this was rarely possible at schools in underprivileged areas, but the Khula Team once again stepped up to assist these learners.

When Level 4 of the lockdown was implemented Khula was granted



essential service status and they could continue with home visits while following strict Covid-19 protocol.

"Because of Covid-19 we reached out with an integrated approach to children and primary caregivers at their homes," Bianca Oppelt, Communications Manager of Khula Development, said. "The staff teams were focused on addressing social issues, building relationships in the home and community, and promoting an at-home learning initiative to prevent school disengagement.

"This caught the attention of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and an @Home Learning forum was formed, with role-players

working collaboratively on a plan to develop at-home learning strategies in the most vulnerable areas of our province."

Currently the lead organisation in a five-month pilot of a community-based model that runs from November this year to March 2021, Khula employs 59 currently unemployed matriculants in a work-skills programme sponsored by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (Dedat).

They will be working through 18 primary schools located in Mbekweni, Paarl East, Franschoek, Cloeteville and Kayamandi in Stellenbosch. SCORE is the supervising NGO in Mbekweni and Love to Give in Kayamandi.

The WCED has reached out to society to get involved in the @Home Learning forum, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable learners. According to Lorraine Hadfield, a Val de Vie Foundation adviser, the foundation together with delegates from other organisations, such as higher-education institutions like UCT, the Western Cape Government After School Programme, Nation Builder, Wordworks and Funda Wande, have worked together these past months to help imagine a world where an ingrained self-directed learning culture is initiated among learners, irrespective of social strata or household income level.

Said Hadfield: "Depending on the results of this pilot, Dedat and the province's education department, in collaboration with the @Home Learning forum will look to roll out this model throughout the Western Cape, targeting more than 800 schools in impoverished communities who desperately need assistance to keep the flame of wanting to learn alive under these most challenging of circumstances."

Haroon Mahomed, Chief Director: Curriculum Management and Teacher Development, said: "The WCED is pleased that partners in the NGO and Higher education communities, and sister government department, Dedat, have responded to the opportunity to find creative responses to the challenges in education that have deepened during Covid-19.

"We are aiming, together, to develop systems that support learners and adults, especially in poor communities, to strengthen learning by focusing on its importance as well as practices that encourage learning in school, at home and in the community."



Merle Mansfield the Programme Director of the Zero-dropout campaign of DGMT said the following during a @home learning presentation for Mergon:

“Dropout is not a singular event. It is the culmination of a long process of disengagement. This is impacted by push and pull factors (Push factors in the school space) Pull (factors outside the school’s space in the learner’s life). The protracted school closures exacerbate disengagement and learners who are high risk are more likely to drop out because of disconnection from school life.”

Let us do everything possible to keep the flame of learning burning!

Through Love and Education, The Khula Team

Erns Labuschagne
CEO