



Quarterly Report

August - October 2024



khula
Development Group

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Funding Purpose

Khula Development Group (KDG), based in Paarl and Stellenbosch, South Africa, is dedicated to our mission of promoting a positive culture of learning and strengthening the value of education and attendance for children at risk of school disengagement.



Reflection

Missing too much school during a child's formative years is particularly worrisome given the longer-term consequences it can have on their educational development. When students miss school, they lose opportunities for learning and social interaction as well as access to critical services. Research shows that chronically absent learners are more likely to fall behind academically, disengage socially, and drop out of school altogether. Because absenteeism is strongly associated with these important student outcomes, it is crucial that policymakers, educators, and researchers identify effective strategies to alleviate it. Germain, E., Hernández, L. E., Klevan, S., Levine, R., & Maier, A. (2024). Reducing chronic absenteeism: Lessons from community schools. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/510.597>

Khula seek the approach to creating sustainable and equitable partnerships to promote and to implement a more sustainable and equitable method of care for low-resource communities in the Cape Winelands. This comes with recognising the value of teachers, caregivers and layman personnel's lived experience and concerns regarding at-risk children within their care, making them information-rich collaborators in a child's referral to intervention services. (O'Connolly Beth)



Beneficiary Reach

To fulfill our mission, we employ a **macro**, **meso**, and **micro** approach in our interventions.

MACRO APPROACH

At a macro level, we reached **12,343** people through a variety of activities, including awareness campaigns, community events, workshops, partnerships, and the GoGo & SoSo shows.

In **72** campaign events, we connected with **2,859** learners, including a nurturing and attachment project led by a social work student from Huguenot College to help parents foster positive relationships with their children. Community interactions through **31** events reached 1,465 people, while three workshops engaged **163** participants. Through **12** networking and partnership events, we reached an additional **1,630** individuals.

Our GoGo & SoSo shows, a popular feature in schools, promote school attendance and address important topics. This term, the shows focused on Women's Month, class attendance competitions, and a prayer week, reaching **6,226** learners across 10 shows.

In August, Khula organized a week of prayer at local schools, continuing its annual support for the schools and community. Events like Koek-en-Loer showcased classroom activities that boost learners' academic and social development, drawing strong support from caregivers. For Women's Month, Khula raised awareness of women's safety and respect, while also promoting reading and motor skills activities to encourage holistic child development in the community. Information sessions focused on building self-worth and positive self-image, addressing core needs like safety, acceptance, and personal growth. As part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, these sessions also explored the causes and impacts of low self-esteem.

MESO APPROACH

Our Meso-level interventions include Go2Teachers meetings, Teacher Appreciation events, and sessions with Go2Captains and Primary Caregivers groups. One Go2Teachers meeting was held with **10** teachers attending. Teacher Appreciation efforts reached **508** teachers across **11** schools and **3** early childhood development centres (ECDs).

Go2Captains sessions resulted in **203** interactions with **54** individual learners, while our Primary Caregivers groups saw **116** interactions. Create2Grow sessions provide children with a safe and structured environment to express their creativity. By offering them love and encouragement, these sessions bring a sense of hope and help nurture a positive, "I can" mentality. Through creating their artwork, children gain confidence and a strong sense of accomplishment. At the end of each session, they proudly share their creations with others, showcasing their achievements.

The impact of Create2Grow and Go2Captain sessions has been profound, with many children showing remarkable growth in confidence and self-expression. Once quiet and reserved, they now approach tasks with enthusiasm, taking their work seriously and stepping out of their shells. In Go2Captain sessions, focused on envisioning their futures, children painted images of their aspirations, creating art that reflects their dreams and goals.

MICRO APPROACH

Our micro-level approach offers targeted support to **253** referred learners across nine schools, addressing academic challenges, absenteeism, behavioural issues, and developmental delays. These learners benefit from our School2home, Love2Learn, and Child Wellbeing programs. Currently, we serve **484** individuals across **339** households.

Our micro-level interventions include **532** individual sessions, **102** assessments, **1,891** group sessions, and **982** home visits. To enhance our service delivery, we collaborate with stakeholders through 21 external case discussions, **116** external communications, and **35** referrals to DCPOs and other organizations. Internally, we held **313** case discussions, facilitated nine family meetings, attended **16** SBST meetings, and conducted **519** school visits.

In one of our Social Worker-facilitated group sessions, bereavement support continued at two schools, focusing on envisioning a future beyond loss. Learners were asked to draw what they hope to become, with some aspiring to roles like police officers or teachers, while others struggled to see a future for themselves. They were encouraged to dream and find purpose in their lives, and these sessions have now concluded.

Other group sessions focused on identifying emotions and expressing them through arts and crafts. Initially, learners were hesitant and needed time to engage deeply. Their responses highlighted challenges with identity and self-esteem, so upcoming sessions will work on building a positive self-image.

Through our groupwork and individual sessions we aim to create meaningful experiences that make learners feel valued and supported, fostering a sense of belonging and motivation to attend school.

Cases closed and new referrals

Fifteen learners have officially exited the program due to their significant progress. Khula's occupational therapist continued assessments, and some learners, having reached their developmental capacity, will also be closed as clients. For these cases, the therapist is preparing closure reports, which will be provided to educators alongside an exit plan.

Additionally, two learners were deregistered from the school system: one for extreme absenteeism and the other for educational neglect. Both cases have been discussed with the relevant DCPOs, who will assume responsibility for further action.

Training

- Khula staff attended a Behavioural problems, Boundaries and Consequences training
- The team attended a training conducted by Ezra, the "I can choose programme".



Celebrating Successes

A 13-year-old boy in grade 4 faces numerous challenges at home, living in a household of over 20 individuals. His primary caregiver is his great-aunt, who has taken on this role due to his mother's struggles with addiction. Despite these hardships, he remains motivated to stay in school and actively participates in Khula's sessions, showing resilience and a strong desire to learn. He enjoys exploring new topics in the Khula class, though his attendance challenges affect his academic performance.

As the final term approached at Klappmuts Primary School, the Class of 2024 was determined to win the "Attendance Champions" title by achieving the highest attendance rate of the year. Motivated by the prize of a trophy, the learners rallied together, reminding each other daily that "Everyday counts!" They organized fun challenges, such as "Perfect Attendance Week," and celebrated each milestone with cheers and high-fives, inspiring even the teachers.

By the final week of the term, the students had shown extraordinary dedication. On the last day, they continued supporting each other, ensuring they were on time and present. When the announcement came that they had achieved the highest attendance rate of Term 3, the classroom erupted in cheers. Holding the trophy, the learners realized the true value of their victory—teamwork, perseverance, and the importance of being present.

This accomplishment not only earned them the title of "Attendance Champions" but also left a legacy of commitment, inspiring future classes to strive for success with determination and teamwork.

A first-grade learner enrolled in Khula's program at the beginning of last year, initially showing signs of a significant learning disorder. However, after two years of intervention, the student has made remarkable progress, both within the Khula program and in schoolwork. When he first joined Khula, he had missed nearly 50 school days the previous year, but as the current year ends, his absences have dropped to fewer than 10 days. The team working with him is incredibly proud of his achievements and the progress he has made.

A Teacher Appreciation Day was a special occasion to honour the teachers who, despite facing many challenges, continued to dedicate themselves to nurturing their students. To show our gratitude, we prepared personalized cards with heartfelt messages and filled colorful bags with sweets to bring joy to their day. When the gifts were presented, the teachers were deeply touched by the thoughtful gestures, and their smiles were a testament to the impact of the appreciation. The celebration reminded us of the importance of love, respect, and mutual support in education. It strengthened the bond between teachers and us, reaffirming that together, we can overcome challenges and that the dedication of both educators and students is the heart of a thriving school community.



A learner was referred to Khula due to chronic absenteeism, parental substance abuse, and neglect. After a home visit by the school facilitator, the learner expressed fear of further visits, revealing physical abuse by her stepfather and visible injuries. She disclosed that her family had been evicted and left to sleep outside, facing an attempted robbery that left her traumatized. The social worker and auxiliary social worker conducted an individual session, where the learner shared that there was no food at home, and she was often left unsupervised while her parents searched for food for her younger brother. A Form 22 was completed, and the learner was placed in a place of safety. A follow-up visit a week later showed physical improvement, as she and her brother were now staying with an aunt. Despite the better situation, the learner remained fearful of further abuse. The teacher reported noticeable progress, as the learner was now bringing a sandwich to school and showed significant improvement in her well-being. This case demonstrates the resilience of the child and the positive impact of timely intervention.



A few group sessions were conducted in collaboration with the Khula Social Worker, a UK student, and a Social Auxillary Worker (SAW) with Grade 4 learners. The goal of the intervention was to lay the groundwork for future group work by building rapport, setting group expectations, and fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the process.

The students actively participated in the icebreaker activities, which helped create a positive and open atmosphere. The group demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of rules and contributed suggestions for fair and appropriate consequences. Many students expressed enthusiasm and excitement about the sessions. At the end of the sessions, a few students made personal disclosures privately.

Collaboration

Current collaborations include, but are not limited to:

- Stellenbosch municipality/Cloetesville library
- Shofar Church Stellenbosch
- Right to Care
- Stellcare
- Amado
- Ezrah Community Training and Development
- Nation Builder
- Inceba Trust
- Winelands Education District
- Hugenote College
- North-West University
- Sheffield Hallam University in the UK
- University of Stellenbosch, University in Ruanda, and University in Nigeria regarding Capacity Grant Application.
- Badisa
- Tutuzela Paarl

Challenges

- It's clear that the teachers are under a lot of stress, even though some don't openly express it. However, we've observed that some teachers vent their frustrations about the children, occasionally speaking negatively about them in front of others.
- Learners' behaviour is posing significant challenges for the teachers.
- Gang violence is impacting innocent community members, and staff members feel unsafe entering certain areas. The situation has escalated, with robberies occurring in broad daylight and gunshots being fired during the day while people are walking in the streets.
- Unwillingness for change.
- A Facilitator commented: "Whenever I am not doing sessions at the school, I find that the learners stay away on purpose."

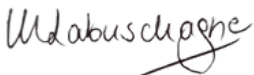
Future Plans

- Legacy Dad rolled out to Klapmuts
- Behavioural change training for non Khula parents presented at Courtrai Primary school on the 7th of November.
- Fundraising Boere Sports day at Paarl Girls Primary on the 9th of December DCPO appreciation preparation for the 13th of November 2024.
- Christmas party for Khula learners hosted by Val de Vie Foundation on the 4th of December

Conclusion

In our efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism, Khula will continue to refine our strategies, applying the insights we gain from effective approaches to improving school attendance.

Kind Regards,



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