

2023 Playhandball Kenya Holiday Camp Report

The first ever integrated life skills-based
handball camp in Kenya held in Suswa, Narok

20.11 - 1.12.2023



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1. Summary

In the backdrop of Narok's picturesque landscapes with combed hills overseen by mount Longonot (a volcanic mountain) which rises from the floor of the Great Rift Valley like a monolith, in the heart of the mesmerizing land of the Maasai land, children and youth played, developed their skills and team work through team sport handball, danced, showcased their diverse talents in arts and made friendship as they socialized and improved their environment in the first ever diverse and integrated educative, life skills based national schools holiday handball camp held at Ilkeek Aare (the two trees) from November 20th to December 01, 2023 involving 122 participants of which 66 were female (that is more than 50%) from 5 counties in Kenya. The camp was entirely run by the youth leaders, young coaches and appointed team captains without interference by the national office or staff. The aim was to enhance their learning, build their self-confidence, management and coordination skills.

This impactful camp was supported by One Team, Thomas und Jutta Kastner-Stiftung and Playhandball International whom we're forever indebted to and appreciative of their kind and impactful gesture.

2. Integrated Team Sport Handball Camp

101 Young people between 10 to 17 years old derived from Angaza Youth Development Organization in Thika, Pendo Amani Youth Organization in Juja, Empower Girls Plus in Kisumu, Githunguri Primary School in Machakos, St. John Centre in Korogocho Nairobi, and the host Ilkeek Aare Primary School in Suswa Narok accompanied by project leaders and teachers participated in this first ever integrated life skills based handball camp in Kenya where they were taken through a progressive training program with each day beginning with fun educational games and activities for warm- up, basic training principles that involved passing and catching, shooting and defending, to more complex game based dribbling and positional play specific training, and effective court communication. This was crowned with team based actual games in the afternoon which involved the trainers and coaches' team playing with the participants as well. At the end of the camp, Sebastian Rieger, PlayHandball Kenya volunteer from German appraised the skills level and determination of the players which inspired him to play in the matches each evening, saying that their skills have really improved and really good.

For ease of coordination and enhanced learning, the participants were divided by age groups and in teams with each team assigned a captain and team leader, which became the first step for leadership development and engagement of the participants in decision making. Each team was tasked to come up with a name, logo and slogan with the young ones naming themselves Simba and Tiger and the older ones coming up with exotic names such as the Gladiators, Panthers, Penuel and God winners. This encouraged a sense of ownership of the camps program and activities by the children and youth.

The camp culminated with fun based competitive team based mini-tournament where the leaders and coaches' team had to redeem their prowess against a very talented youthful team. It was amazing to see the transformation among the players as they showed great improvement in passing and catching, shoot and defending and skillful positional play. The last days matches we're entertaining to watch as they were a scene from a professional league. *See Appendix 1. Integrated Life skills Based Handball Training Program.*

The handball camp was conducted by qualified and skilled team of coaches who mentored the young coaches, and an active top player in the Kenyan national league to inspire the participants. The joy and grin in the faces of these hundreds of children and youth was expressive enough to show the impact with most wishing the camp would not come to an end and recommended that such a camp should be held at least annually if not during each school holiday.

Note: These organizations serve some of the most underserved, poor and marginalized communities in Kenya whose children and youth would have never imagined that they will ever get an opportunity to travel out of their communities, leave alone participating in such a camp at this point in time in their lives.

3. Life Skills Based Environmental Skills Development

During the camp, the participants were put in different groups composed of participants from different organizations, where other than playing as a team during the handball training and activities, also completed assigned tasks together, ate in the evening together and participated in life skills based environmental activities as a team.

The participants were taken through topics and activities on waste management with a focus on how to discard, destroy, process, reuse/recycle and control waste with activities derived from the PlayHandball - Play Fair for the Environment Manual. Further to this, the facilitators also conducted sessions that would help the participants understand self, growth and development, issues on mainstreaming gender and decision making which are key in enabling them to make informed and right choices in life.

As in the handball activities, the participants got an opportunity to get self-motivational talks to inspire and motivate them in their educational and career paths in the evening's and over the weekend from the leaders present and once an invited guest Cassandra (an artist and psychologist) from the USA who had visited the Ilkeek Aare Primary School and will next year be drawing a mural on the pre-school classes.

4. Intercultural Exchange and Team Building

To maximize the impact of the camp, the participants were taken through an inter-cultural exchange team building activity on Sunday December 26, 2023 afternoon after morning Sunday service that was led by the youth themselves. The participants were taken on four hours walk and hike on the shadows of Suswa hills by actually a Maasai teacher who shared with them great Maasai cultural stories on the way as they saw for the first time in their lives the Maasai housing structure the 'Manyatta', and it being a season of circumcision met the different youth groupings in their colorful attire and the revered Maasai morans before climbing Suswa hills where they experienced breathtaking views of the Maasai landscape.

This life changing impactful experience did not only make them appreciate life but understand the diversity in culture and way of life. The trekking and hike broke the monotony of a daily sports based integrated activities, to something refreshing and new.

5. Creative Arts and Music

It being a talent-based camp, the participants were taken through creative arts and music either in the evening or course of the day as the Masaai land can get extremely hot in the middle of the day. In this regard, each team had to develop a colorful logo that resonates with the team's motto and

motivational slogan/phrase, and thereafter developed a personal expressive image of themselves and on the last week were taken through professional drawing focused on one dimension drawing, drawing using shapes and a lesson on how to express self-using. During the drawing classes, the invited guest Cassandra (mentioned earlier) who was in the country among the top 11 artists in the world to do wall murals in Maasai villages under the project dubbed 'mile 46' was so impressed by the artistic ability of our participants and with this extended an invitation to Playhandball Kenya to identify and send selected participants to participate in April 2024 art skills exchange camp at the school where she will bring her students from the USA to participate in.

What we did not anticipate is that actually the art lessons would reveal to us how impactful the camp would be to the participants. In one drawing, a participant had expressed grief, and when we followed up, we learnt that her mother passed away two months ago and actually the camp helped in her healing. One other participant was mentally disturbed due to constant abuse and rough upbringing, and for the first time felt appreciated and valued. In one other drawing the participant expressed aggression which was diverted and used to reveal the inner strength and passion for handball. Most of the children in the camp were going through so much trauma with no one to speak to about it or avenue to vent or express it.

14-year-old Eucabeth Muinge from Pendo Amani won the best detailed and expressive art award.

"These made all of us emotional and determined each day to wake up and make an impact in the lives of the participants through sports and art."

6. Fun Based Social Evenings

In addition to the above, participants were given time in between the evenings when they were not doing group assignments or art to either watch a motivational movie, sing and dance and intermittently play an instrument the guitar which one of the German PlayHandball Kenya volunteers had come with to the camp. These were nights to remember, as they sang and danced their hearts out each bringing the best dance from their communities and showing their youth prowess. These became social evenings where participants became open and free with each other, made friendships and bonds. Jule Burfend, a German volunteer with PlayHandball on several occasions was brought into the dance and she expressively showed great dancing skills that took participants in awe, especially the young ones that were attached to her throughout the camp.

During the camp, one participant received her end of primary school national exams and unfortunately, she had not performed well, and to her disappointment was hugely affected and broke into tears. Her self-esteem was hugely affected. The new friends noted the change in the attitude and gloomy face of this 14-year-old girl, and they knew something was wrong. The new friends went to her and consoled her. They embraced her and within a few minutes the dark cloud in her life was swept away, confidence built and self-image strengthened. At the end of the camp, she was among the most jovial, friendly and happiest participant we had. The power of sports was exhibited in its truest form.

On the last day, they clung to each other with tears in their eyes, and we promised to make sure that they meet again in the near future through organized inter-organizational sports events such as tournaments or camps. We believe that long term interventions are impactful than short term interventions.

7. Challenges and Recommendations

We experienced diverse challenges which ranged from financial to injuries management during the camp.

- a) Our budget surpassed the planned expenditure due to sudden increase in fuel prices which affected the food prices and travel costs. This made us adjust the budget to suit the new conditions.
- b) Several injuries were reported however one unprecedented event occurred where one participant broke the hand. Treatment of fractures and major injuries were not factored in the initial budget, which we will consider in the future including having a qualified physio in the camp. We also need to factor in well-equipped first aid kits to enable us manage high number of injuries.
- c) Coming from poor backgrounds, most girls did not have sanitary pads, with boys only having one or two inner pants. We resolved to include menstrual health and hygiene in our future program activities and factor in possible cost implications as these was a major challenge.
- d) Most participants did not have correct sports attire or playing shoes. We provided uniforms and bibs, and other required sports equipment, unfortunately we could not provide shoes and socks for them. However, this did to deter them from being highly spirited and active.
- e) There were reported misbehaviors among very few participants which we managed well and through the team's leadership enhanced discipline and cooperation among all participants.
- f) Heavy rains at times halted the flow of planned activities, especially in the initial days of the camp. We creatively rearranged the days program and introduced indoor activities.
- g) The coaches and trainers alluded that the camp motivated them to upgrade their skills and requested for advanced coaching course and advanced events management skills as they also learnt in the process and acquired different concepts as they learnt from each other during the activities.

8. Conclusion

The impact of the Playhandball holiday integrated life skills-based handball camp resonated beyond the sports arena. At the Narok's majestic landscapes crowned by the warrior spirit of the Maasai, participants not only refined their handball skills but also experienced personal growth and development, understood and experienced the value of teamwork, discipline, and instilled leadership skills and the importance of protecting their environment. The inclusive and culturally immersive nature of the camp facilitated enduring friendships, symbolizing the unity and harmony that defines both Maasai traditions and the spirit of handball. The camp became a symphony of skills, unity, and culture. The positive impact on young athletes, coupled with the captivating essence of Suswa hills, is set to leave an indelible mark on the future of handball in Kenya. As the sun sets over the Mara, Playhandball Kenya's commitment to youth development through sports echoes a promising future where sports, arts and culture dance hand in hand, much like the Maasai in their ancestral land. We endeavor to make this an annual event and with this wish to thank One Team, Thomas und Jutta Kastner-Stiftung and Playhandball International who supported this life changing event.

Appendix 1. Holiday Camp Program

20. November 2023 - Travel, arrival, set-up and climate setting

21. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast
10-12 Fun games/ Training
1. Monkey (Jule)
2. Know me I know you (Seb/Jule)
3. Squid game (green light red light) (Naki / Meddy)
4. Tic tac toe (Panfied)
5. Mountain River (Jule/Naki)
6. Who is afraid of the lion? (Sebastian)
12:30 Lunch break
14:00 – 15:00 Life skill/ Environment
15:30 – 16:30 Games
16:30 – 18:30 Cleaning time
_18:30 – 19:30 Dinner
20:00 – 21:30 Entertainment (music, rap, art, storytelling)
22:00 Lights off

22-November 2023

09:00 Breakfast
10:00 – 12:00 Training – Passing and Catching
1. Warm up (Football, who is afraid of the lion, Rugby)
2. Four corners passing
3. Number-Passing
4. Endgames: 10 Passes, Spike Ball
5. Cool down (Stretching)
12:30 Lunch break
14:00 – 15:00 Life skills
1. Environment: Cleaning the area, collect and sort trash
2. Teambuilding: Drawing team logo and slogan
15:30 – 16:30 Handball games
16:30 – 18:30 Cleaning time
18:30 – 19:30 Dinner
20:00 – 21:30 Entertainment: Create a song for your team
22:00 Lights off

23. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast
10:00 – 12:00 Training – Catching, Passing, Dribbling, Positions
1. Fun game – Atom game
2. Warm up
3. Repeating catching and passing (Four corner passing)
4. Dribbling (Relay, Slalom)
5. Positions (Explaining, running ways)
6. Cool down
12:30 Lunch break
14:00 – 16:00 Life skills

1. Environment – game cards: Seven different stations with games with focus on the environment.

16:00 – 17:00 Handball games

17:00 – 18:30 Cleaning time

18:30 – 19:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 Entertainment: Presentation of the team-songs

22:00 Lights off

24. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast

10:00 - 11:30 Training – Positions, right back, left back, center player

1. Warm up: running, stretching
2. Three lines passing and retaining the positions
3. Switching positions
4. Running to the other side with the positions with and without defense/ cones
5. Cool down

11:30 - 12:30 Drawing challenge – express yourself with a drawing and phrase/ own logo

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 17:00 Continue Training + Handball games

17 – 18:30 Cleaning time

18:30 – 19:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 Entertainment: Watch projected professional handball match

22:00 Lights off

25. November 2023

9:00 Breakfast

10:00 - 12:30 Handball games

1. Warm up: Running, stretching
2. Many games with all teams

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 15:00 Cleaning dorms and the dining halls

15:00 – 17:00 Different games: Football and Volleyball

18:30 – 19:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 Entertainment: Different board and card games (Ludo, Chess, Cards)

22:00 Lights off

26. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast

10:00 - 12:30 Service (Worship & praise songs, prayers, preaching by the youth themselves)

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch break

14:30 - 17:00 Trekking & Hike (Intercultural team building exchange)

17:00 – 19:00 Resting

19:00 Dinner

20:00 - 21:30 Entertainment: Watching the movie “Remember the titans”

22:00 Lights off

27. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast

10:00 - 12:30 Handball training (warm ups 15 min, positional play; introduction of the line player and wings).

12:30 - 14:00 Lunchbreak.

14:00 - 16:30 Optional activities: Watching a movie (REMEMBER THE TITANS), play soccer, play handball, volleyball.

16:30 - 17:30 Freshening up while waiting for dinner.

19:00 - 20:30 Dinner

20:30 - 21:30 Socialization

22:00 Lights off

28. November 2023

09:00 Breakfast

10 - 12:30 Warmups, positional play and defending

12:30 - 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 - 15:00 Life skills session – understanding puberty under growth and development

15:00 - 16:30 Applying what was taught in the morning

16:30 - 17:00 Tea break

17:00 - 18:30 Freshen up and socialization

19:00 - 20:30 Dinner

20:30 - 21:30 Drawing's review

22:00 Lights off

29 November 2023

09:00 Breakfast.

10:00 - 13:00 Handball Games – real matches for different teams in different organizations

13:00 Lunch

14:00-16:30 Handball games, split boys' and girls' team per organization

17:00 - 17:30 Giving out t-shirts and photoshoot.

17:30 - 18:15 Tea break.

18:15 - 20:00 Freshen up.

20:00 - 21:30 Dinner and Socialization

22:00 Lights off

30th November 2023

09:00 - 10:00 Breakfast

10:00 - 13:00 Cleaning and packing

13:00 - 14:15 Lunch

14:20 - 16:30 Art classes led by Sandra and Victor

16:30 - 17:30 Tea break

17:30 - 18:30 Freshen up, dinner.

19:00 - 21:30 Socialization

22:00 Lights off

01. December 2023 – Closing ceremony and departures