

# School Partnerships between Denmark and Kenya



A case study report on the Danish experiences in the North-South Connection Project





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Center for Inclusive Education, Bulgaria: [www.cie-bg.eu](http://www.cie-bg.eu)

Mundu (formerly O3V), Denmark: [www.mundu.dk](http://www.mundu.dk) in cooperation with Global School Partnerships Denmark: [www.globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk](http://www.globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk)

Voluntariat, Slovenia: [www.zavod-voluntariat.si](http://www.zavod-voluntariat.si)



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## Content

Page 4	Project Introduction
Page 5	Project Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishing of partnerships</li><li>• Joint curricular projects</li><li>• Visits from Denmark</li><li>• Visits from Kenya</li></ul>
Page 8	Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summer camp in Slovenia</li><li>• Summer activities in Kibera</li></ul>
Page 10	Lessons learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From a student perspective</li><li>• From a teacher perspective</li><li>• From an NGO perspective</li></ul>
Page 12	References and presentation of organizations



## Project Introduction

One of the main challenges of our current educational systems is to create a common feeling of interconnectedness and shared responsibility for the world and for its inhabitants. Even when teachers are ready to integrate global issues in their teaching, they often lack the knowledge, skills or tools to motivate their students by demonstrating the immediate relevance of these issues to them.

This is the reasoning behind the project North-South Connection: Partnership for a more just world between European and African schools which has been running for the past 2 years with the support of the European Union. The main beneficiary of the project is a network of 16 European schools from Denmark, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovenia. Each of these schools is linked to an African counterpart, allowing direct collaboration with peers in the global South.

The main aim of the project has been to improve the sensitivity and critical understanding of global problems among European high school students and promote their active engagement in addressing these issues with a specific focus on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as to integrate global issues into the formal education system by developing global school partnerships between European and African schools.

In Denmark the schools have been collaborating with Kenyan schools from the Nairobi area. All partnerships have been established with the help from the Kenyan based NGO Amani Kibera, which has followed the project throughout the project period.

The participating Danish schools are as follows:

- Vordingborg Gymnasium og HF, Vordingborg
- Nykøbing Katedralskole, Nykøbing Falster
- Slagelse Gymnasium, Slagelse
- Rungsted Gymnasium, Rungsted

The participating Kenyan schools are as follows:

- Kibera Girls Soccer Academy, Kibera, Nairobi
- Starays Hope Community Center, Kibera, Nairobi
- Domus Mariae School, Nairobi
- Nairobi Day School, Kibera, Nairobi

During the project period, the partnership program has involved more than 120 Danish students and 100 Kenyan students who have had the chance to exchange thoughts and ideas through classroom activities.

In this report we have gathered the experiences of the students and teachers involved in the school partnership program.



## Project activities

During the project period, a variety of activities have been carried out. This report will focus mainly on the lessons learned from the activities concerning the partnership between the Danish and Kenyan schools.

### Establishing of school partnerships

In Denmark, the four participating schools were selected from the network of Global School Partnerships. They were initially shortly briefed on the framework, aims and activities of the project and later at a teacher workshop introduced more in depth to the project and the methodology of developing joint teaching projects and school partnerships.

The Kenyan schools were selected and introduced to the project by Amani Kibera and once key teachers had been appointed at both the Danish and the Kenyan schools, they were matched and started communicating with their partner in order to initiate the planning of the joint projects and the Danish teachers' visits to Kenya.

#### Some key factors to establishing good partnerships:

- Teacher motivation and support from school management
- Computer and Internet access
- Thorough introduction to the project and the method
- Local coordinators: The Kenyan NGO played an important role in connecting the schools

### Joint curricular projects

When planning the joint teaching projects the teachers were encouraged to follow a four step model:

1. LEARN: Students receive theoretical inputs from their teachers
2. RESEARCH: Students explore how global issues are reflected in their personal lives and local context
3. SHARE: They exchange their findings with the students in their partner school
4. ACT: They implement an action based on their own idea and initiative

Among the joint projects developed between the Danish and Kenyan schools were the following:

#### **Eradication of poverty**

*Rungsted Gymnasium and Nairobi Day School*

Focus: Making it possible for the students to relate to the MDGs on a personal level. The Danish students read different texts but also presented personal facts about their income and spending and compared it with the \$1 a day facts. The presentation of spending led to an overall discussion of available income per student and 'essential' expenditures.

#### **How to accomplish the good life in Kibera and Vordingborg**

*Vordingborg Gymnasium and HF, Kibera Girls Soccer Academy*

Focus: How education can improve gender equality in Kibera and Vordingborg. Students used Facebook as a tool to work together and share knowledge about the ways to accomplish the MDGs. Students at both schools produced small videos uploaded to YouTube as a way of presenting the products.



### **Climate change**

*Nykøbing Katedralskole and Starays Hope Community Center*

Focus: The carbon-dioxide pollution and the dilemma between economic growth and sustainable development and the role of Denmark (and the EU) and Kenya in the climate debate. Students also confronted people in the street and their fellow students about key issues related to the climate debate and documented it through vox pops and videos.

### **Partnership for development**

*Nykøbing Katedralskole and Starays Hope Community Center*

Focus: How much money is spent on development aid – is it spent the right way? How does the aid affect the African population? How many people have gained a better life? Students worked together using e-mail, Google Doc, YouTube and Facebook.

### **Cooperative teaching across cultures**

*Slagelse Gymnasium and Domus Mariae School*

Focus: Danish students conducted independent research related to a specific MDG and seek answers from their Kenyan peers. In this way abstract concepts became personal stories as well.

### **The role of NGOs in Denmark and Kenya**

*Vordingborg Gymnasium and Kibera Girls Soccer Academy*

Focus: How NGOs in Denmark and Kenya work with the Post 2015 goals? More specifically, students conducted interviews to investigate how education can be a life changer.



A Danish teacher is visiting the partner school in Kibera, Kenya. Photo: Carola Croll.



## Visits to Kenya

Four Danish teachers visited Kenya for one week in order to plan the joint projects face-to-face, to gather first-hand experience of the formal education system in Kenya and knowledge on how MDG issues are reflected in a local African context.

These visits proved to be of utmost importance as the joint projects were planned during this visit. For many of the Danish teachers it was their first time in the African continent and many of them describe it as an eye-opener as well as a once in a lifetime experience.

Some of the Danish teachers had the opportunity to guest teach a group of Kenyan students as well as doing Q&A sessions with the students. The teachers found this part very useful and would recommend this for future partnerships.

### Advice from the Danish teachers:

- Remember to have a plan for the visit
- Arrange Q&A sessions with students
- Arrange co-/guest teaching
- Reserve time (at least one full day) to make teaching plans and future arrangements
- If possible, travel with another teacher
- Make sure you come at a time where it fits in the plans of the hosting school

## Visits to Denmark

After having finalized the joint teaching projects, three Kenyan teachers visited their Danish partner schools for one week. The visit was an occasion to evaluate the collaboration so far, to get an impression of the Danish educational system and to meet with the Danish students. For the teachers involved, meeting again with their partner teacher was also seen as an important opportunity to look forward and plan activities for the coming year as they hope to be able to continue the partnerships and the collaboration.

Two of the Danish schools decided to invite and pay for students from their Kenyan partner school to come to Denmark along with the teacher. This turned out to be a very positive experience for both the Kenyan and the Danish students who were finally able to meet. For several of the Kenyan teachers and the students it was the first time they travelled abroad so early planning was essential in order to obtain not only visa but also passports.

At this point, three of the four Danish schools have received visits from their partner school however the fourth school hopes to be able to carry out the visit before the end of the project period.

### Travelling together

The teachers from Vordingborg Gymnasium and Nykøbing Katedralskole organized to travel together and had as accommodation chosen a home stay in Kibera in an apartment of the Kenyan NGO Amani Kibera. Kibera is one of the world's biggest slum areas and meeting the Kenyan students and experiencing life in Kibera made a great impression on both teachers. One of them says:

*"Leaving Kibera was very difficult. The students and Amani Kibera have gained a place in my heart and I really feel like going back. It is such an interesting place and I have never before met so many smiles".*

The teachers were very happy to travel together and would recommend doing so in future teacher exchange programs. It made it easier to process all the new experiences.



## Supporting activities

The Danish and Kenyan students have also been participating in other activities preparing and bracing them to participate in the project. All Kenyan students participated in a one-day summer event hosted by Amani Kibera and 12 Danish students participated in the summer camp 'Eurolinks' in Slovenia where they met students from the other European schools involved in the project.

## Summer camp in Slovenia

The Eurolinks Summer Camp, which took place in Zgornje Jezersko, Slovenia, proved to be a great success in terms of intercultural communication. Forty eight students from four European countries got to learn about each other's culture as well as about the traditions of the African countries they have been working with during the project.

### Response from a Danish student:

*"I really enjoyed meeting people from other countries and getting their perspective on everything. Even though we are all from Europe, we still do things very differently and we can learn a lot from each other"*

During the camp students came together to generate ideas on how to further promote a global dimension in schools.



### Student generated ideas for future projects:

- 🌐 "We should make YouTube videos of how to use different social media platforms for our Kenyan partner schools"



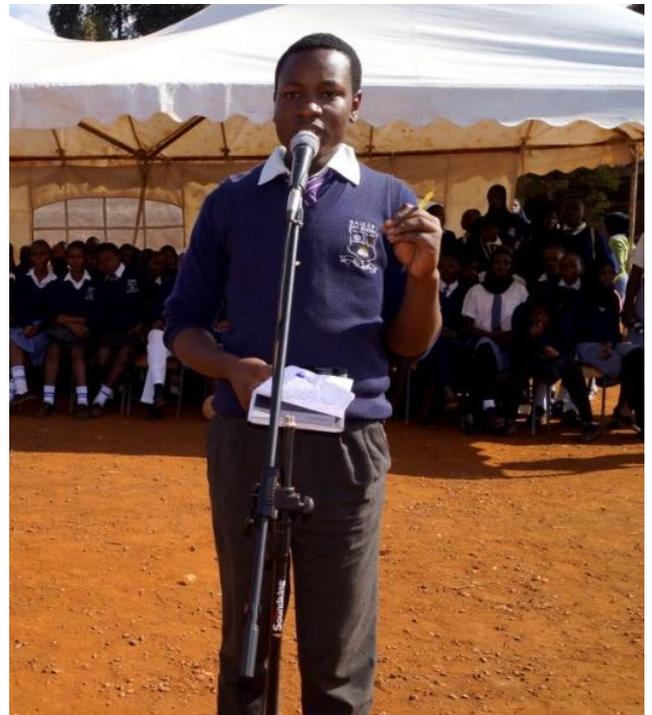
- “We should do an awareness raising campaign in our local community showing how powerful the students from Kibera are. They have a tough life but they are still positive”
- “I would like to do a handbook on Denmark to share with my new Kenyan friends and I would like them to make us one on Kenya”
- “We could do a Kenya Café at our school teaching our peers on what we now know on Kenya”
- “I would like to visit Kenya as well and meet more Kenyan students! Even though we come from different worlds, we still share many of the same interests”

### Summer activity in Kibera

The four Kenyan schools participated in a one-day summer event in Kibera organized by Amani Kibera. The day included games of soccer, volleyball and debate where the schools competed against each other. Two weeks before the summer event the schools were provided with the debate topics and rules so they could research, prepare and practice before the actual day. The topics included:

- Has modern technology improved the quality of life?
- Are the calls for national dialogue by politicians necessary?
- Are informal settlements a creation of the Government?

During the activities, the students and teachers were entertained by local artists and also talented students from the different schools showcased their musical and dancing talents.



Debate competition. Photo: Amani Kibera.



## Lessons learned

As the project was carried out, a number of challenges as well as opportunities were revealed, some of which were expected whereas others were unforeseen. These are some of the lessons learned expressed by the students, teachers and NGOs involved.

### From a student perspective

Many of the Kenyan students had not heard about the MDGs before entering the project but found it to be an interesting discovery that helped them broaden their minds. In some of the Kenyan schools, the project also gave the students the opportunity to apply other talents than they usually do in school and many hidden artistic talents were uncovered, such as musicians, dancers and poets.

For students in both Denmark and Kenya, the fact that they could interact with students from a different part of the world without travelling was an amazing idea and some of them have made good friends and are now communicating actively, especially through their Facebook page, and share ideas and experiences not only related to the partnership activities.

### From a teacher perspective

The teachers were faced with a number of challenges of planning joint teaching activities, such as differences in school schedules, in equipment and Internet access. The Kenyan teachers experienced difficulties due to lack of modern equipment and computer skills (some of the Kenyan students had hardly seen a computer before the project began) and therefore recommend more support to the Kenyan schools in terms of equipment and time.

The Danish teachers stress the need to make more simple and strict plans and find that now by the end of the project they are much better prepared for planning joint activities because they are aware of the differences of the school systems and know what can be done.

The Kenyan teachers were impressed by the interest of their students in discovering the MDGs and reported that they themselves also learned more about the MDGs during the project and about different teaching methodologies from their partner schools.

#### Learning about oneself

Feedback from the Danish students shows that they not only learned about the MDGs and about Kenya but also felt they learned a lot about themselves by participating in the project and communicating with the Kenyan students. The cultural meeting humbled them and made them think about the inequalities in the world:

*“A thing I learned is that they have a lot of life spirit. They don’t give up easily and they fight for their rights. The children are happy about school and they love education. It is very hard to survive if you don’t have an education”.*

*“I feel inspired by my friend’s cheerfulness and positive attitude to whatever life challenges to her. She is the most inspiring person I have ever known. I have really got a friend who has taught me the most important things in life”.*

*“I realized that I did not know very much about the situation in Kenya when it comes down to it. I think it is important to know about the world”.*



## **From an NGO perspective**

According to Amani Kibera, a positive effect of the project is that it has helped the Kenyan teachers and students understand that the problems they face in their day to day life are global problems and not just their own local problems. They have also discovered that there is a need for global collaboration to resolve the problems being addressed by the MDGs.

As a recommendation for future projects Amani Kibera suggests to have the African NGOs involved at an earlier stage, preferably already at the beginning of the proposal development, so as to be able to give input about the challenges that the African schools are likely to face. A more equal distribution of activities between the European and the African schools is also recommended by Amani Kibera. This is supported by Mundu (formerly O3V) and Global School Partnerships Denmark which would have liked to see exactly that flexibility in the project design. The current division between funds for activities in Europe and funds for activities in Africa makes it very difficult to secure equal terms for all participants in collaboration projects such as The North-South Connection Project.



## References and presentation of organizations

This report is based on interviews with teachers and students as well as evaluation schemes from all schools, Danish and Kenyan. The Danish students have been contributing with their input writing student essays as well. Furthermore, Amani Kibera has contributed with a more comprehensive evaluation report on the Kenyan part.

### The organizations involved in the Danish part of the project

#### **Mundu, formerly O3V (Denmark)**

[www.mundu.dk](http://www.mundu.dk)

Contact: Susanne Pascal, [mundu@mundu.dk](mailto:mundu@mundu.dk)

Mundu is a Development Education Centre developing educational projects, teaching materials, workshops and cultural events about developing countries and specific global issues in cooperation with other NGOs. Mundu was founded in 1990 and bases its work on solid ethnographic knowledge and experience. On this project Mundu cooperates closely with Global School Partnerships Denmark.

#### **Global School Partnerships Denmark (Denmark)**

[www.globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk](http://www.globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk)

Contact: Kristine F. Tolborg, [kt@globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk](mailto:kt@globaleskolepartnerskaber.dk)

Global School Partnerships Denmark is a program assisting Danish schools in establishing long-term educational partnerships with schools in developing countries and other countries outside the so-called Western world. The aim is to enhance students' understanding of the global community they are part of – and their involvement in it.

#### **Amani Kibera (Kenya)**

[www.amanikibera.org](http://www.amanikibera.org)

Contact: Benson Ooko Ouma, [ben@amanikibera.org](mailto:ben@amanikibera.org)

Amani Kibera is a non-profit, grassroots organization situated in Mashimoni village of the Nairobi Kibera slums in Kenya. The organization uses integrated actions to improve the conditions of the Kibera community through facilitating initiatives and partnerships that promote peaceful co-existence, health, education, and livelihood opportunities for children, youth and other marginalized groups. This is done via capacity building, information dissemination, and promotion of value based sport and cultural interaction for development.

