

## **SCRIPTURE UNION-KENYA**

### **Report #K27**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Scripture Union of Kenya (SU-Kenya in this report), is an inter-denominational Christian movement in Kenya. It primarily aims to reach children between 4-14 years in primary schools, but does have programs that reach older youth and adults. The key goal of SU-Kenya is to facilitate interaction between the target group and Scripture so that it can raise children as Disciples of Christ who are well-adjusted and responsible citizens. Methods of outreach include Bible clubs, holiday camps, devotional material and specialized programs. SU-Kenya raises funds from well-wishers who appreciate the vision of the movement and donate to its good cause. With the absence of traditional structures of family support, the busyness of parents, a decrease in morality in our society, and overworked teachers in most of the public schools, SU-Kenya is a much-needed ministry in present day Kenya. Its capacity to have a national reach means there is great potential to influence the moral and spiritual development of the nation. However, SU-Kenya needs to build its financial capacity so that it can reach more schools.

#### **HISTORY**

SU-Kenya was registered in 1967 under the Societies Act, as a faith-based, non-profit organization. That was when it started its initial work focused on reaching children and teenagers. The main method of outreach was through the production of daily devotional literature. One of the more famous productions was and remains a worship hymn book known as Golden Bells. In 1985, SU work gained more focused momentum in reaching primary schools and remains active in teaching children in schools. It expanded its work to provide materials for church Sunday school classes, and devotional materials for youth and adults and some programs designed to strengthen families.

SU-Kenya works to facilitate and encourage children, youth and adults to interact richly with Scripture. Its emphasis is that Scripture should be engaged daily, systematically, thoughtfully and prayerfully. SU-Kenya organizes camps, rallies, vocational Bible schools and a range of activities for adults in select places around the country. In these events, SU-Kenya conducts evangelism and discipleship programs, life-skills training, trains Sunday school teachers, organizes marriage enrichment seminars for parents, and runs Christian bookshops to meet the literature needs of all Christians.

#### ***Why Focus on Children?***

SU-Kenya believes that reaching children is vital to the spread of the gospel, the growth of the church, and to passing on the Christian faith to the next generation, and hence, building a healthy nation.

SU-Kenya notes that research has proven that children are more receptive to the gospel and that most people that come to a relationship with Christ do so as children. At least, this has been the case for most people who are currently Christians in the African context. Even when they don't make a decision, if they are well socialized into the faith as children they are closer to making a

decision for Christ when they are older than if they were not socialized as children. According to SU-Kenya, research in other countries shows that 60-70% of adults who are Christians gave their lives to Christ before they were 14 years of age. Nancy, my interviewee, believes this is also true in Kenya, although research on this is lacking. It is harder to reach someone beyond the teenage years since as older youth or adults their mindsets are entrenched in certain values. Proverbs 22 says that train up a child in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it. This is the commitment of SU.

Although children can get a good education and have all their needs met, it is only the gospel of Christ that offers true hope of laying a solid foundation for their lives. When children are brought up with a Christian value system that leads them to faith in Christ, as they grow into adulthood, many are able to avoid the damaging consequences of life away from God.

For those children who come from dysfunctional families, ministry to them gives them an opportunity to overcome the negative effects of the problems at home.

In the absence of traditional networks of support and care, children's ministry can provide an alternative care community that is committed to the well-being of the child.

## **MISSION/ VISION**

### ***Vision***

*"To see children and young people following Jesus, filled with hope and transforming the families and nations of Africa."*

### ***Mission***

*"To nurture children and youth, to strengthen family life and help people engage with God through the Bible that they may follow Jesus Christ and be instrumental in transforming their communities."*

### ***How is this mission/ vision achieved?***

- *"A movement of children..."* The core business of SU-Kenya is to lead a movement of children throughout the country, united to read, interact with and engage with scripture. SU-Kenya target group is what is known as the 4-14 window or 4-14 generation, that is, from four to fourteen years of age. Reference to this age group emphasizes that this group is most receptive to spiritual formation (discipleship).
- *"Extending to families and communities..."* SU-Kenya seeks to nurture children but realizes that they are not raised in isolation; rather they are situated in families. SU-Kenya, therefore, designs programs to help create a conducive environment for the growth of children. Of necessity, this includes strengthening their family lives. This generates the vision for reaching parents with specialized programs. In this way, ministry to children opens an opportunity for the transformation of families and communities.
- *"The Bible as good news through devotional interaction with scripture..."* Working with schools and churches, scripture union aims to make God's Good News known to children, young people and families. SU seeks to encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer so that they may:

- Come to personal faith in Jesus Christ,
- Grow in Christian maturity
- Become both committed church members and servants of a world in need.

SU-Kenya sees a culture of daily Bible reading as a key discipline in developing a God fearing nation, one that practices good stewardship of national resources and unites all people.

- “*Reaching through schools*” SU is committed to facilitating the young people in primary schools, and when possible bringing along their siblings and parents to discover life truths from scriptures through Bible clubs, children’s rallies, camps and literature among other channels.

### ***Components Of Su-Kenya Ministry ( Combined With Impact)***

- 1. Ministry to Children in Public Primary Schools:** This is done by starting Bible clubs in primary schools, equivalent to the Christian Unions in high schools. These clubs are started under the PPI (Pastoral Program Instruction) program, designed to teach daily Bible lessons based on memory verses, songs and Biblical stories that teach moral uprightness, Christian values, daily prayers and counseling for character deviancy. This program is not examinable; therefore, it is not funded by the government. Christian teachers are encouraged to run it as an extracurricular program, meaning it is both voluntary and often not taken seriously, unless SU-Kenya comes in as a partner to give leadership on content and activities.
- Over the years, SU-Kenya has earned credibility with the ministry of education in Kenya. The government recognizes that SU-Kenya adds great value to the lives of children through the moral formation, life skills, psychosocial support and counseling that SU offers to children. It, therefore, allows the organization to engage freely with the schools. When SU needs to run a program in a school, they have not yet built a relationship with, they send their request to the ministry of education or its representative office seeking permission to do so.
- SU-Kenya’s contribution is increasingly significant as more families of modernizing Kenya have lost structures of communal support in raising their children. Many homes are experiencing dysfunctions—drunken fathers, domestic violence, absentee parents, poverty, disease, etc., all of which are affecting children’s interaction with the school environment. SU-Kenya comes in as a partner to help develop moral formation and make the schools easier to manage.
- SU-Kenya leverages relationships built with the teachers over the course of time so that teachers become the recruiters and facilitators of the SU’s programs. The school outreach program also encourages Christian teachers to make use of the opportunities they have to influence the children with biblical values, towards moral formation.
- SU-Kenya recruits, trains, equips, and motivates Christian teachers to run Bible club relevantly and effectively in their schools. One of the avenues for this task is by holding conferences for teachers. SU-Kenya has been holding a conference for teachers, in collaboration with Kenya Secondary School Fellowship (KSCF), at least once a year, but hopes to hold a conference every term.
- Although there is no measurable criterion to evaluate the impact directly, Nancy, the national director of SU-Kenya says that many grown-up Christians, some of whom are leaders today, point to the work of SU that reached them when they were young.

## 2. Scripture-based Devotional Material:

- Interacting with Scripture is the heart of SU-Kenya's activities with children, youth and adults so that they can be deeply rooted in the word. SU offers Bible reading guides that are prepared to engage with Scripture prayerfully, thoughtfully, regularly and systematically.
- The goal is to take one through the Bible in eight years, with identifiable developmental steps for each age group. There are guides for age four years to 12 years, 13 years to 14 years, and 15 – 19 years.
- SU's devotional guides include *Daily Guide* (for adults), *Daily Power* (for youth and families), *God and Me* (for children), *Wasomaji wa Bibilia* which are Bible guides in local languages (Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, Kikamba, Kiswahili) and *Diaries with Bible readings*. Nancy says that the Scripture Union sells over 50,000 devotional materials annually through their bookshop outlets, which she estimates to be an indication of a good devotional reading culture.

## 3. Collaborative (Partnership) Initiatives with other Organizations:

SU-Kenya works with other organizations to run particular programs in parts of the country. These depend on the goodwill that SU-Kenya already has in schools. They include

- a. World Relief Services to offer Life Skills programs in Muranga, Thika, Maragua districts. These programs were offered to respond to family dysfunctions in these areas.
- b. Catholic relief services: an abstinence program that offers life skills training in select schools in greater Nairobi, Central and Eastern regions to empower young people with skills on healthy behaviors in relationships, so that as they grow older they stay out of trouble. This is in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- c. With Hosanna International Ministries, SU offers a program known as "*Faith comes through hearing*." They supply devices through which groups listen to the Bible in audio. It covers select schools in Nairobi, Coast, Rift Valley, Eastern and Nyanza regions.
- d. With Jesus film project, SU-Kenya shows the *Jesus film* to school children in various parts of the country. This serves as an opportunity to start conversations about Jesus and subsequently start an SU-Kenya club in a school.
- e. With Max 7, the goal is to offer a set of materials that are fun, age-friendly and bible based to help children interact with scripture.
- f. With One Hope International, the goal is to offer free Bible Readings materials done in a church friendly manner that can be used by Sunday School and Bible Club teachers
- g. Many Churches and other Local Faith-based Ministries that have a passion for children Ministry

## 4. Family Ministries:

These are programs intended to strengthen the environment in which a child spends a great deal of their time, with the family. They are designed for married couples, parents and young people in relationships, to point to the supremacy of God in family life and teach how to be responsible. It is also committed to the prevention of AIDs through the promotion of wholesome relationships.

Programs include

- a. *Adventure Unlimited*, a life skills program designed for 8-14-year-olds to prepare them for teenage and adult life in today's world.

- b. *Choose Freedom*, a sequel to *Adventure Unlimited* is a life course designed for 13-20-year-olds to produce behavior change
- c. *Choices and Limits* is a life skills program that approaches prevention of AIDS from the perspective that HIV / AIDS is only a symptom of a much greater issue – the dislocation of the family unit and the breakdown of moral values. It aims to strengthen these values in the young adult person.
- d. *Enjoy Your Marriage* seminars teach on marriage, including on topics like a practical guide for marriage, agape love, communication, romance, the covenant of marriage and so on.
- e. *Positive Parenting*: a program for parents; content includes guidance on raising up confident children, talking about sexuality to children, communication with children, handling teens and others
- f. *Engagement*: a life skills program to help young students understand the biblical principles of dating to glorify God as they date and to develop strong families after marriage

#### **5. Inter School Rallies:**

These are rallies for Bible Clubs from all the different schools that SU-Kenya works with, held *once a term* in regions. They are forums to nurture talent, and evangelize to more children and offer age-appropriate biblical counseling on identified themes.

#### **6. Holiday Camps:**

These are residential camps running for a few days at a time during school holidays (there are three holidays in the school program in Kenya). They offer a space for children and youth to be equipped with age specific socio-spiritual life skills necessary to make informed choices and decisions in life.

#### **7. Volunteer mobilization:**

Scripture Union opens up an opportunity for youth and adults to serve in the nurturing children of various age groups, particularly at camps but also in schools. Volunteers are mobilized from churches through the regional offices, as well as Christian teachers from schools.

### **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITH SIMILAR FOCUS**

There is no other organization in Kenya that is focused and networked with a capacity to reach children the way Scripture Union does. None.

### **CURRENT LEADER**

Nancy Kahuthia is the national director of SU-Kenya. She joined the organization in 2011. She is on her first contract. Each contract lasts four years and can be renewed. Previously she worked with FOCUS for nine years, serving with university students. Nancy has a degree in sociology from the University of Nairobi and an MA in Biblical Studies from AIU-NEGST.

As the National Director, Nancy leads a staff team of about fifty employees. These work both in the ministry and in the eight SU-Kenya's bookshops around the country. Her job involves management, collaboration with other organizations, and partnership development, and strategic planning.

Nancy is excited about leading SU-Kenya in its focus on the spiritual formation of children. She is known for her warm, lovely personality, relational aptitude, her motherly character, integrity and commitment to any task she puts her hands on.

## **LEADERSHIP, BOARD, AND ORGANIZATION**

SU is part of a family of national movements in more than 130 countries.

The umbrella body that brings the movements together is known as *The Scripture Union International Council*. SU-Kenya is under SU-Africa region. However, each movement is autonomous. National movements plan their work according to the needs of each country, but they all subscribe to the same vision, beliefs, and working principles.

SU has regional offices in Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret, Kisumu, Embu, Machakos, and Nakuru. Each region is supervised by SU-Kenya's staff. There are about two hundred volunteers who support the work of SU. Some of these form "Committees" that organize the work of SU-Kenya in smaller units or sub-regions.

The committees support the SU-Kenya's staff in those regions, to oversee the running of the work. The national director's office oversees and facilitates the Regional and area teams to oversee work at the grassroots.

SU is structured as follows;

1. The board of trustees is drawn from all over the country.
2. The Council which reports to the AGM
3. The National Executive Board, which oversees SU-Kenya's strategies and implementations.
4. The management team, led by the National Director sees to the daily running of the ministry and reports to the executive board.
5. A policy document is available detailing how the staff is recruited (though it was not made available for this research). There is compliance with the documents in hiring and human resource management decisions.

## **FINANCES AND OTHER RESOURCES**

According to Nancy, SU-Kenya is a non-profit Christian organization that relies on friends and well-wishers for funding. It has no main donor. SU-Kenya's network of friends supports the work especially when they see the organization's outcomes of their work. SU encourages these friends to register as members who pay annual and life membership fees.

There are two types of membership:

1. *Group Membership* - This is for those who belong and actively participate in the activities of a local SU-Kenya group e.g. Bible Club in Primary school, Bible Club in the community, Sunday school or children's ministry or a Teachers Fellowship in a region. Group membership is a one-time contribution of Ksh 30,000 (USD 345).
2. *Individual membership* for those individuals who become friends through ministry encounter, then give their time, money and skills to support the work of reaching children. These are built through personal relationships. Individual members pay a one time Ksh 10,000 (USD 115) life membership fee and annual membership fee of Ksh 2000 (USD 23). SU-Kenya has about 300 members, most of whom are teachers in the schools where SU-Kenya operates.

Other ad hoc sources of income:

- Partners who give a one-time donation, usually through encounter with the work of SU-Kenya;
- churches that sponsor specific projects;
- Bible Clubs Bible clubs pay an annual affiliation fee of Ksh 500 (USD 6);
- Organizations who fund identified projects;
- Sales of Christian literature provide some income.

According to Nancy, finances continue to limit severely the reach of SU-Kenya. Currently, SU is only able to reach about 3,000 schools in a country with 30,000+ primary schools with a combined population of about 10 million children.

To have significant influence among children in the country, SU-Kenya's goal is to increase that outreach to 10,000 schools if they can raise the funds for it. SU-Kenya is seeking partners to support her towards this end.

SU-Kenya also hopes to develop a Campsite on its 10-acre piece of land in Kajiado County so that it can act as a children's campsite and also bring some income to the organization.

## **PARTNERSHIPS/LINKS**

- SU-Kenya is evangelical but inter-denominational, meaning they work with any church that intends to spiritually nurture children, children's workers and peer educators.
- SU-Kenya is part of the Forum of Bible Agencies (FOBA): includes Bible Society of Kenya (BSK), Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL). These are all organizations that either distribute or print the Bible. They are seeking to collaborate in designing a new PPI curriculum which will then be ratified through Kenya Institute of Education.
- Others contractual partners in select schools are World Relief Services to offer Life skills; Catholic relief services to support poverty-related interventions; Hosanna international ministries; Jesus film project and Max 7 to provide child-friendly evangelistic material.
- KSCF (reaches high school), FOCUS (reaches college-age), partner with SU-Kenya in specific projects. For example in August 2013, they all mobilized and held a joint teachers conference, part of whose agenda was how to reach children and youth in schools. In February, SU-Kenya with these organizations and several churches mobilized these 6000 children, youth, and adults together at the Karasani Sports Stadium to pray for the nation ahead of the general election. SU-Kenya considers that 6,000 was an impressive turn-out.

Nancy says that the collaboration could be strengthened further. They are in discussion about joint discipleship material development to ensure that when a child goes to primary school, on to high school and college, the track of growth is maintained. They also hope to collaborate so that college students can mentor high schools, and high school students can mentor primary schools. This goes on informally particularly between college and high school because of missions, but it needs to be formalized. This is still a matter of discussion between the three organizations.

## **SWOT ANALYSIS**

### **1. *Strengths:***

- With offices in Nairobi, Eldoret, Kisumu, Mombasa, Embu, Nyeri, Machakos, and Nakuru, SU-Kenya is well spread around the country, which means it has potential to reach children in thousands of schools. SU has government good-will.
- It has a good leadership structure, with a strong history of a national movement

### **2. *Weaknesses:***

- Financial base severely limits SU's ability to reach as many schools as the need that is there
- Nancy says there is a great need for human resource development to build the capacity of the staff, in terms of updating their work skills and capacity to deliver.

### **3. *Threats:***

- The Muslim agenda, which is Islam's plan to expand its religious percentage in Kenya. Their strategy is to reach children so they can be raised as next generation Muslims. Nancy says they are succeeding, that the population of Christians in Kenya has declined from 80% to 75%. No independent statistics confirm this, but it is a concern expressed in other Christian spheres.
- The second and more significant threat is the moral decadence in Kenyan society. Children are being introduced to and addicted to drugs at an early age. Sexual immorality has become rampant. Parents have become so busy they have no time for children to offer moral guidance, and many children are raised in dysfunctional families. Because of the large number of children in schools, teachers don't have the capacity to give them the necessary attention towards their moral formation. For these reasons SU-Kenya keenly feels the need to raise the bar of its activities—to reach more schools, develop curriculums, empower more teachers and run programs for families.

### **4. *Opportunities:***

- SU-Kenya's programs are trusted by the government's education department and welcomed into all public schools to conduct the PPI program.
- The target group is a great opportunity because there aren't many people looking into that.

## **PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

- *SU-Kenya Bookshop*: is the literature arm of Scripture Union, labeled the S.U. Christian Book Centers. It aims to meet the literature needs of all Kenyan Christians. The bookshops stocks a wide variety of books, including a selection of commentaries and Bibles, including vernacular varieties produced with the partnership of FOBA



organizations (cited above). They also stock books on church growth, leadership, marriage and counseling, music and gift items. SU-Kenya has eight bookshops, three of which are in Nairobi and the rest are in Eldoret, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nyeri and Nakuru towns.

- SU has acquired rights for printing its own books such the Golden Bells and Bible reading guides and notes. It imports most of the other books from overseas suppliers, as there are not many books authored locally. Some are sourced locally.

## **FUTURE**

- Nancy says the current strategic plan is coming to end in 2014. As the national director, she is spearheading a plan to develop a 50-year strategic plan, which can then be implemented in 5-year terms. She also wants to develop the publishing capacity of SU-Kenya to publish more and to put their devotional material into electronic forms. Currently, material is in paper (book) print.
- For now, granted that she is in her second year directing SU-Kenya, she is focusing on short-term goals until a long-term plan is in place. Here are short-term activities planned for the year 2013 some of which have already been achieved:
  1. A peace prayer Rally for children and students in February 2013: Children and students to pray for the general elections. Adults and political leaders were mobilized to make a pledge for peace to the children for the sake of the children, during and after the general elections.
  2. Mobilizing and distributing 1 million Bibles for a million to children without Bibles
  3. Mobilizing children to plant 2 million trees to care for the environment
  4. Holding a Christian Teachers Conference for capacity development on how to reach the children within their reach
  5. Mobilizing funds to start development of the SU-Kenya Campsite and Retreat Centre Kajiado.
  6. Developing a curriculum and materials for Programme of Pastoral Instructions ...a programme allowed by the government to be implemented in all the primary schools in Kenya

## **REPORT PREPARATION**

**Person Interviewed:** Nancy Kahuthia, Scripture Union-Kenya National Director

**Others Sources:** SU-Kenya's comprehensive website, <http://www.sukenya.org/index.php>

**Date of Interview:** 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013

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