Education

ANNUAL REPORT | 2016

WORLD HOPE
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Introduction

World Hope International believes that a quality education for all children is the key to transforming communities and reducing poverty, suffering, and injustice worldwide. WHI's education programs include those that are part of the child sponsorship program as well as independent education projects in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, and Azerbaijan.

Child Sponsorship

WHI donors sponsor 1,200 children in 10 different countries. WHI is not only focused on ensuring the child is physically in the classroom by providing assistance with fees and supplies, refurbished classrooms and clean water, but also that the education received is of good quality. Continued support for a child through their educational career increases their likelihood of academic excellence. WHI accomplishes this in a number of ways, including paying stipends to teachers who otherwise receive no salary, encouraging and supporting teachers to become certified, and helping parents and school personnel form School Management Committees. WHI tracks the academic progress of sponsored children through report cards and national exam results, and continually works with schools to improve test results. In 2016, 93% of all WHI sponsored children passed their school year and will move on to the next grade level. In Grade 6, 100% of sponsored children in Sierra Leone passed the National Primary State Exam (a test mandatory to proceed to Grade 7), exceeding the countrywide passage rate of 75%. Additionally, 94% of the sponsored boys and 100% of the sponsored girls in Sierra Leone passed the Basic Education Certificate Exam! Countrywide, the normal passage rate is 47% on this exam. WHI's partner school for indigenous children, Batotitik Mission Academy (BMA) is ranked the 2nd best primary school in their district in conflict-torn Southern Mindanao, Philippines. While WHI is pleased with the impact of their educational support, there is substantially more work to be done. WHI remains committed to finding more ways to improve student learning, in hopes of transforming lives through education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

WHI in Bosnia & Herzegovina (WHI BiH) exists to spread hope and transform communities primarily through education and community development. WHI BiH desires to see lives and societies transformed through the power of Jesus Christ, as we promote justice and share faith, hope, and love in our community. Initial WHI BiH efforts revolved around renovating schools that hadn't been cared for since the end of the war in the mid 1990's. After several years, WHI began transitioning to focus on English and computer classes as well as educational seminars for local primary and high school teachers. Over time, WHI BiH has partnered with many local organizations to provide support and resources to teachers, primarily those working with children with special needs and/or learning disabilities. Recently, we've expanded many of our programs and partnerships to further our impact and meet the evolving needs of our community.

As of late, Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced acute economic challenges which have limited the availability of educational resources. To address this deficit, WHI BiH desires to provide educational opportunities for the whole community. Some of the ways we accomplish this are through small cooperative projects, seminars and workshops, various partnerships, the Education Resource Center, the Learning to Learn program, and ongoing education classes.

Small Cooperative Projects

Throughout the year, WHI works together with local schools and community organizations to actualize a variety of projects and ideas. These small projects have a budgetary limit of up to $250, and require a well-thought out, written proposal to be submitted before any final consideration of the project. While our projects primarily focus on enhancing educational opportunities in the five local primary and high schools, we also encourage small businesses and local organizations to apply for the projects. We especially promote and fund projects that encourage cooperation between different groups.

Programming through robotics

In 2016, WHI BiH began hosting a bi-annual small project competition among local school classrooms. The projects were specifically targeted to enhance students' learning opportunities. Božo, the computer teacher at the technical high school, went above and beyond our expectations. His spring project included the purchase of two robotic arms and two small robots. With these robots, his class learned hands-on computer programming skills. After Božo's students learned how to program the robots, they visited local primary schools and taught younger students how to program. We love how this program brought together teachers and students from different classes at different schools!

Educational Seminars

WHI hosts continuing education seminars for local educators and professionals. In the past, we've worked primarily with professors from the United States who have provided valuable resources and tools to local teachers. In 2016, in an effort to overcome cultural and language barriers, WHI began working with local area speakers to present topics for educators and special groups in our community. In addition to three seminars provided for primary and high school teachers, we also hosted two seminars for special groups, particularly for those professionals working with children with special needs. In addition, we hosted two seminars for local community groups, including the nursing association at the hospital and the agricultural club. The grand total of educational seminars for 2016 was seven seminars that brought in 500 attendees. Seminars topics were varied. One seminar instructed teachers how to incorporate sensory tools when working with children with special needs, while another taught a youth agriculture club how to grow better raspberries!

Sensory integration seminar

Marijana, one of the teachers we work with, is always coming to us with new ideas — she is very driven to further her own education and provide educational opportunities to others in the community. She was recently very involved in planning a seminar focusing on sensory integration — that is, implementing sensory tools to help professionals and parents who work with children with special needs. One of the focuses of the seminar was a sensory room that could be used in combination with a trained sensory therapist. Several teachers and professionals from a nearby towns attended the seminar, and they were encouraged to begin their own training in hopes to one day have a sensory room available for kids with special needs. We often find that when we empower one person to pursue an idea, it encourages others to jump on board!

Education Resource Center

At the Education Resource Center (ERC), WHI offers all local teachers and educators access to classroom space, printers, computers, projectors, and books. WHI also employs a speech therapist who works individually with children with special needs and provides advice & counseling to their parents. Moreover, the ERC hosts cooking and children's language classes (English & German). In 2016, thirty-one children attended these language classes.

Learning to Learn

The Learning to Learn program provides personalized encouragement and support for primary school students who have learning disabilities. Local schools offer adequate programs for students, but there is little to no attention given to students who have learning disabilities. These students quickly fall behind their classmates and are often unable to complete even their basic school work, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. In 2016, WHI doubled the number of teachers and number of students in the program from the previous year. We now employ four local school teachers on a part-time basis. These teachers work with twenty primary school students every week through intensive one-on-one tutoring. Every tutoring session is tailored to the individual student's needs, and the teachers provide constant encouragement.

Ongoing Education Classes

WHI offers various types of ongoing education classes. In 2016, we offered two such classes to the community, including an English conversation club and a knitting class. In our community, many people know English but lack the practice to speak confidently. Our conversation clubs offer space to practice speaking, correct grammar, and ultimately gain confidence in being a conversationalist. This fall, we also began offering a knitting class for women. The success of the first class exceeded our expectations with over twenty women attending. We already have a list of more women who want to come in 2017! In addition, we hope to expand these types of classes for the community in 2017.

Early Childhood Development in Sierra Leone

The community-based Early Childhood Development pilot project is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Sierra Leone, UNICEF, and WHI. WHI's portion of the project is being implemented in 10 under-resourced communities in Bombali District.

Country-wide estimates have indicated that 10% of children in Sierra Leone are enrolled in pre-primary school or nursery programs. Parents do not understand the value of preschool programs, and in any case, preschool programs don't exist in most low-resource communities. Parents also don't know how to prepare children for school at home. As a result, upon entering primary school, a large number of children lack essential school readiness skills. This might be why one in four kids does not complete primary school in Sierra Leone.

The goal of the early childhood development project is for 10,000 children 0-5 years old to participate in early stimulation/early learning activities at specialized community centers and through home visits. WHI also intends to educate 2,000 caregivers of 0-5 year olds about early childhood development and good child reading skills, and to help them access early childhood development centers.

In 2016, WHI conducted community assessments and engagement meetings in 10 communities. The community engagement meetings included paramount chiefs, town and section chiefs, religious leaders, and women and youth leaders to make sure no one was left out of the decision-making process. The 10 communities each identified community-owned structures to serve as Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers. While some community structures could be reconfigured to serve as an ECD center, other ECD structures had to be rebuilt from the ground up. To date, over 75% of the ECD structures have been completed and ready for use. The remaining structures will be complete by the end of January 2017. Once construction efforts were finished, ECD center staff began registering children. So far, a total of 999 children have been registered into 17 ECD centers — 515 females and 484 males. Each center has a management committee to make sure that the centers are maintained and well run.

In 2017, WHI will conduct ECD trainings, identify vulnerable households to receive extra support, and start home visits to caregivers and young children to reach pre-primary school reading & writing skills. WHI also hopes to receive funding to build another 10 ECD centers.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, WHI focused on adult education, offering English language classes to give adults the skills they need to compete in the job market. Some of the students are refugees or internally displaced persons who are hoping to start a new life in Europe or North America where English skills are important. In 2016, WHI provided English lessons to 155 students through classes and conversation clubs. Of these, 29 were refugees and 17 were internally displaced persons. WHI's computer teacher taught valuable IT skills, both for hardware and software, to 14 students, four of whom were refugees. Good jobs are scare in Azerbaijan, and computer skills will make these students more competitive for employability.

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