# Overview

uweza Foundation

## WHO WE ARE

We work in the Kibera slum, the largest slum in Nairobi, Kenya, home to over 500,000 people living in extreme poverty, more than half under age 18. In addition to poor housing, residents lack toilets and access to running water, proper sanitation and quality healthcare.

Focused on meeting their basic needs, with inadequate resources and support, many smart, talented young people end up engaging in harmful behaviors and activities that have the potential to negatively alter their entire lives.

Uweza recognizes that Kibera residents are creative, resilient and resourceful and that sustainable change requires a future generation that is more educated, motivated and empowered.

Founded in 2008, today we provide 300-400 Kenyan children and youth with unique opportunities to pursue a path to a better future through the discovery and development of their talents and abilities – gaining education and ultimately earning incomes that utilize their own inherent strengths.

We seek and nurture long-term relationships with individual children and youth to have a more lasting and impactful effect, versus a short-term emergency response to young peoples' needs.

All 12 of our staff live in Kibera. We know the community well, and we work out of the Uweza Community Center, which opened in 2011. We developed our programs in response to needs expressed by Kibera community members, and our work evolves in response to both formal and informal feedback collected from program participants and their parents/guardians.

We achieve a lot with a very small budget (approximately $150,000) and an American board of directors, both of which we are looking to grow.

## WHAT WE DO

### Uweza Soccer Academy

Soccer is very popular among youth in Kibera and our largest and most well-known program in Kenya making it possible to reach vulnerable children and youth in ways that might not have otherwise been possible. We use soccer as a vehicle to promote life skills and the importance of education. Coaches act as mentors and learn each child's personality and background, enabling Uweza to connect them to other resources. 120 children and young adults participate in our award-winning, age-specific teams for both boys/men and girls/women. The Uweza Soccer Academy is pioneering girls' participation in sports in Kibera. Women's soccer still suffers from lack of interest and investment, and we continue to push for more resources, funding and attention for women's sports. Several former soccer players are now in college/university and current careers/occupations of former soccer players include artist, comedian, teacher, referee, coach, professional soccer player and business owner. Nine former and current soccer players are currently employed by Uweza.



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## Sponsorship/Scholarship Program

Education is extremely important to Kibera families, who recognize its potential to lift students out of poverty. Although both primary and high school have been declared free by the Kenyan government, there are fees associated with attending school that many families can't afford. In this community, the Sponsorship Program is Uweza's most frequently requested program/service. Currently, we provide 66 scholarships to primary students attending local schools; secondary students most of whom attend boarding schools outside of Kibera; and post-secondary students who attend vocational schools and colleges. Scholarships cover the costs of school fees, school uniforms, school supplies, mentorship and guidance and life skills workshops.

## Art Program

There are no opportunities for creative expression or development of artistic talent in most Kenyan schools, and opportunities to participate in art for Kibera children and youth are extremely limited, despite a plethora of artistic talent. The Uweza Art Gallery opened in 2013 to provide art students with their own space and materials to paint and market their artwork, which is sold online, at the gallery and through events and exhibitions. 60% of all sales goes to the artist and/or to his/her school fees if the artist is under 18. 40% of sales goes back into the gallery to pay rent and purchase supplies. As of 2018, the gallery is currently self-sustaining through sales of artwork. Several of the artists have been able to pay the entirety of their primary, high school and post-secondary education through the sales of their artwork, and many of the older artists are able to fully support themselves through their sales. Uweza Art Gallery also hosts art classes for children from Kibera twice a week.

## Golden Girls Power

Insecurity in Kibera and the risk of assault and sexual harassment makes it more difficult for girls to be able to gather and meet in public spaces, whereas young men and boys commonly spend their days at "bases" scattered throughout the slum. Our girls' empowerment club provides Kibera girls with a safe space to meet, socialize, discuss and learn about topics that are relevant to improving their mental, emotional and physical well-being.

The club is divided into two groups by age, and each group meets once a week. Led by a female facilitator who teaches through drama, group work, song, dance, debate, audiovisual materials and discussion groups, club members also take trips outside of Kibera and are visited by guest facilitators. In addition, the club provides an opportunity to provide individualized attention and assistance to girls who are going through challenges and are in need of advice and support from caring peers and adults.

## Bright Futures

The goal of this young women's economic empowerment group is to help women become financially independent. Activities are developed and implemented by the members themselves and are communal in nature, with all members participating and benefiting. Current group activities include group savings and making and selling of liquid soap products. The group also discusses one life skills topic at each meeting related to motherhood and womanhood. Group members have also taken on jobs at the Uweza Community Center such as washing uniforms for the soccer team and cleaning the center to earn a small amount of income for themselves and their families. We have just launched a program to provide business loans to twenty young women from Kibera. The loan application process includes a written application, interview, home visit and individualized business and finance training. Loan applicants are proposed by the group and funded in groups of five to promote accountability.

