

Changing the lives of street kids in Nairobi

The founders of a Nairobi ministry which helps street children are about to retire. How will the ministry's Kenyan leaders and staff continue its legacy and give it a life beyond its founders?

The Kenyan capital city Nairobi has a population of 3.5 million with an estimated 60,000 young people living and working on the streets.

Made in the Streets (MITS) is a ministry and residential school for 100+ kids from the Eastleigh district of Nairobi. In its 25-year existence, MITS has served over a thousand street kids, and its intention is to keep this going through the generations ahead.

The current leaders have many things in common. They're all local Kenyans and are all committed to serving street kids 24/7/365. They also have many differences. Some are MITS alumni, having been street kids themselves. Others have never lived on the streets. Some are educators and some are administrators. It's a varied team.

But the ministry is about to enter a period of transition because the MITS founders, Charles and Darlene Coulson, are preparing to retire fully. This means the ministry will be run solely by the Kenyan team.

Business Challenges

- Preparing a leadership team for sole responsibility when the founders fully retire
- Continuing an organization's mission, making it sustainable so it honors the founders' intention

Company Profile

Made in the Streets (MITS) is a ministry in Nairobi, Kenya, which rescues children from the streets of Nairobi. MITS provides a boarding school program where street children receive a safe haven, food, shelter, education and training in a vocational skill. When the students complete their studies at age 18, MITS helps them find jobs and provides a support network for them in the community.

Made in the Streets (MITS)

To become the stable, long-term school providing positive options for street kids, the leaders need to meld as a team and envision the future of the school. And this is why the MITS Leadership Development Program (MITS LDP) was launched at the end of 2019.

For a whole week in December, 19 MITS staff members gave up their roles as administrators, teachers, social workers and career counsellors and returned to the classroom. They were students again.

Solution

The program was facilitated pro bono by Burlington Group Pty Ltd (Melbourne, Australia) at the MITS school in Kamulu, Kenya.

The LDP focused on two core areas. First, understanding self and others better for enhanced leadership, communication, teamwork, decision-making and conflict resolution. And second, the art and theory of innovation through design thinking.

“The MBTI® instrument was a natural choice for inclusion in the LDP,” said Alan Rowley, Director of Burlington Group, “to help the MITS leadership team begin understanding more about who they are individually and collectively. We have used the MBTI with leadership teams across Australia, Asia Pacific and Europe, so why not in Kenya, too? The only drawback was the cost. Any expenditure on staff is a sacrifice to funding the education of one more student.”

This is where The Myers-Briggs Company, Melbourne, stepped in. We donated the MBTI online assessments, MBTI Personal Impact Reports and *Introduction to Myers-Briggs Type* booklets for each of the 19 LDP participants.

Solution

- Use the MBTI assessment to develop leaders
- Focus on self-awareness and team development
- Use the MBTI learning to develop innovation

“ This will go a long way in helping us be able to communicate and effectively help these kids achieve their goals. ”

Joel Njue,
Exit Manager and
Student Affairs, Made in the
Streets

Made in the Streets (MITS)

Part 1: exploring the preferences

The first two days of the LDP was spent delving into the MBTI personality types, exploring the preferences and how they play out in real life for the MITS team. There were numerous 'light bulb moments' as the team discovered why they take different approaches to decision-making, and how they show up differently in team meetings. The "vigorous training", as it was described by Irene Otalo Akinyi, Assistant Administrator of MITS, included a variety of activities where participants could actually see their preferences playing out within the team.

Part 2: exploring innovation

When the program moved on to innovation, the time spent looking at personality type preferences proved immensely valuable. The team interacted with a much deeper understanding of how they were each taking part. Participants said things like, "Wait, we haven't given Victor time to reflect on the question," or "Jane's questions are legitimate – they are questions, not roadblocks."

This kind of awareness wouldn't have happened without the exploratory MBTI sessions.

Results

The MITS team clearly benefited from the MBTI insights and information.

Moses Okoth, Skills Training Supervisor, captured it by saying, "This week has been so insightful, knowing my own preferences better – a way to understand myself and those I work with. This adds value to MITS to get to know each other better and move the organization into a better future."

This was seconded by Joel Njue, Exit Manager and Student Affairs, who said "[By] knowing our preferences, we are able to transform the lives of street children in Nairobi Kenya. This will go a long way

Results

- Increased awareness of difference leading to stronger collaboration and unified focus
- Better understanding of personality, which leads to better communication with street children

Made in the Streets (MITS)

in helping us be able to communicate and effectively help these kids achieve their goals.”


The learning hasn't stopped with the conclusion of the MITS LDP. There is full anticipation that their newly acquired insights and learning will be put to use regularly when working together as a team. Francis Mbuvi, Administrator, MITS, set the bar for action in his concluding remarks by stating, “I am going to use my preference to better lead and equip the team members to perform their roles and their duties at MITS.”

As a result of the MBTI sessions, the MITS leaders now know that some of them get their energy from each other, and some get it from within themselves. Some are ‘now’ oriented in very practical ways, and some are oriented to the future and ‘what if?’ scenarios. Some base their decisions on how it will impact other people, and some lean more heavily on logic and rules. Some are spontaneous while others prefer planning.

At the end of the workshop, it was evident the MITS team recognized and valued each of these differences. They realized that their diversity helps to continue the Made in the Streets initiative and continue changing the lives of street kids in Eastleigh, Kenya. This was aptly put by Jane Kiama Nyambura, Literacy Teacher and Girls Residential Director, when she said, “It has enabled me to know that people have different personalities and we must speak a language that they understand. The MBTI training has enabled us to know that we are different and our diversity will bring the best out in us.”

Four months after the workshop, the benefits of the MBTI work are being seen across MITS. As the Assistant Administrator at MITS, Irene Otalo Akinyi describes how preference awareness is improving the abilities of MITS leaders. She stated, “I am more aware of what information I require, how I make decisions and the needs I need met when working on a project. My team understands, too, and now know the reason why I ask the questions I do.” Similarly, Monica Mureithi, Eastleigh Supervisor, reported that “Knowing

Made in the Streets (MITS)



my preference has really helped me improve my relationship with the people I work with. It has made my leadership more effective because I understand different people's personalities."

At the frontline, Stella Nginga, Computer Teacher, has said that "It (MBTI) has enabled me to help others feel they are cared for because now I'm able to pay attention and respond appropriately." In like manner, Resident Advisor, Paulsen Atisiba, explained that "Knowing my personality type is helping me improve effectiveness and satisfaction at work and also enhancing interactions and relationships with students and fellow team members."

For more information about the difference that Made in the Streets is making to the lives of street kids, visit www.madeinthestreets.org



ABOUT THE MYERS-BRIGGS COMPANY

In our fast-changing world, your edge lies in harnessing 100 percent of your talent – whether you’re at work, home, college, or anywhere in between. Your success and sense of fulfillment aren’t just about what you know and what you can do, they hinge on your relationships and interactions with others.

The Myers-Briggs Company empowers individuals to be the best versions of themselves by enriching self-awareness and their understanding of others. We help organizations around the world improve teamwork and collaboration, develop inspirational leaders, foster diversity, and solve their most complex people challenges.

As a Certified B Corporation®, The Myers-Briggs Company is a force for good. Our powerfully practical solutions are grounded in a deep understanding of the significant social and technological trends that affect people and organizations.

With over 60 years in assessment development and publishing, and over 30 years of consultancy and training expertise, a global network of offices, partners and certified independent consultants in 115 countries, products in 29 languages, and experience working with 88 of the Fortune 100 companies, we’re ready to help you succeed.

© Copyright 2020 The Myers-Briggs Company. MBTI, Myers-Briggs, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the MBTI logo and The Myers-Briggs Company logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Myers & Briggs Foundation in the United States and other countries.