

BUSINESS DAILY

How skating is transforming children's lives

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IN SUMMARY

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Skating, which is practised worldwide, is said to be a good tool for youth empowerment but it is not until recently that the sport became widespread in Kenya.

Initially only a few people engaged in the sport but now some non-governmental organisations have introduced the sport to children in the slums as a way of keeping them out of trouble.

Skate Aid, a German NGO, started training children on how to skate but lack of ample free space proved to be an obstacle.

“In Kibera slums where we introduced skating when we first came to Kenya, most of the skate training was done on the streets,” says Skate Aid regional director Daniel Gluche, adding that it is now one of the safest streets in the area as it has been transformed into a skating haven for children.

On the other side of town, stands a 1,000 square metre skating park, which is Kenya's first and biggest project at the Shangilia Mtoto wa Africa in Kangemi.

Daniel, who is a volunteer skate trainer, tells us of the hundreds of children from the children's home and the surrounding slums of Kangemi who show up at the park to skate every weekend.

“The main objective of the projects undertaken by Skate Aid International is to support children and young people around the world through skate boarding as a way of promoting a sense of identity in the community,” he says.

The projects which started six years ago in Afghanistan were meant to support children in the war-torn country by engaging them in a sport that would take their minds off their problems by giving them a chance to play.

“Some of the lessons we teach through skateboarding is that falling doesn’t mean it is the end. One needs to get up and continue despite how many times one falls,” says Daniel, adding that it helps the youth in marginalised areas combat bad behaviour. Use of the facility costs Sh200 during weekdays and Sh300 on weekends.

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