

Me And The Society! A Brief Foresight.

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MY INTERESTS:

- Christian Bible Teaching Ministry.
- Research and practice in the field of Urban Design with emphasis on the development of sustainable infrastructure and environment.
- Sustainable Youth Leadership, Development, Advocacy and Action.

MY MOTIVATION:

I strongly believe that citizenship education should be an integral part of every child's formative years. My action in the civil society is motivated by my history as a student who for example could not afford regular meals, basic health care, school fees and education resources while commuting to primary and secondary schools. By God's grace I was the first and only student from my school to qualify to join Kenya's public universities. This was an achievement and a challenge to me. Having a first hand experience of the difficulties faced by students in rural areas like my home and a clear understanding of the gaps in education provision, it would be my task to address these issues. Indeed, this was a phenomenological shift in my life mission – to ensure that the disadvantaged youth (in a similar situation like I was) have access to quality education and become agents of change.

Before taking this step, I thought, *“I can not yet do it for am not old or experienced enough or still I have other priorities. The situation has existed for long as people watch; what makes me feel that am better qualified to alter the situation?”* I have learnt that for you to make change, you have to permit yourself to do so. Others have reasons for their failure: maybe they did not realize there is a problem, or they did not identify their potential hence they did not give themselves permission to lead at a young age. Fortunately, their reasons aren't mine. By redefining the youth years as a period of initiative and community leadership I must start changing the world now.

Hope Educational Initiative (H.E.I.)

THE PROJECT: HOPE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE (H.E.I.)

THE NEED:

My project aims at addressing local and global inequalities perpetuated by lack of access to quality sustainable education. Education is a fundamental Human Right guaranteed by Universal Declaration of Human Right and the International Covenant on Economic, Social & Culture Rights. In Kenya several children lack access to relevant quality education denying them essential learning tools and the basic learning content, required by human beings to be able to: survive, develop their full capacities, live and work in dignity, participate fully in development, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions, and continue learning. The key causes of inaccessibility to education in my community include: vicious cycles of family poverty, effects of conflict, war, violence and displacement; cultural practices; gender discrimination; inadequate infrastructure or educational facilities particularly in rural or isolated areas which lack adequate funding. Despite the government's free primary and the recent 'free' (subsidized) secondary education programs, several children are still out of school. Others who are in school seem not to be gaining the necessary skills, knowledge, and values to be successful individuals and leaders. Many are ill-prepared to enter the workforce and the broader society, escalating the unemployment rate.

Generally, my project aims at addressing the educational needs and resources available to the young disadvantaged people as well as empowering the youth toward sustainable development.

ATTEMPT TO A SOLUTION:

To fulfill this objective, I will collaborate with the private, public and civil societies. Most students are disillusioned and are insufficiently informed of the prospects of education. We must stir the passion in children to get them appreciate the role of education and identify their potentials. We are planning to achieve this through education outreach programs like: inter- and intra-school competitions and prize giving programs, excursions to selected universities and colleges (being organized, expected to commence this year), free tuition and counseling during vacations(already doing this) – these are aimed at improving academic excellence and mentoring students into appropriate careers. We'll initiate activity-oriented programs to develop good citizenship values in the students: create awareness on Christian faith, civic issues, environmental stewardship, moral living (campaign for responsible sexual lifestyles and drug free schools and most importantly, sharing fundamental gospel truth and witnessing God's grace.) Through a joyful and a hands-on learning the children will be encouraged to think out-of-the-box preparing them to be creative and innovative in generating immediate solutions. We'll facilitate eco-schools programs designed to encourage curriculum-based actions for a healthy environment; for example, students applying mathematics in measuring water production and consumption patterns. The students will be involved in tree planting, waste collection and developing food gardens in their schools. Upon accessing adequate resources, we hope to collect and distribute books and computers to public school libraries, set a bursary fund and/or build a school for the orphans and vulnerable children like victims of female genital mutilation, early marriages and violence.

High school graduates will be encouraged to foster the group's values through the alumni. They will be trained on vocational and entrepreneurship skills - cheap and appropriate technologies together with sound management techniques needed for self employment. We'll increase youth participation in community work by coordinating volunteering and connecting organizations with volunteers.

Hope Educational Initiative (H.E.I)

RESOURCES NEEDED:

We shall require monetary and human resources. H.E.I members (University of Nairobi undergraduate students) will coordinate the project in liaison with other stakeholders like district education extension officers, school administrators, teachers, and various community leaders like pastors, chiefs, parents, e.t.c. The personnel's work will be entirely voluntary with allowances provided for specific logistical requirements. We'll adopt participatory leadership throughout the project. Through mutual understanding, we hope to utilize some of the locally available underutilized resources like land, school implements as well as through free or subsidized lease. We shall seek partnership with other Community Based Organizations and NGOs working toward education and youth empowerment to finance and implement various project requirements. We'll also seek funding from the private sector and the business community by using well detailed project proposals. By selling various products like vegetables we hope to generate some income which shall be ploughed back into the project. As the project stabilizes, we'll establish a small enterprise revolving fund which shall be loaned at low interest rate to alumni members as seed capital for business or college education support. We shall increase our income base through regular members' subscription.

This project is broad and highly transferable. I believe that its cost and the stage of development are interdependent and are factors of our commitment within a particular time frame. With \$ 3,000 we project to successfully run a complete pilot project in one community within two years.

The project will be evaluated based on how successful it fulfills the set objectives considering both its quantitative and qualitative impacts on the target population. The best judgment of the success of Hope Educational Initiative is that it results in more ideas on how to grow and improve it to reach more people at the local, national and international levels, sequentially.

LIKELY CHALLENGES:

Being a pioneering project, Hope Educational Initiative is faced by numerous uncertainties regarding strategies for action and community's response. To implement this project, I have to broaden my world view and action so as to contextualize the lessons learnt from participation in national and international youth leadership forums. I will consult extensively with education providers together with the targeted beneficiaries so as to adapt the project to their felt needs thus promoting a sense of ownership among them.

As students and young professionals, it might be difficult to monitor the rural based projects closely and constantly. Through proper planning, we shall schedule critical activities to be implemented within periods that guarantee our availability, e.g. rotational leadership since members have different academic calendars. We shall establish local resource centers run by trained local youth leaders. As such, the founding leadership will act as lead project coordinators.

CONCLUSION:

I understand that this is not a complete solution to the society's youth education related problems. Nevertheless, it is an attempt to deviate from the status quo, an approach towards creating a better living environment for the majority.