

EMPOWERING RURAL GIRLS THROUGH SELF INITIATIVE PROGRAMMES.THE CASE OF ORUBA MIXED AND LIFUNGA GIRLS

BY

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Introduction

There is evidence that majority of African Nationals are not able to compete equally in a global economy because of a mismatch between society's investment in education and its expectation. To counteract this education in Africa need to change quickly and dramatically in a sense that they not only educate more people, but educate them far better to become responsible and valuable members of the society.

Kenya, with a population of 38.60 million people and about 53% of the population being females (Kenya Census 2009), has not been able to address the issue of gender parity in its education system. Just like other developing countries in the world, the girl's completion rate has not been at par with the boys. There is need to focus on girls education to enable the Kenya achieve its development pillar which is enshrined in its Vision 2030 blue print.

Nyanza province which is the focus for this paper is situated along the lake Victoria which is the only fresh water lake in Africa hence their main economic activity is fishing, sugarcane growing, subsistence farming of groups like maize millet, sorghum, groundnuts, trading in manufactured and on manufactured goods i.e (baskets, potters etc) and international industries (mostly owned by Indians of Kenyan origin),rice farming, tea farming, tobacco growing, brick making, carvings, tourism, transport among others.

Environmentally, Nyanza lacks adequate rainfall, there is soil erosion due to poor farming methods, and thunder and lightning in Kisii (Nyanza), flooding during heavy rains in the plains is also rampant alongside logging or cutting of trees for firewood bringing about deforestation

Girl's education

During the releasing of Kenya of Secondary Education (KSCE) results in 2009 by the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) which is the body concerned with examinations in Kenya, it was realized that only 6 girls from Nyanza scored A plain in their high school out of the 100 girls from other 7 provinces.

The mean score of the majority of the girl's school in Nyanza was D grade which does not enable them to compete amicably alongside other girls from other leading provinces like Nairobi, Central, Western and Rift Valley.

The underling factors of the poor performance among girls in Nyanza from various researche, forums and initiatives which has been carried out the latest being, District Education Officers meeting(DEO,2010) Nyanza Education Women's Initiative (NEWI, 2010) and others, the major barriers to girls education can be summed as poverty, early pregnancy, gender favourtism (by parents),early marriages, truancy, sexual harassment, lack of role models, absent parents(mostly fathers),unfriendly facilities, lack of female teacher counselors, lack of self esteem just to mention a few.

The problem of girls not completing their high school is rampant in Nyanza but other provinces are also not spared, for instance Central and Western provinces which are some of the largest provinces in Kenya and are also facing major challenges in terms of girl's education

- The poor performance of girls in education is also realized in other provinces like Coast, Eastern and North Eastern province .Though the challenges the girls are facing are almost all the same, the provinces differ slightly in how girl's education is handled in terms of culture.
- Some provinces like North Eastern province are so engrossed in their culture which discourages girls from achieving proper education.

Girls self initiative projects

These papers concentrated in two schools in Nyanza province. The schools are Oruba mixed in Migori district and Lifunga girls in Siaya district. . Nyanza province has population is 5,442,711 in total which comprises 2,617,734, a males and 2,824,977 females in an area of area in 12,612.9 Sq.km (Kenya Census,2009).

The specific targeted districts are Migori district with a total population of 335,873, males 161,083, females 174,790 within an area of 1,167.7 Sq.km and lastly Siaya's population is 550,000, comprising of 257,711 males, 292,513 females, with an area of sq km 1,534.0 Sq.kms (Kenya Census, 2009).

In all these two districts, the population of females is higher than the males.

The two projects that is Siwidhe Nyiri which involves selling of small items in the school when the girls are having a break from class and over the weekends was started by a group of 24 (Twenty –four)girls at Oruba mixed day secondary and the tree planting project at Lifunga girls.

The girls in Oruba mixed are mostly from poor backgrounds in Migori district and some are from migrants to Migori considering that it is a border town which attracts other migrant workers from neighboring countries like Tanzania, Uganda and others.

The Initiative involves engagement in small business activities to earn little money which they can keep for future use or use immediately when there is an urging need and the girls have since then expanded their project to farming after the school gave them a portion of the school farm to use to plant groundnuts.

The Lifunga girls tree planting was started by the sponsors of the school which was started in 2008. All the 40(Forty) girls In the school are involved in the project and also, all the 40 girls of Lifunga secondary come from poor backgrounds and none of them can afford to pay high school fees hence the tree planting could be strengthened not only for environmental means but also to meet both economic and social needs of the girls.

**The girls in Lifunga secondary
also face the challenge of being
young mothers as most of them
dropped out of school due to
pregnancy.**

The two projects by Orba mixed and Lifunga girls can be strengthened further to enable the girls be self sustaining in meeting some of the basic needs and also some of the challenges they face in school .

When the girls are independent and can provide for some of the basic needs without help from outside forces (parents, siblings or boyfriends) the challenges could be reduced since now they will have time to concentrate on their studies, look at themselves positively and feel motivated to work further and achieve more in life.

Barriers to girls achieving quality education

- Security of girls not a guarantee while in school and out of school
- Household poverty
- Truancy
- Unfriendly user facilities in schools
- Sexual harassment early pregnancy
- Sibling discrimination
- Cultural barriers
- Negative attitude towards girl's education
- Lack of role models amongst others

Target Population of the projects

- Both teachers and students involved in the project at Oruba Mixed and Lifunga girls secondary schools.
- other students in the school where the projects are .
- Parents of the girls involve in the projects are also targets
- The local communities where the girls operate from are targeted
- The education officials in the two districts
- Other schools
- Other education stakeholders
- The Non Governmental organizations (NGO's)

Sustainability of the Girl's Project's

- I. The issue of sustaining the projects is challenging because of various factors like in the case of planting of trees, they may not know what to do with the trees as they grow.
- II. The other challenge could be financial management skills in the case among the project initiators.
- III. The two projects could also lead to poor performance by the girls involve due to balance of academic and other duties.
- iv. The projects could also face a challenge of objection by the parents. so to sustain them, the parents have to be involved.
- v. The Non Governmental organizations can assist in providing logistics and sustaining the projects.

Benefits of the sustainable projects

I. They can empower the girls so that they don't become reliable

II. They can ease the burden on parents or some responsibilities can be shouldered by individuals and not necessarily those parents or guardians.

III. They can improve our economy

IV. They develop the youth to become responsible citizens

V. To prepare girls or the youth to help the country in achieving macro and micro economic stability for long-term development in line with the country's development blueprint enshrined in the country's Vision 2030

VI. To help the youth help their country in attaining the millennium development goals of eradicating poverty in households by 2015.

Direct beneficiaries of the projects

- **Students who are involve in the project**
- **The school**
- **The parents**
- **The community at large**
- **Other Education stakeholders**

Indirect beneficiaries

- **The schools management**
- **The education officers in the region**
- **The politicians**
- **The government**

Expected direct results of the two projects

- Depending on the output like the case of Siwidhe Nyiri Oruba mixed, the results of the small enterprise will be realized immediately like from their first savings they have decided to try their hands in farming. With better skills and management skills, the girls will get the best advice on starting business, expansion, marketing and saving for future investment.

•The Lifunga girls' tree planting will be of great benefit to the community around because of the environmental value of trees, the economic value like selling seedlings and other benefits of nature conservation will be realized.

•The fact that the girls can perform other activities alongside their academic work will be quite motivating to the girls and may lead to better performance in school work.

- **The parents will be the another direct beneficiary of the projects because some of the burden of taking care of the girls will be removed from them and other parents are also likely to motivate their school going children to do the same.**

- **The local community where the girls live will benefit directly and indirectly from the projects like tree planting, farming activities and other trainings which will be conducted can be cascaded down to the community.**
- **Improvement of girl's wellbeing both in school and at home**
- **Realizing the potential the youths have to shape their future from an early intervention.**

- **The community will realize the benefits of school girls when they are engaged in productive activities**
- **Empowerment of girls will help both planners at national and local level realize the girl's needs and put strategies which can assist them.**

Key Factors for success

- The student's involve in the project
- Though active involvement and participation of the girls in the two projects will ensure their success.
- The communities support for the projects will ensure their successes
- The schools support and time management by the girls in addition t observing the school rules will ensure that the girls succeed.
- Timely and relevant training on various stages of the projects life circle.
- Funding support in the initial and crucial stages which need support.
- Parents support is necessary for the projects to succeed
- Openness to new ideas will help the projects succeed

What is required to implement such a project in other areas?

- I. Willing girls or boys in high school(s) to start the initiative(s)
- II. Good school administrators who can understand what the boys and girls are doing
- III. Good and motivated teachers who can act as team leaders for the initiatives
- iv. Various trainers in relation to the projects advocated for
- v. Financial capital to start the projects before they can be self sustaining
- vi. Motivational speakers to talk to the school boys and girls on the aspect of combining - school work and other activities and succeeding in all.
- vii. Good training on various aspects of the project.

Lessons for the Future

- It is good to teach the young investment skills
- It is possible to succeed in academic work and at the same time do other side activities.
- Sustainability of project's is necessary.
- Teamwork is necessary for projects to succeed in a given circumstance.
- People of whatever age should look for other means of earning a decent living.

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THANK YOU