Women Empowerment in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa through Capacity Building and Training

Tanzania

Anonymous (not verified)

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget:
$250,000 - $500,000

Website:
http://aggen2011.blogspot.com/p/about.html

- Gender equity
- Child protection
- Income generation
- Poverty alleviation
- Girls’ development
- Rural development
- Women’s issues

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

We bring change in the world through helping women and men cope with the impact of fast globalizing world in ways which have never been done before. Specifically, we invest in women and men through cutting edge monitoring and empowerment techniques from our team of volunteers who work for various world's reputable institutions but are willing to risk their lives to bring change in the remotest areas of the world; the end product is empowered women and men capable of navigating a fast globalizing world and be free from the cycle of poverty, all at no cost. We also identify opportunities available in local and international contexts and invest, through partnering with local communities and the donor society, to sustain benefits of our intervention. No modern NGO has employed our approach.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The women entrepreneurs are predominantly wanyiramba. Wanyiramba are Bantu speaking tribe who live in Singida. They speak kinyiramba. They participate in activities such as hand hoe farming to grow sunflower, sorghum, millet and maize. They also keep livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats. Before 1974, wanyiramba lived in isolated homestead settlements in miyombo bushes of the North or the thorn scrub region of the South. However, the Ujamaa program launched in 1974, led into gathering of the Wanyiramba into into larger villages where education, commercial agriculture, and political control would be easier to implement. A significant number of wanyiramba are Sunni Muslims of the Shafi School. Others are Christians belonging to different denominations. However, a significant number of them practice traditional religion and keep their traditions. Majority are neither devout Muslims nor committed Christians; they are somewhere between religion and local tradition. By and large, the climate in the region is unfriendly to rain-fed agriculture on which many depend. This greatly contributes to food insecurity and extreme poverty of the region. Yet, a little bit of training and exposure can have an astounding outcome. Singida is known for sunflower oil production and a lot of women entrepreneurs engage into that business. AGGEN is going to capitalize on this potentiality to allow the Singida community get integrated into the fast globalizing economy and create sustainable employment for its people.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

AGGEN revamps an ongoing grassroots project started by over 200 rural women entrepreneurs. It seeks to improve women’s welfare through a revolving fund in ways which have never been done before. Experiences show that there is much success in such projects especially when they are not profit driven and have been started by grassroots people. Our bottom up strategy ensures that women get them integrated into the fast globalizing society and continue without much monitoring afterwards. The project will result into a creation of a model for Sub-Saharan Africa where we have representatives. Members volunteer their time, expertise and American experience with little facilitation through provision of lodging, travel and meals within Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, after receiving an award of $25,000 from the US Department Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, we managed to organize resources worthy $239,765. An award of $50,000 can organize resources worthy
$500,000. Our strength relies on a team of dedicated world renowned scholars who need simple facilitation to start great changes. Other NGOs hire such scholars, at expensive rates while we have been formed by scholars tired of seeing the suffering of poor grassroots people. Our bottom up approach is embedded in partnership with locally available people and resources to bring everlasting change. We also design several entrepreneurial projects to sustain its activities whose profits will be used to fund and sustain grassroots loan schemes. In sum, the change that we anticipate is both cheap and inevitable in modern world.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

We undertake the following activities: empower women particularly those living in semi-urban areas through provision of loans, microenterprise, and education so as to unlock their potentials towards improving their - social economic well being; provide entrepreneurial training to members of women’s networks to foster their political, social, cultural and economic empowerment; create an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women and girls to enable them to realize their full potential; encourage positive societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women; build and strengthen partnerships with civil society, particularly women and youth’s organizations; Develop international exchange and linkages through provision of advice, training and grants; Organizing entrepreneurial training to enable unemployed women and men to start own income generating activities so as to fight against poverty; Facilitating women to participate in fair trade products; Facilitating collaboration and networking with local government authorities, other governmental and international institutions and/or organization to enhance women and youth empowerment and ensuring poverty alleviation.

About You

Organization:
AGGEN

First Name
Rasel

Last Name
Madaha

Twitter
Facebook Profile
http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Africa-Grassroots-Gender-Networ...

About Your Organization

Organization Name
AGGEN

Organization Country
DS

Country where this project is creating social impact
SI

How long has your organization been operating?
Less than a year

Is the project that you are entering related to this organization?
Yes

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

Innovation

What stage is your project in?
Operating for 1-5 years

Share the story of the founder and what inspired the founder to start this project

AGGEN founders came together at a critical moment in African women’s history to support African Women’s Decade (2010-2020). Founders decided to honour the decade by addressing extreme poverty among grassroots women. Specifically, the team, with scholarly reputation, wanted to go to the field and address grassroots problems to challenge scholars who do not go beyond teaching, researching and publishing for promotions. Despite previous interventions, the team is distressed by several facts such as a) 70% of poor people around the world are women b) women own only 2% of the property in the developing world. Accordingly, the team supports a linkage between development and women’s empowerment as stipulated in Goal 3 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Initially, Mr. Rasel Madaha (a PhD student at University at Buffalo) organized like minded state alumni from USA and Africa to dedicate their expertise and experience to grassroots efforts of women. Nevertheless, the initial idea, shaped by all of the founder team members, evolved into a new more innovative idea. Consequently, the
team was known for its ability to make its members exceptional and the team envision remaining exceptional indefinitely. Tanzania was selected as a place to launch the first project to sustain the intervention. It was believed that in order to successfully share success from the Tanzanian project to those elsewhere in Africa, creation of an international NGO was of great importance. As a result, the founders formed and named the NGO Africa Grassroots Gender Empowerment Network.

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**Social Impact**

**Please describe how your project has been successful and how that success is measured**

The main reason for AGGEN to invest in this project is the fact that the project has been successfully. Rasel Madaha, team leader, spent a total of 4 years in rural areas of Tanzania interacting with over 800 rural women entrepreneurs. He allocated funding to the traditional micro credit schemes (known as upatu in Kiswahili), as a Project Manager: trained women entrepreneurs, as a local NGO consultant; and frustrated, as a human rights activist, by the way rural financial institutions failed to capture and adopt the traditional schemes which were so successfully but instead copied schemes from elsewhere which seriously continued to impoverish grassroots women. He then shared his proposed scheme to his PhD mentor, who got so impressed. Afterwards, he invited three more professors to join his PhD committee who also got impressed by the project idea. The improved idea was then submitted to the US Department of State Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) which requested its alumni to come up with innovative ideas. His idea was approved and he successfully managed to convince 41 alumni and non-alumni from Africa, China, and USA to join his team. The team was so excited and worked further on the idea so as to make it innovative. While his PhD project is qualitative and greatly makes use of his previous experience and documentation for data, his idea has been greatly improved, by the team for actual implementation on the ground.: the end product was victory by a huge margin of all projects submitted in Africa. The project was voted 11th out of nearly 700 projects submitted globally. This project is about giving voice to women who have been so successfully without necessarily being beneficiary of any development intervention. This project is about improving a successfully traditional model for it to be adopted in Sub-Saharan Africa featured by similar socio-cultural context.

**How many people have been impacted by your project?**

101-1,000

**How many people could be impacted by your project in the next three years?**

More than 10,000

**How will your project evolve over the next three years?**

Since this project is about creation of a gender sensitive model to be adopted across all countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sub-Saharan immigrant population in the developed world, we will expand by opening of semi-autonomous AGGEN branches across Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, we have established contacts in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon and Cote d'ivoire. Efforts are underway, in the mentioned countries to register AGGEN branches as local NGOs. Several affiliated organizations for fundraising, networking and addressing issues of Sub-Saharan immigrant population in developed countries, with a significant number of refugees, will be established. Efforts are underway, to establish Affiliated Organizations in USA and China i.e. AGGEN-USA.

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**Sustainability**

**What barriers might hinder the success of your project and how do you plan to overcome them?**

There are two major barriers to AGGEN interventions: a) Adequate funding to support our interventions which often times focus in rural and remote areas of Sub-Saharan Africa b) decreased morale of volunteers, majority of whom are middle class academicians working for universities, to travel and experience difficulties in remote and rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa so as to facilitate empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs. With regards to funding, AGGEN team members will continue to collaboratively write funding proposals to support our interventions. We will also invest locally to sustain local interventions so as to slowly convince and transform people to devise and run their own development intervention (details on our approach can be viewed at [http://aggen2011.blogspot.com/p/about.html](http://aggen2011.blogspot.com/p/about.html)). Finally but not least on addressing insufficient funding, affiliate organizations will be established in donor countries so as to raise funds for our interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa. With regards to decreased morale of volunteers, we will firstly educate interested people about who we are and the associated risk of join our team; we will then thoroughly scrutinize, in line with our vision and mission, all new applicants before they join our teams. Afterwards, we will orient new team members on how to survive in remote and rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa by actually and physically participate in our ongoing rural projects. Induction courses will also be conducted to allow veteran members to get more integrated to our interventions which are likely to be changing as local contexts are subject to social, political, cultural and economic forces.

**Tell us about your partnerships**

We are an international NGO which has been founded by people, from across the globe, who are friends, activists, colleagues but share a common goal of empowering rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of us have been in Sub-Saharan Africa, have experienced and have observed the difficulties of rural woman in the region. Majority of us were born and raised in rural areas but because our mothers and other rural women worked so hard, we managed to get educated and travel abroad to further our education (the team leader, an advanced user of computer and internet, accessed computer for the first time when he worked for an International NGO at the age of 21 years). We are indeed products of efforts of rural women and believe that if rural women in

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Sub-Saharan Africa are empowered, all nations will be empowered. While we are friends with a shared vision, rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa are our family. Our project has been supported by close to 200 world renowned scholars who made us the most voted project in the whole of Africa during the 2011 US Department of State AEIF. That support is on the increase as we continue to expand our intervention all over Sub-Saharan Africa. While there are so many examples of partnership across Sub-Saharan Africa that we have developed, we have partnered with grassroots NGOs, international NGOs, professional associations (such as Tanzania Alumni Association), consultancy firms, regional and national government. Shortly, we make use of their human and non-human resources during our interventions. Our customers are those who seek for our consultancy services; we offer very competitive charges.

**How do you plan to strengthen your project in the next three years?**

Our project is built by collaboration and commitment of its members. Unlike many other NGOs which employ people for a living, our NGO is composed of members who have a life time commitment to women empowerment. Our organization will cease only if all members, scattered all over the world, die and that is very unlikely. Besides, many scholars share our vision and mission and they will quickly take our positions. We have a slogan which says, “AGGEN shall never die but will live indefinitely.” It is a generation to generation commitment whereby we will raise our children to serve in the organization when we get old. Moreover, our organization is a membership organization and we will continue to recruit new committed members to our team. Our talented members do volunteer their time, and a little bit of their income through membership fees, while they work elsewhere for a living. AGGEN keeps a small number of full time employees for supporting purposes. This is what makes us spend close to 100% of funds given to us by individual and institutional donors for operational activities. Actually, we multiply every penny given to us: $1 usually support intervention worthy $4 to $5. Unlike many NGOs, we use money to facilitate volunteers. When we completely run out of funds -which is unlikely- to facilitate our interventions membership fees help us sustain our intervention. To sustain our interventions, we also offer consultancy services, write grant proposals and invest locally, not only to earn an income, but to provide models for the local communities to copy.

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**Challenges**

**Which barriers to employment does your innovation address?**

**Please select up to three in order of relevancy to your project.**

**PRIMARY**

Restrictive cultural norms

**SECONDARY**

Lack of skills/training

**TERTIARY**

Lack of access to information and networks

**Please describe how your innovation specifically tackles the barriers listed above.**

The team believes that restrictive cultural norms which marginalize women of rural Sub-Saharan Africa have played a major role in backwardness of the region. Sub-Saharan women, for example, produce 80% of the agricultural labor force in many countries of the region; they are involved in the informal sector, rarely measured by conventional economic models; they spend much of their time doing household chores which often times results into women’s involvement in traditional micro loan schemes, also not captured by conventional economical models. Our approach not only address restrictive cultural norms but focuses on provision of entrepreneurial training, small scale local investments as models, underemployment, restricted access to new markets through information and networking.

**Are you trying to scale your organization or initiative?**

If yes, please check up to three potential pathways in order of relevancy to you.

**PRIMARY**

Grown geographic reach: Multi-country

**SECONDARY**

Repurposed your model for other sectors/development needs

**TERTIARY**

Influenced other organizations and institutions through the spread of best practices

**Please describe which of your growth activities are current or planned for the immediate future.**

The team believes that restrictive cultural norms which marginalize women of rural Sub-Saharan Africa have played a major role in backwardness of the region. Sub-Saharan women, for example, produce 80% of the agricultural labor force in many of their respective countries; they are involved in the informal sector, rarely measured by conventional economic models, fuel the economy though; they spend much of their time doing household chores which often times results into women’s involvement in traditional micro loan schemes, also not captured by conventional economical models. Our approach not only address restrictive cultural norms but targets entrepreneurial training, small scale local investments as models, underemployment, and restricted access to new markets through networking.

**Do you collaborate with any of the following: (Check all that apply)**

Technology providers, NGOs/Nonprofits, For profit companies, Academia/universities.

**If yes, how have these collaborations helped your innovation to succeed?**

Our team is composed of volunteers from all works of live i.e. government, technology providers, & for Profit companies. We are equipped us with the ability to offer consultancy services on governmental, technological, academia, NGO establishment and entrepreneurship. Importantly, we cut unnecessary expenses by obtaining information from government, technology providers, local NGOs and universities, we have partnered with in all of our interventions. We have even obtained an office space from one of our partners worthy $10,000 of annual rent. We have also utilized free
government services (both from Sub-Saharan Africa and developed world mainly USA) such as business counseling & the like. Partnership and networking has been one of our major strengths to sustain our interventions.

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