

Micro-Farms to Improve Orphan Nutrition and Food Security

Los Angeles, Honduras Los Angeles, Estados Unidos



KiteChild

Elizabeth Thorne



Year Founded:
2010

Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Start-Up

Budget:

\$50,000 - \$100,000

Website:

<http://www.kitechild.org>

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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

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

Kitechild develops micro-farms in orphanages around the world. Produce from the micro-farm transforms the children's diet and reduces the home's dependence on foreign donations. The farm also creates opportunities for the home to earn income and educate orphan children on sustainable farming.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Orphanages around the world are dependent on inconsistent foreign donations and struggle to provide their children with proper nutrition, education, and care. Due to lack of resources, homes are often forced to choose between feeding their children a well-balanced diet, supporting their education, or employing a sufficient number of caretakers. As a result, children in orphanages subsist on starch-based diets with very little access to proteins and other micronutrients, and have higher rates of malnutrition than the rest of their communities. These children experience stunted physical and cognitive growth along with reduced energy, immunity, and concentration. Lastly, orphanages are consistently overlooked as institutions for the implementation of any kind of innovative solutions.

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

Orphanages around the world are dependent on inconsistent foreign donations and struggle to provide their children with proper nutrition, education, and care. Due to lack of resources, homes are often forced to choose between feeding their children a well-balanced diet, supporting their education, or employing a sufficient number of caretakers. As a result, children in orphanages subsist on starch-based diets with very little access to proteins and other micronutrients, and have higher rates of malnutrition than the rest of their communities. These children experience stunted physical and cognitive growth along with reduced energy, immunity, and concentration. Lastly, orphanages are consistently overlooked as institutions for the implementation of any kind of innovative solutions.

Impact: How does it Work

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

Grace acts as director and “mom” to 45 children at a family-style orphanage in Kenya that is typical of our partner homes. Before, she was only able to feed her children starchy meals, and only twice a day, due to high and unstable food costs. Her ability to provide vegetables or protein depended on whether or not she happened to receive extra foreign donations that month. Kitechild developed a chicken coop on orphanage property that revolutionized the children’s diets and the home’s finances. We covered the start up costs of coop construction, training, chickens, and maintenance for a predetermined length of time. The children now eat eggs at least twice a week! The home hatches some eggs to grow its supply, and sells some eggs at the market. Grace now uses her newfound earning power to add variety to the children’s diet. She tracks egg production, consumption, and sales on a daily basis. Our field liaison, Martha, visits the home regularly and sends quantitative and qualitative reports back to our staff. If we develop a coop at a partner home in the region, Grace will donate some of her hens’ eggs for the home’s initial start up supply. Lastly, older children are learning how to care for the chickens, and take great pride in sharing the duties. From having the project on site, the children have not only learned livestock skills and begun to understand the connection between the farm and their plates, but also developed a sense of self-esteem and personal responsibility that is not easily fostered in orphans. These are lessons that they will carry with them into adulthood.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

The previously described Kitechild chicken coop added 12 g of weekly protein per child to the diets of 45 Kenyan orphans. Our latest project (cost: \$4,000) is an Aquaponics Farm at a Honduran orphanage. The sustainable system will yield between 1,100 and 1,500 lbs. of vegetables and 400 to 500 lbs. of tilapia each year, and will save the home \$12,000 in annual food costs. The farm will provide 27 orphans with vegetables three times a day (up from once a day) and tilapia (an excellent source of protein and micronutrients like Vitamin B and potassium) three times per week. The home will reallocate money formerly used for food to pay for educational expenses and hire more caretakers. When the aquaponics system is complete, we plan to bring the concept (and the outcomes) to other orphanage homes, transforming orphan health and giving homes the power to provide quality orphan care and nutrition by lifting them out of the cycle of dependency.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability?

Our online community funds the (relatively low) startup costs for each micro-project through our crowdfunding platform. As we add projects, we use modern online campaign strategies to grow our fan base to support our expansion. Crowdfunding is expected to raise \$5.1 billion in 2013 (up 340% from \$1.5B in 2011). Its foreseeable, growing success points to the sustainability of the method as our fundraising model.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Many organizations, such as DIG, also promote sustainable farming in developing countries, but the most marginalized children - orphans - are seldom included in the solution. Other NGO’s aim to improve orphan care by funding basic needs. Yet most of these groups do not address the long-term issues of financial independence and food security. A home that uses donated funds to purchase food is vulnerable when the inflow of donations ceases or food prices increase. Our micro-farms reduce that vulnerability and sustainably improve orphanage food security. We look forward to partnering with other organizations with specialized agricultural expertise, such as urban gardens, using the institutional framework of orphanages to scale up these these food solutions and expand their impact to include orphans.

Team

Founding Story

Pollyanna Salas-Urueña, one of the founders of Kitechild, visited international orphanages as a child with her missionary parents and witnessed children’s poor living conditions first-hand. Forever impacted by those childhood experiences, she returned to a couple of the homes to volunteer as an adult and noticed the same desperation for foreign assistance. She realized that the best way to make a difference in orphans’ lives was to help those promising homes- with loving directors and high levels of transparency- help themselves. She teamed up with Jacqueline Herrera, a fellow UCLA International Development student, to bring the idea to life. Through conversations with orphanage directors, the concept of income-generating/money-saving projects was born, and they began to guide homes down the path to financial independence, with the ultimate goal of improving children’s quality of nutrition, education, and care.

About You

Organization:

Kitechild

About You

First Name

Elizabeth

Last Name

Thorne

Twitter URL

<https://twitter.com/search/users?q=Kitechild>

Facebook URL

<https://www.facebook.com/Kitechild?fref=ts>

About Your Organization

Organization Name

Kitechild

Organization Country

, CA, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County

Country where this project is creating social impact
Has the organization received awards or honors? Please tell us about them

Google Grant Recipient
Guidestar 2012 Top Rated List

Nutrients For All

Where do you ensure the availability of nutrients?

Nutrient-rich farming, Full nourishment foods, Human wellness and vitality.

If you had greater capacity, which additional sectors would you like your solution to target - either through expansion, partnership, or thought exchange?

Healthy environments, Nutrient-rich farming.

How specifically would this added capacity help you improve the quality, efficiency, or sustainability of your existing product or service?

The added capacity will help sustain our service of bringing the micro-farm concept to other orphanage homes. The grant will help us control the quality of our current projects by funding proper vaccinations, expert visits and on-site consulting. This will improve our efficiency and effectiveness in implementing and operating our micro-farms, allow us to expand to other partner orphanages, and provide more nutrient-rich diets to more children. The added capacity will also give us the opportunity to recharge our crowdfunding strategies to support future projects.

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/nutrientsforall/competition/entries/microfarms-improve-orphan-nutrition-and-food-security>