School Garden Initiative.

Kenya
Samuel Muhunyu

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

The School garden initiative aims at Inculcating positive values on food, agriculture and environment in growing youth. It teaches sustainable agriculture and nutrition which form basis for stable livelihood and informed consumption habits. The gardens are demonstration and seed multiplication centers for community contributing towards food security and biodiversity conservation.
Country your work focuses on:
Kenya

Website URL
http://necofakenya.wordpress.com

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

YouTube Upload

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?
<$50

Innovation

Describe your idea in fewer than 50 words.
The School garden initiative aims at inculcating positive values on food, agriculture and environment in growing youth. It teaches sustainable agriculture and nutrition which form basis for stable livelihood and informed consumption habits. The gardens are demonstration and seed multiplication centers for community contributing towards food security and biodiversity conservation.

What makes your idea unique?
The current generation is managing and utilizing land on ‘lease’ from the youth and future generations. Investing in the youth is investing in sustainability and posterity. The school garden initiative provides the youth with hands-on experience in food production and other livelihood skills and they are encouraged to replicate the same at home. Harvest from the gardens supplement school feeding program.

What is your area of work? (Please check as many as apply.)

What impact have you had?
We have been able to establish school gardens in 11 schools with 410 students from highland and semi-arid parts of Kenya. The initiative compliments learning of other subjects like mathematics through measuring plant placement and spacing; other sciences through learning about plant life cycles; language through writing step by step instructions on planting the garden for a take home brochure; history through choice of traditional food products; fine arts through use of garden plants to learn about color and texture and health through recipes and making salads after harvesting vegetables. By participating in food fairs and agricultural shows they show-case their activities and teach other students, teachers, parents and community and whet their leadership skills. Experience (in 3 years) has shown that youth involved in the programme have also performed very well in national examinations.

Describe the primary problem(s) that your project is addressing.
In Kenya agriculture contributes over 50% to GDP and providing employment to over 70% of workforce and yet it is not given sufficient emphasis in school curriculum. over 50% of the youth leaving primary and secondary schools (that don't continue with further education) end up in rural areas unprepared for a career as farmers. Many of them find it hard to eke a livelihood as small scale farmers and end up in urban areas in search of employment thereby worsening the unemployment situation and a good number find themselves in crime and other vices. In Kenya agriculture is taught in a myriad of many sciences in primary and in secondary school, it is treated as a junior science and only weak students are encouraged to sit for it. Meanwhile the rural areas remain starved of vital labour and youthful creativity.

Describe the steps that your organization is taking to make your project successful.

a) The organization is working towards empowering rural communities and youth to rediscover themselves; scale up and out positive values of sustainable development. Undertake activities that are easily replicated in other schools and at home.
b) Emphasize use of locally available materials
c) Undertake activities that quickly become self sustaining.
d) Cooperation with local and international organizations/institutions including government departments, cooperatives and NGO
e) Creating awareness on the fact that the current generation is utilizing and managing natural resources and biodiversity on behalf of the youth and future generations.
f) Emphasizing to the society that the values we learn when young persist-on even in adulthood and investing in the youth is investing in prosperity and sustainability.

Impact

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Success in Year 1:
Having a garden of between ¼-1/2 on which the students will learn and practice sustainable farming. Participatory skills training and demonstrations. Sensitizing school leadership and education officials to appreciate school garden initiatives, Development of training manuals, induction training for teachers and students, Providing planting material, simple irrigation kits, tools and equipments.

Success in Year 2:
Using the garden as a learning and demonstration center for the communities and other schools. Organizing exchange visits and competitions among students, every year students will be encouraged to participate in award winning competitions related to food, environment and community development. This will take the shape of written essays and art. Facilitating the exchange of newsletters, which will be published and circulated in primary and secondary schools, students and teachers will be encouraged to generate articles for publication in this newsletter. Introduction of tree nurseries.

Success in Year 3:
Integrate a small livestock project and facilitate the youth to lead communities in tree planting and environmental cleanliness and management, networking with other school garden projects in the country and outside.

Do you have a business plan or strategic plan? (yes/no)
Yes.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 1:
Lobbying parents, teachers, school administrators and policy makers to appreciate importance of school garden initiatives.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 2:
Support establishment and strengthening of school garden projects through capacity building.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 3:
Scale up the school garden initiative through networking, information access and sharing.

Describe the expected results of these actions.
Policy makers will rethink the curriculum and develop policies promoting sustainable agriculture in learning institutions. Teachers will embrace school garden initiatives and guide the students better in realizing their objectives. Parents will support the activities of students in school; provide room and opportunities for students to replicate the same at home. Students will gain hands-on experiences in food production, transformation and consumption. They will interact with communities, other students during food fairs, agricultural shows and they will be able to showcase their activities, and this builds their leadership skills. School gardens will supplement the school feeding program, provide diversity in food and cut down on the food budget. The community will be able to access planting materials, seeds and gain practical skills in farming from schools near their homes.

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?
In 2005, our organization decided to conduct community needs assessment in sustainable agriculture in the rural areas Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). In these case studies we also wished to learn with the community the daily calendars for different gender categories. I was surprised to learn that there were very few young people working on the farms, which means little recharge in terms of innovation and creativity. We decided to conduct a seminar for 35 school teachers (primary and secondary) to discuss agriculture syllabus at both levels which further confirmed our fears that youth leaving school were not well prepared for career as small scale farmers after school. Their knowledge on the environment and quality of food were equally low. This helped me understand why many out of school youth immigrate to urban centres in search of employment thereby worsening the already bad unemployment situation. Many of them end up in crime and irresponsible social life that has led to erosion of morality and HIV/Aids. Those that remain in the rural areas practice poor management of the land and indulge in destruction of natural resources and environment especially by cutting down trees for fuel (for sale in urban centres) in attempt to get "quick" income. It is upon this background that I initiated our school garden initiative.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.
I, Samuel Muhunyu the country coordinator of Necofa and Leader of Slow Food Central Rift Convivium in Kenya, designed our school garden initiative with support from my colleagues and schoolteachers. I am 53 years old and have worked for 29 years in community development. My background is Agricultural Engineering focusing on irrigation and soil conservation but have invested myself more in participatory community development especially towards food and nutrition security. I strongly believe that development comes from within and that sustainable agriculture and participatory technology development is sure path towards food and nutrition security in Africa. Biodiversity is important in sustainable agriculture and food security since it offers cushion against both climate extremes and uncertainty. It reduces vulnerability, increases resilience as the farmers produce more food and generate higher incomes. It is the natural insurance for society's future adaptation and evolution.

Seeds, are a gift of nature, past generations and diverse culture are a major component in biodiversity. I believe that it is our inherent duty and responsibility to protect them and pass on to future generations. They are the first link in the food chain, the embodiment of biological and cultural diversity and the repository of life's future evolution. Seed saving technology is an art African women have perfected and is passed on through generations.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?
From a Friend.

Sustainability
What would prevent your project from being a success?
Unfavorable political and administrative policies, Political instability and insecurity. Because people deal with these insecurities by a myriad of decisions and strategies that not only have an impact on individual lives but also on the form of several institutions; land tenure, law, social networks, etc, just as the long-term effects of ecological instability are visible in the socio-cultural set-up, livelihoods, institutions and individual decision-making the same must be true of political instability coupled with a high level of violence, banditry and many localized conflicts. The consequences occur in terms of human suffering, loss of economic production, forced displacement and retarded technological development.

Financing source
If yes, provide organization name.
Yes, Network for Eco-Farming in Africa (NECOFA)
How long has this organization been operating? (i.e. less than a year; 1-5 years; more than 5 years)

more than 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Board of Directors, 3 men, 4 women.

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs? (yes/no)

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses? (yes/no)

Yes

The Story

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government? (yes/no)

Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

Necofa is a member of Participatory ecological land use management (PELUM), which promotes sustainable Agriculture in Kenya. From Pelum, Necofa benefits in capacity building especially in various technologies of ecological farming. The initiative benefits from knowledge and skills gained, target schools will have opportunities to visit some production units of partner organization to learn and share experiences. The target schools will also benefit from reading the partners publications. Necofa is also a member of Kenya organic Agricultural Network (KOAN), which organizes fairs and shows on organic Agriculture technologies and products. The school garden students will participate in forums and activities, it provides capacity building in organic Agriculture and marketing. The initiative will bring resource persons to facilitate training, and the students will benefit from publications.

How many people will your project serve annually?

This field has not been completed. (150 characters or less)

What is the total number of employees and total number of volunteers at your organization?

This field has not been completed. (50 characters or less)

What is your organization's business classification?

Non-profit/NGO/citizen sector organization

Have you received funding from any of the following groups? (Please check as many as apply.)

None of the above.

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