Section I: Narrative

The project is aimed at promoting peace in Mukono municipality by reducing youth unemployment-related crime. Getting the youth occupied, increasing their productivity as well as giving them hope for a better future were the specific objectives of the project. Working with local leaders and Maendeleo Foundation, a local nongovernmental organization, the project gathered young people who were greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. They underwent a vocational skills training of their choice from the select courses of; hairdressing, tailoring, welding, and catering. As a supplement, they attended digital skills and entrepreneurship classes, and some were attached to local entrepreneurs to acquire more skills.

Decision on addressable issues and approaches to project implementation

I have lived in Mukono District for the past 10 years. I witnessed many youths (boys) coming to my door to steal shoes that were less than $4. A particular group of young girls where engaged in prostitution to survive. Given the rising unemployment rates in the country because of Covid-19, more young people resorted to bad vices such as theft, prostitution, drug possession/abuse, and so on. More so, early pregnancies led to many dropping out of school indefinitely; newborn babies were disposed of in dustbins and pit latrines. It is such a dire situation that gave birth to this project.

The target beneficiaries were recruited for: vocational skills training & development, mentorship, and apprenticeship. This was all done by experienced local entrepreneurs, craftsmen, and women majority of whom had worked with Maendeleo Foundation before. The participants attended practical sessions 3x a week for a minimum of 4 hours per day. It was envisioned that the training itself, the knowledge and skills acquired thereafter would: in the short term, reduce idleness and hopelessness of the youth; in the middle term, promote job creation, employability, and labor productivity; in the long-term, boost individual & household income as well as ultimately promoting peace in the area.

Choice of the host site and role of local relationships to project success

I chose the hosting site because it's a place I understand best, it's my home country, and It is my village where I witnessed several challenges that were taking place. So I worked with local leaders, community leaders, and youth development leaders to identify the right people for the program. Additionally, the district and local area police departments were led by the Former City metropolitan commander, who gave in more than 8 hours of sensitizing the trainees and local people about: peace disruptors, peace promotion by the youth, and ‘the need to work, and cooperation with law enforcers.

Maendeleo Foundation, the host partner: brought its 15 years’ experience of community work and capacity training to the project: it provided a spacious, safe, and secure venue for the training; provided equipment like computers for digital skills training and the administrative/managerial levels, Maendeleo Foundation was so instrumental in strategy setting, tactical planning, not-withstanding monitoring, and evaluation.

Planning adjustments and reasons, therefore
The original plan anticipated the training to last only three months; however, the training has been pushed to end after four months because the three months were not enough for the students to learn to the required capacity. The target number was 100; however, the project was very attractive to the community, and we ended up registering 120 students.

Other fundraising efforts

After some fund-raising efforts, the project did not get any other funding opportunities apart from the Davis projects for a peace grant.

Any other opportunities for continuing with work on the issue of peace and unemployment

For continuity, we need to write for more grants to get more funding. With the hosting organization, we also seek to find more partnership opportunities from local agencies that can support similar works.

Reflection

My definition of peace

Living in a place where there are no disturbances, Having Harmony with neighboring communities and people, as well as living in a violence-free community. Generally, I look at peace as a stress-free state of security and calmness within a community.

Short-term and long-term changes by the project that will contribute to peace

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Lessons from the challenges or conflicts that lied under the targeted issues or utilized approaches

Challenge number one was that we couldn’t get the required number of trainees through the local churches, schools, and mosques; we thus decided to visit hotspots for the youth like youth recreational centers, gaming & betting spots, as well as one on one, especially in the vicinity of the host organization. In regard to this, I learned that for proper project implementation, contingency plans should always be at hand, in addition to a proper delegation of authority to enable delegates to exercise innovation in project implementation. The Expenses were more than the budget due to inflation. We also received more participants than we had planned and incurred more material costs. Supplies.

Change of my thought about the world following the project

“...nze nali ntwaala obusimu bwabantu nsobole okwebezaawo, naye kati nga bwenjize okufumba cake, sigenda kudamu kuba…”

This literally means that:

“... I used to steal people’s cell phones to afford a living, however, since I have gotten skills of baking cakes, I will not steal again…”

Personal Statement

I have seen various youth empowerment projects within our Mukono but this notion of community peace as the foundation and ultimate goal of the project is unprecedented. This makes ‘ntongoskills4peace a landmark” which should not only be continuous but also replicated in other areas where society peace is at the edge” Senior Commissioner of Police – Kafeero Mose