FINAL REPORT

The Future is Bright (JEKA): Empowering Zimbabwe’s Youth to Thrive, Substance-Free
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Summary
JEKA was an in-depth, community-based initiative in Kuwadzana, Zimbabwe, aimed at combating the pervasive issue of substance abuse among young people. Through a variety of strategies encompassing both digital and in-person community outreach, we successfully initiated important conversations and provided practical solutions to address the root causes and consequences of substance abuse within the community.

Project Description
- How did you decide what issue(s) you wanted to address and what approach(es) or strategies you chose to implement in your project?
Growing up in Kuwadzana, the ramifications of substance abuse were not just statistics or news stories; they were lived experiences that affected friends, family, and neighbors. After conducting a preliminary needs assessment with local organizations such as Uncommon.org and Pora Health, it was clear that an intervention was urgently needed. We designed our strategies to be multi-faceted: first, we leveraged social media and other digital platforms to distribute a series of educational videos that tackled myths about substance abuse; second, we organized a series of community forums, workshops, and seminars to engage with various age groups and stakeholders in the community.

- Why did you choose your host site? In what ways did local relationships support you or contribute to the project?
Choosing Kuwadzana as our host site was an amalgamation of strategic reasoning and personal connection. As a community faced with a significant need for substance abuse intervention and also being my hometown, Kuwadzana naturally became the focal point of the JEKA Project. Our success was significantly bolstered by the local relationships we were able to nurture and sustain. Unlike traditional engagements where community leaders often facilitate meetings with local authorities, our approach was markedly different but equally impactful. Medical professionals from within the community, including doctors specializing in substance abuse and mental health, graciously offered their time and expertise, providing us with invaluable guidance. Additionally, various stakeholders such as educators, small business owners, and youth organizers contributed to our project by sharing their insights into the unique challenges and perspectives of the community’s youth. This collective wisdom greatly enriched our approach and implementation, enabling us to tailor our programs and messages to be as resonant and effective as possible.

- What changes or adjustments did you make to your original plans, and why?
We encountered several challenges, such as the unforeseen withdrawal of our key partner, Uncommon.org. We quickly adjusted our focus towards a more digital-centric approach. We initiated the #30DaysOfEmpowerment digital campaign, where we featured daily empowering messages and facts about substance abuse. This adaptive strategy reinvigorated our project and even attracted more local volunteers who wanted to contribute.

- Did other fundraising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?
Thanks to the generous grant from Projects for Peace, we didn’t need to engage in additional fundraising efforts. This financial stability enabled us to focus our full attention on impactful execution, optimizing resource allocation, and maximizing our community engagement.

- Are there opportunities for continuing your work on this issue? If so, please describe.
There are abundant opportunities for the project’s sustainability. Along with Pora Health, we have established a podcast series, "Breaking the Chains," to further disseminate information and generate discussions around substance abuse. While we have recorded several episodes, they are yet to be published. This podcast represents an important post-project initiative that will ensure the long-lasting impact of our work.

Reflection

- **How do you define peace?**
  I view peace as a dynamic state of equilibrium where both individual and communal well-being are maximized. This goes beyond the absence of violence or conflict; it encapsulates the idea that people have access to the resources, education, and support they need to fulfill their potential.

- **In what ways might your project contribute to peace? What changes occurred? Short-term? Long-term?**
  The JEKA Project contributes to peace by addressing an underlying issue that affects social harmony. In the short term, we managed to break the social taboo around discussing substance abuse, making it a subject of communal conversation. For the long term, we aim for a measurable reduction in substance abuse rates, facilitating a more conducive environment for education, employment, and overall community wellness.

- **Identify a significant conflict you observed or encountered in your work. How did you navigate the conflict and what would you like to learn more about as a result?**
  The most significant conflict we faced was logistical, particularly after the withdrawal of Uncommon.org. This resulted in a re-evaluation and adjustment of our strategies. We learned the importance of flexibility and contingency planning. I am now interested in studying the complexities of project management, particularly how to navigate uncertainties and conflicts that could derail community-focused initiatives.

- **Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has the project changed, challenged, or inspired you?**
  The project has been a transformative experience. It has magnified my understanding of how deeply interconnected we are as a community and how each of us has a role in the collective well-being. It was both a challenging and inspiring endeavor that has left an indelible mark on my worldview, further solidifying my commitment to community engagement.

Personal Statement

"The JEKA Project has been a monumental learning experience for me. It has highlighted the immense power that lies in community action. In navigating both successes and obstacles, I have gained an unparalleled understanding of the intricacies of sustainable impact. This journey has not just educated me; it has profoundly inspired me to remain engaged in grassroots initiatives that transform lives." - Adrian T. Chimboza

Associated Project Social Media Platforms:

- **Facebook:** [https://www.facebook.com/porahealth](https://www.facebook.com/porahealth)
- **Instagram:** [https://instagram.com/pora.health?igshid=MzRIODBiNFZrZA==](https://instagram.com/pora.health?igshid=MzRIODBiNFZrZA==)
- **LinkedIn:** [https://www.linkedin.com/company/porahealth/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/porahealth/)
- **Spotify:** [https://open.spotify.com/show/6m5wTmZvAB9dSonf1oiCUi](https://open.spotify.com/show/6m5wTmZvAB9dSonf1oiCUi)
- **Youtube:** [https://youtube.com/@porahealth5673?si=rBj8bodmUliuA9Pr](https://youtube.com/@porahealth5673?si=rBj8bodmUliuA9Pr)