Project title: Growing Futures: Agricultural Empowerment for Hosanna Children's Home
Country: Kenya
Nominating College: Davidson College
Samuel Waithira

Summary:
The Growing Futures project sought to address the financial challenges of Hosanna Children's Home in Githunguri, Kenya, by establishing a sustainable pig farming initiative. Through the construction of a pig sty and breeding farming through training, the project aimed to generate income for the home while providing valuable agricultural education to the community, contributing to stability, poverty reduction, and youth engagement.

Project Description:
The decision to address the financial challenges of Hosanna Children's Home stemmed from a deep personal connection and understanding of the critical role the home plays in Githunguri. Having grown up in close proximity to Hosanna, the challenges faced by Hosanna were evident, particularly the cycle of students unable to pursue higher education and the unending donation-dependent cycle Hosanna was lopped in. To tackle this multifaceted issue, the Peace Project strategically chose a sustainable agriculture approach, focusing on pig farming, after consultation with Hosanna. This approach was carefully selected due to the local proximity to a pork-processing plant, creating a viable income source. The project aimed to alleviate financial constraints, empower youth with agricultural skills, and foster a sense of community ownership.

I choose Hosanna Children’s Home as the host site due to its central role in addressing the needs of orphans, destitute children, and the broader community. Local relationships proved instrumental in shaping the project's design and implementation. The close ties I had with the home's leadership, staff, and children, and the great relationship Hosanna has with the Githunguri community provided invaluable insights into the challenges faced and opportunities available. These relationships fostered collaboration, ensuring that the project aligned with the community's needs and aspirations. This ensured that the project not only helped cater to the needs of the home but also addressed significant community needs that Hosanna was aware of.

Throughout the project's development, adaptations were made to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability. In the course of the implementation of the project, it became evident that the construction of the pig sty was going to be the financially demanding component of the project. I, therefore, adjusted my budget to add more finances to the construction in consultation with the Hosanna Children’s Home management. Additionally, we had to come up with a community learning program that ensured the farm's biosecurity was ensured. In our construction design, we ensured community members could see the pigs from the outside of the pigsties and not from the inside to ensure no diseases would be spread to the pigs. In the course of the project, we received a lot of support from the community members who came for training at the Home and they provided input that helped with the project. In addition, Githunguri pig farmers allowed us into their farms, trained us, and provided input. Lastly, there was enormous support from Farmer’s Choice, a meat processing company, who sent a representative to train us, and ensured we got a supply contract to the processing plant. In the end, we were able to construct six pig stys, a feed storage unit, and three workers' living quarters housed on top of the pig sty, which were remarkable achievements.

The project opens avenues for continued impact beyond its initial implementation. The establishment of the pigsty as a community learning center ensures ongoing education in sustainable agriculture. This
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foundation allows the project to serve as a model for other pig farming initiatives in the community, encouraging youth involvement, reducing poverty, and promoting stability. The project's design emphasizes community ownership, setting the stage for the replication of similar ventures in the community. In addition, the pig farm provides a pathway for Hosanna Children's Home to achieve financial independence and sustained growth.

Reflection:

For me, peace means providing basic needs to the Hosanna children and needy community members. Meeting basic needs reduces poverty, promotes stability and well-being, and provides a space for individuals to participate in their communities. The project has the potential to contribute to peace in several ways. In the short term, by addressing the financial challenges of Hosanna Children's Home and providing sustainable income, the project can reduce the economic stress that often leads to conflict over resources. Moreover, the educational component of the pig farming initiative promotes community cohesion, knowledge sharing, and skill development, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation. In the long term, as the project empowers youth with agricultural skills, it provides an alternative to criminal activities, offering a path to economic stability and personal growth. By breaking the cycle of poverty and crime, the project creates a more peaceful and harmonious environment within the Githunguri community.

The project highlighted the complex challenges underlying financial constraints and youth engagement in the community. The dilemma of providing immediate support versus building sustainable solutions required careful consideration. Pig farming requires patience as the production cycle can last up to six months when the financial benefits of the project start to be felt. Additionally, navigating the intricacies of agricultural practices, market dynamics, and community engagement revealed the need for adaptable strategies to address diverse needs and expectations. Most of the youth in Kenya have absconded farming and we saw the need to sensitize them on the need to practice modern farming. These challenges underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach, especially involving the youth and ongoing community involvement.

Engaging in the project transformed my perspective on the world. Witnessing the positive impact of sustainable solutions on vulnerable individuals shifted my understanding of how lasting change can be achieved, and made me understand that sustainable change takes time. The project's emphasis on community collaboration and education underscored the power of collective effort and knowledge-sharing in promoting peace and addressing complex societal issues. This experience challenged me to think creatively, adapt to evolving circumstances (there were many, especially during construction), and recognize the potential for positive change, even in challenging environments. Lastly, the project honed my problem-solving skills, helping me think of innovative ways to address specific project challenges, and brought to light the importance of a collaborative decision-making approach.

Personal Statement:

Through the Growing Futures Peace Project, we've witnessed the transformative power of sustainable solutions in nurturing both economic stability and a sense of community. This experience has taught me that by empowering individuals with skills and opportunities, we can truly sow the seeds of lasting peace and positive change. The grant allowed me to understand my community's challenges in a way I never envisioned before. A great thank you to the Project for Peace program for the opportunity!
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