

Davis Project for Peace

The National Entrepreneurial Camp

Applicants:

Jihad Hajjouji: Middlebury College'14. Co-founder and President of Rabat Entrepreneurial Challenge; Knowledge Director of the UN Aspire Global Business Group; Co-leader of Global Changemaker's Social Entrepreneurship and Microfinance group; Fellow of the Harambe Entrepreneurship Alliance; Participant of the World Economic Forum of the Dead Sea.

Hafsa Anouar: Tufts University'15. Co-founder and Vice-president of Rabat Entrepreneurial Challenge; Tisch Scholar at Tufts University; Speaker at the UN's Expert Meeting on Peace, Stability and Development in Africa.

The context:

The unemployment rate in Morocco currently stands at around 9%. While this figure is seen by many citizens as down played, a bottom line reality is agreed upon: the government needs to create more than 300,000 jobs a year if it wants to contain the pressure. With its current capacity of 50,000 positions a year, the government is significantly below target. The gravity of the situation is also exacerbated by the fact that the state has been the most attractive employer for decades, which automatically forces the government today to create artificial inorganic state positions under a severe budget crisis in order to appease the increasingly violent protestors. The implications of unemployment on peace in Morocco and in the region are no stretch to the mind. With a highly young population and a high unemployment rate, the danger of instability becomes imminent, not only to the immediate political institutions but also to national, and even arguably to international security. As social entrepreneur Soraya Salti articulated it, "those who are unemployed and directionless, often fall prey to fundamentalists and can, down the line, become a threat to national security." What are, then, the underlying causes of this unemployment issue?

The problem:

Our diagnosis of the issue is two-fold; on one hand it is an issue of perception: the government, which has been the most attractive employer so far, can no longer keep up with the number of people entering the job market every year. Yet, the youth's expectations about their careers are still lagging behind this reality, and thus they are still demanding government jobs. On the other hand it is an issue of skills: there is a mismatch between the education the system provides and the skills needed under the new circumstances. This means that even if university graduates shift their focus from the public sector, their skills might not be conducive to the needs of the current day market, which requires a mindset of independence and entrepreneurialism. Solution?

The National Entrepreneurial Camp: a project for employment, a project for peace.

The National Entrepreneurial Camp is a summer camp that aims to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship to students between the age of 16 and 19, and train them on the fundamental skills of starting their own enterprises. It will take place in July 2012 in Bouznika, a beach camp between Casablanca and Rabat, and it will last for six days of solid training with two days (at the beginning and at the end) allowing for travel and rest. The camp's national dimension ensures the creation of a common learning experience for students from around Morocco.

Our vision:

To develop a generation of job creators, not job seekers.

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Our mission:

To find the entrepreneur in our students through exposure to a revolutionary process: the process of problem identification, problem solving, and idea implementation.

Objectives:

Our target group is high school students between the age of 16 and 19 with no previous exposure to education in business. And our objectives can be divided into short, mid, and long-term.

Short term: we aim to benefit 35-40 students recruited from different cities across the country directly through training on basic entrepreneurial skills and introduction to successful entrepreneurial experiences in Morocco. By the end of the camp students should be able to come up with business ideas that respond to an envisioned opportunity in their environment, pitch these ideas confidently and holistically in front of everyone, and plan a simple budget and a sustainability strategy. Our ultimate goal for this week is to broaden the horizons of the students about their future plans and professional aspirations.

Mid-term: The national dimension of the camp serves as an emphasis on the importance of entrepreneurship in solving the country's unemployment problem. But because of our limited capacity, the national camp model will not have a wide spread effect geographically. In three to five years, we aim to shift towards a more localized model of training (franchise-like) where different regions around the country can have their own training opportunities. This is hoped to be advanced by our interested alumni given that they will originate from different areas themselves (cascade training).

Long-term: Within a timeframe of 10-20 years, we aim to have a network of young alums who have started or are starting their own ventures. This network is what we hope to be the next generation of job creators.

Sustainability:

This project is not only an embodiment of the quote "don't give a man a fish, teach him how to fish", but it's also the foundation of creating an entire future fish market. Education by its very nature is sustainable: it is a long-term investment in future welfare. In addition to this fundamental quality of the project, the issue at hand is of interest to many stakeholders: governments which need to address unemployment and ensure stability, businesses which seek good employees with skills conducive to their needs, and non-governmental organizations which believe in education as the foundation of any aspired development. This common interest is the point on which we aim to capitalize in order to secure sustainable support for this project. By showing a successful training model to these stakeholders, we hope that the project will be increasingly adopted by the state itself, in partnership with interested parties.

Our support network (includes sponsors of previous initiatives by Rabat Entrepreneurial Challenge- an organization we started in summer of 2011 to promote entrepreneurship among youth in Rabat):

The African Leadership Academy, Amidest (The US Department of State), The British Council, Forum des Jeunes Marocains, Jazz ¼, Mafoder, The National Institute for Youth and Democracy (Morocco)....