

Mizizi kwa Amani: Roots for Peace
Bennington College: Davis Projects for Peace
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June 18th – August 12th 2014 Nanyuki, Kenya

Mission: The mission of Mizizi kwa Amani: Roots for Peace is to promote peace through increasing access to primary education in rural Kenya. I will start a sustainable food program at Likii Primary in Nanyuki, Kenya to provide its 750 students with a nutritious lunch. First, I will build a Shamba (Swahili word for a large-scale vegetable farm/garden) that will be able to provide food for all the students, then I will build a Jiko (a large stove) so the school lunches can be cooked on premises daily.

Background/Need: Nanyuki is a town located about four hours north of Nairobi. The town has a large number of street children who are not in school. Children leave home and go to the streets for varying reasons, such as abusive homes or lack of food. While on the streets, most of the girls get sold into prostitution and many of the boys begin sniffing glue to suppress their hunger.

The Simama (“Stand Up”) Project, founded in 2011, is a non-profit organization based in Nanyuki that works with the most disadvantaged youth, most often street children, to help them get out of poverty and into school. Likii is the poorest neighborhood in the area and is where 80% of Nanyuki’s street children come from. Likii Primary School has 750 students from grade one to eight. The students don’t eat at school unless their parents can afford to send them to school with food, which the majority can’t. This highly affects the students’ attendance and performance in school and results in a lot of students dropping out of school at a very young age.

There are currently 1,031,544 primary school aged students who are not in school in Kenya.¹ Many children don’t go to school because most schools don’t provide lunch and the vast majority of students are unable to bring lunch to school. This statistic can be changed by implementing more school lunch programs across the country. A great example of a successful lunch program at a school in East Africa is Bupalla Primary in rural Uganda. This school was sponsored to start a lunch program and enrollment has nearly doubled since the program began. I believe my project will have the same extraordinary impact.

Project Description: I propose to build a large Shamba that will feed all 750 students at Likii Primary. The Davis grant will enable the implementation of the Shamba and create an infrastructure for school lunches to be made. The Shamba is a way to sustainably feed all the children at Likii Primary, to encourage school attendance, and to foster better performance in school. The grant will also fund the purchase of cooking utensils and the construction of a jiko (a large, outdoor stove that will be used to cook food for all 750 students) and a storage shed for the harvest.

Likii Primary has seven acres of unused land. We will be cultivating this land and growing maize, beans, kale, and vegetables. These are staples in the Kenyan diet and are relatively cheap and nutrient rich. Once the Shamba has been finished, parent volunteers will harvest the crops and cook lunch daily on the stoves we will build. The parents are a key part of this project as most of them have Shambas of their own, but are still struggling to sell their vegetables and feed their families at the same time. Many of them are very knowledgeable about farming in the area and have showed interest in working in Likii’s Shamba. Every student will be served a bowl of food at lunchtime to give them brain power and energy to succeed in school.

¹ Database, World Development Indicators. "Children out of School, Primary Statistics - Countries Compared Worldwide." *NationMaster.com*. NationMaster, Web. 30 Jan. 2014.

Peace: Education is the root of creating peace in a deeply divided developing country such as Kenya. Kenya has a history of extreme physical violence and has had several major outbreaks of violence recently. In 2007, 1500 Kenyans were killed and 250,000 were displaced due to post-election violence. If more children go to school and are educated about Kenya's history of violence and how they can change Kenya for the better, Kenya will have a more peaceful future. In addition, schooling leads to a more economically stable future, which in turn leads to less violence. Having enough food is a prerequisite for getting a good education. This project will create incentive for the children of Likii to go to school (and stay in school) and will allow them to focus on their education, rather than focusing on filling their stomachs. It will also educate the students about the processes of sustainable agriculture and where food comes from.

Personal Experience: I have been lucky enough to travel to Kenya on two different occasions for a total of four months to work at a school outside Nanyuki. While at this school, I spent time in the Shamba and helped out in the classroom. I know my way around the town of Nanyuki and have experience interacting with locals. I am very familiar with the work Matt Orcutt, the founder of Simama, is doing with the street children and am well acquainted with the history and trajectory of the project. I am also currently doing an internship with the Africa Yoga Project, based in Nairobi, so I am continuing to grow my connections with nonprofits in Kenya.

Partners: As this is a joint project between me and the Simama Project, I will be working very closely with them as well as Likii Primary. I will also be working with the organization Slow Food that has a project that is building 1000 gardens in Africa. I have been in close contact with the Slow Food contact person in Kenya and will be working with them to further develop the details of the garden, such as what crops we will plant and our planting timeline. I also have other connections with both Kenyans and Americans in the area and will try to involve as many people and organizations as possible to widen the reach of the project and create a sense of ownership among those involved. My goal is to make people really care about this Shamba and its survival. I want as many people as possible to see the impact it is having and how it is changing the school's enrollment and attendance. The more people I involve in the project while I am there, the more people will be there to look after it when I am gone.

Projected Timeline:

Spring 2014: Stay in close contact with Simama and Slow Food to further develop details of the project, such as a more detailed calendar.

Mid-Late June: Arrive in Kenya

Week 1: Get settled and hold a meeting with Likii Primary parents to get input and advice on the garden specifics (i.e. what crops to plant and when).

Week 2-3: Begin to prepare the land to be cultivated by killing the top layer of vegetation using non-toxic methods. Continue to reach out to parents. Collect compost and manure.

Week 4: Mix compost and manure into soil. Build fencing around garden area.

Week 5: Create garden plan (what crops and where) in collaboration with parents. Dig compost hole and make wood plank for a cover. Begin work on storage shed and jiko (stove).

Week 6: Plant seeds. Finish storage shed.

Week 7-8: Finish jiko and wrap up any last minute tasks.

Projected Outcome/Sustainability: One of the key aspects of this project is sustainability. After the garden is installed, every parent who has a student at Likii Primary will be expected to pay 100 Kenyan Shillings a month (a little more than \$1 US) per child to help maintain the garden. Parents who can't afford this will be asked to donate time working in the garden. Lastly, if a child has no parents and cannot pay or donate time Simama and Likii Primary will work together to find a sponsor to pay. This will make the project financially self-sustaining. Since I am collaborating with Simama and Likii Primary, they will both continue to work on and oversee the project after I leave Kenya. This project will also serve as a model for other schools in Kenya and the developing world.