

Education Support project for Vulnerable Children and Youths Sponsorship



I. The Context and Activities of the project

By the end of December 2006, ASSIST-RWANDA set up a 3 year strategic plan mostly focused on the support for vulnerable young people. It is under the plan that the vulnerable young people targeted for Education Sponsorship Program were categorized under the following criteria:

- (i) Unsupported children and youth who are at risk of dropping out of school, especially girls and those from children-headed household families, or from very disadvantaged families,
- (ii) Disabled children, especially girls (with sensory, physical or mental disabilities), who cannot receive education support,
- (iii) Deprived children and youth in either urban or rural settings, especially those who are discriminated or vulnerable on the basis of gender or disability.

ASSIST-RWANDA used different strategies in identifying the beneficiaries, and the criteria used basically depended on the following:

1. Lack of school fees, scholastic materials, school uniform, and other means that deter accessing school and achieving in it,
2. Risk of dropping out of school due to lack of support or deprivation; discrimination affecting the child's progress and achievements in education based particularly on gender and disability,
3. Progress report in school that indicate positive academic attainment despite the limitations based on psychosocial, economic, or other barriers, and an opportunity for the child's improvement if supported.

In the last seven years, ASSIST-RWANDA has used its meagre resources to offer education sponsorship to few children in Primary and students in Secondary Schools, in a relatively unplanned program. This involved provision of scholastic materials, uniforms, and medication and school fees.

This has been a big challenge to the organization due to the rising number of orphans in Rwanda resulting from the 1994 Genocide and HIV/AIDS pandemic, but the organization had managed to assist more than 100 pupils in Primary Schools and 30 in Secondary Schools.

The main activities of the project will be as follows

- 1.** To sensitize the general public on the value of education with special emphasis on girl child who has been neglected in the past.
- 2.** To provide school fees and other necessary needs for the project's beneficiaries.
- 3.** To make follow up on the project beneficiaries like visiting them at school and to liaise with school authorities in reference to performance and other school requirement.

III. Objectives of the Project

Global Objective

To offer education support to vulnerable children and youth identified as the most at risk of dropping-out-of-school.

Specific Objectives of the project

- 1.** To complement the government policy on education for all program, and private initiatives of NGOs and individuals,
- 2.** To fulfil the ASSIST-RWANDA missions and goals, of mobilising support for the education of the vulnerable young people,
- 3.** To contribute to the country's recovery from the horrors of the 1994 Genocide by investing in education,
- 4.** To promote an integral, comprehensive education orientated towards the respect of human rights and adapted to the present situation of the country.

IV. Expected results

- 1.** To assist at least three hundred (300) Secondary School students and two hundred (200) Primary Pupils by the end of the planning period (2007-9), especially at the critical stage of their education when they expected to move to the next cycle of education, i.e. from primary to secondary, or from secondary to tertiary education levels.
- 2.** The education sponsorship project will prioritise provision of school fees, scholastic materials, uniforms, transport, clothes, beddings and medical care.
- 3.** The project will particularly aim at minimising the child's risks of dropping out of school or progressing from one level of education to the next.
- 4.** The project will aim at reinforcing the children/youth's rights to education.

V. Problem Statement

The need to establish ASSIST-RWANDA Education Sponsorship Project was prompted by a high number of young people especially orphans who are unschooled or have dropped out of school due to lack of school fees and other associated needs/materials.

Rwanda's Vision 2020 aims at the development of a knowledge-based and technology-led economy. It seeks to eradicate poverty and to move Rwanda to the list of Middle Income Countries (MIC) by the year 2020. The people of Rwanda are its greatest asset as it has extremely limited natural resources. Education is therefore at the heart of the Vision's Strategy and ASSIST-RWANDA aims at supporting this policy in Education Sponsorship Project. In today's globally competitive environment, an educated population is a prerequisite for a country to take on technological challenges and development.

ASSIST-RWANDA recognizes the challenges faced by the country in the field of education like developing approaches to deal effectively with the legacy of the genocide, notably the education of orphans and child-heads-of family and the provision of feeding and boarding programmes for such children. In Education Sponsorship Project, ASSIST-RWANDA would like to share in this challenge by enabling some vulnerable young people get access to education through sponsorship.

The recent 'Synthesis of the 2002 Census' indicates that some "60% of the population aged 15 years and above can read and write at text in at least any one language", and that men have a higher literacy rate than women. The highest rates of literacy are within the 15-34 year age range. The Government of Rwanda has set a target of having 80% of the population literacy by 2010 and ASSIST-RWANDA would like to share this policy by helping the government in increasing the literacy level in the the country.

Though about 72.2% of young people account for the National primary school enrolment in Rwanda, over 27.8% (in the year 2000) do not go to school and the rate of dropping out of primary school is still rising (over 17.4% in 2001, according to Rwanda E.F.A. Plan, pp 18). Where as about 64.8% of pupils are enrolled at the right age of primary school level, 16.2% of the girls reach primary six (6), as compared to 19.4% of the boys (Education for all Action Plan for Rwanda, 2002, pp. 15).

Though the government of Rwanda introduced free primary education in 2004, many children are unable to go to school due to lack of lack of privately introduced teachers' allowances ranging from 1.000 to 4.000 Rwanda Francs each school term which is quite expensive in many rural areas. In addition to this, some fail to get other school essentials like books, pens and uniforms. ASSIST-RWANDA views this situation as lamentable hence need for an aid to solve this problem through Education Sponsorship Program. This similar situation is found in secondary schools. 20% of primary school leavers manage to join secondary schools.

Some of those who pass their examinations fail to join secondary schools due to essentials like school fees, uniform and other demands.

It's evident that secondary school education in Rwanda is very expensive considering the economic situation in the country and high level of poverty among the majority in the population.

As a result of above mentioned problems being faced by school going children and youth in Rwanda, ASSIST-RWANDA organization comes up with a project proposal in the area of Education Sponsorship for at least three hundred (300) Secondary School students and two hundred (200) Primary Pupils by the end of the planning period (2007-9). Identification of some beneficiaries is already made, however, the process continues. We have the desire to involve students in Tertiary Institutions and Universities in the program since they are many needy and vulnerable orphans involved therein. Moreover, many students fail to join Universities and other Tertiary Institutions not because they have totally failed examinations, but due to the fact that Rwanda has limited number of Public and Private Universities which can't accommodate a big number of students who complete Senior Six (6) annually. The private universities introduced in Rwanda after the 1994 war and genocide are quite expensive in reference to the majority of Senior Six (6) completers who are orphans and others who come from impoverished families which can't pay for their fees and other necessities.

VI. Zones of operation and Implementation

ASSIST-RWANDA will implement this project in the following selected zones of operation: In regions where ASSIST-RWANDA has its projects functions and in zones where vulnerable children are most disadvantaged because of the socio-economic and history of the area. For example ASSIST-RWANDA will operate the sponsorship project in Nyagatare District; in Musanze District of the Northern Province and in Gasabo and Kicukiro Districts in Kigali City because that is where most its projects are, and are expected to complement the sponsorship project. It will also operate in Kamonyi District in the Southern Province and in Rwamagana and Nyamata Districts in Eastern province, because of their proximity to other complementary projects run by ASSIST-RWANDA and because of the abundance of unsupported vulnerable children and youth.

Though the beneficiary children and youth will be hailing from the targeted zones, they are expected to be studying in different schools around the Country depending on their choice, especially those at secondary school levels and those with disabilities who are in boarding sections.

VII. Target Group

The project target three hundred **(300) Secondary Students and two hundred (200) Primary Pupils**. The target group was identified by filling the application forms on which the views of the child, the community leader (teacher, local authority) and ASSIST official was valued.

It is from the form that all the details of each individual beneficiary was listed, screened, assessed and sorted out in categories of priorities.

Because Rwanda has too many vulnerable groups, the prioritisation process was guided by weighting of the criteria involved.

Evidence of vulnerability, discrimination and lack of support for educational progress, are some of the basic criteria used in identifying and selecting the beneficiaries.

The identification of target group involved local authorities and local school administration whenever necessary to ensure transparency and objectivity in the procedures, because these are the closest neighbours of the vulnerable groups, and are able to provide supportive documents and other related information.

VIII. Project Management and Chart

ASSIST-RWANDA organization will be in charge of project management. The organization's project coordinator will give regular reports to the National Director regarding the situation of beneficiaries at school which will include performance, health and other relevant conditions regarding them. The National Director will finally give a report to the sponsors/donors and reserve a copy for the Executive Committee.

IX. Project Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

The process of accountability, to which ASSIST-RWANDA is committed, dictates that there should be a Joint Review of the ASSIST Education Sponsorship (JRAES) on a regular basis (annually for the foreseeable future). The JRAES will be composed of ASSIST-RWANDA Administration, some selected Sponsors who will represent others and other stake holders (both internal and external) that may come in during project implementation. It will review the performance of the project.

In terms of the monitoring of ASSIST education sponsorship performance, the purpose of the JRAES will be to ensure that there are effective returns on the ASSIST education sponsorship and on the intended beneficiaries, i.e. students, children, guardians and all other stakeholders.

The performance of ASSIST sponsorship program will be evaluated against project reports, target completion and visits to the schools.

The JRAES will be arranged to complement the annual progress report and the budgetary cycle so that informed decisions can be taken. The review will cover the whole sector performance and will, of necessity, cover all aspects of annual educational sponsorship project.

ASSIST-RWANDA will produce periodical reports on the project. The Project Coordinator will give reports demonstrating the progress of the project and set backs if any. These reports will be handed over to the National Director who will finally report to the donors/sponsors. Evaluation reports will be produced after the 6th month of the project calendar while the final narrative report will be submitted in the 12th month.