# YOUTH & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (YWEP)

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

ICT for Development Kenya (ICT4D Kenya) is a community based organization founded to focus on the plight of youth and women in rural Kenya. We exist to empower women and youth through technology.

We leverage on information technology training session to interact with our target population with a long-term goal of addressing more profound issues that affect the communities ; Namely: *Gender based violence, Discrimination, Unemployment, Poverty and drought among others*. The methodology of delivering our community services involves camping in a village for a month, setting up ultra modern IT labs equipped with computers and other IT equipment. We provide training to youth and women in a flexible training model that allows them to attend classes for 3 hours from 8am in the morning to 8 pm in the evening. By doing this everyone in the village gets an opportunity to attend our training session.

Once the training quorum is realized we engage other development professionals to interact with the community on issues ranging from healthcare, agri-business, education, economic empowerment as well as innovative approaches to poverty eradication in the community.

Our believe is that through training we equip the youth and women with an employable

*Figure 1: Our class setup with Youth and Women*

skill as well as give them an opportunity to work with us for more community empowerment in our subsequent training sessions.

Every month we move to new villages replicating the same training at the same time recruiting youth and women for community empowerment initiatives and program. As per our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) we believe the communities can easily achieve over 75% community development through the right empowerment. We believe that technology plays a great role in SDGs uptake. To us Technology is a strategic enabler to development and in-turn the realization of SDGs.

We currently are working actively in three counties; Kilifi, Makueni and Machakos. We have the capacity to train an average of 1,000 youth and women in 10 villages every month. Our training program has reached 40% of the rural areas most vulnerable and in no doubt we can reach to over 60% with your support.

## 2.0 Our focus group

Living in rural Kenya setting comes with prides and challenges in equal measure. Youth unemployment is currently one of the main challenges in our country and has its toll effect mostly experienced in the rural areas. Poverty and unemployment are causing sleepless nights and endless policy meetings with no clear cut solution seemingly prevailing to these menaces. Many policies have been formulated to approach the issue with fire fighting stop gap measures all filled with quick fixes that have not proved sustainable, long lasting and beneficial.

Women on the other hand have not received a real fix to the predicaments they go through especially the heavy burden of being caregivers, custodians and sometimes bread winners for rural families. Statistics show that over 68% of the rural families have women as the sole breadwinners.

In times of drought, floods and other calamities women remain the main victims and their roles remain overstretched. Despite all these, women in rural Kenya still undergo the burden of Gender Based Violence, early pregnancies, cultural discrimination, safety nets for drug addicts and other vulnerable groups.

In Kenya for example the approaches to address this menace have been enlisted around *"work for food"* program for groups of youth and women. These programs among other government initiatives have proved unsustainable as women and youth still find themselves in the same vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment.

Our Youth and women especially those living in rural Kenya lack the knowhow to understand, approach and address their needs and most importantly their root causes. It thus has led different development partners to keep on trying what works to address their plight.

An ideal Youth in Kenya is aged between 18-35 years, however this falls short owing to the fact that a great number of young people are dropping out of school before the said ages as well others are transiting to old age with nothing substantial to show from their youthful ages. It thus possess a huge challenge on who to call youth as well as to authoritatively define Youth unemployment and the target population.

The biggest question thus remains; *"What strategic initiatives will work for the rural youth and women to alleviate their plight?"*

## 3.0 Our believe

We believe that technology is bait to resource mobilization in the communities as it offers a practical approach to education especially reaching to the rural populations. Rural Youth and women have untapped potential that can easily transform the socio-economic as well as cultural believes on poverty and development.

By aligning ourselves within the technology sphere an reaching out to our target populations right at their comfort zones in the communities has given us the reassurance that we are providing a highly sought skill at the same time getting to the right people with the need and urge of propelling their own socio-economic development.

Equipping the youth and women with technology skills creates a demand for the utilization of mobile phones, computers, internet as well as social media with a goal of getting into tech driven access to development.

## 4.0 Our impact

ICT4D Kenya has in six years trained over 60,000 youth and women out of which 81% have secured employment, 6% started their own businesses and 2% are now studying IT in colleges and other tertiary institutions.



**Figure 2: Part of our trainees during a past graduation ceremony**

We have in turn also worked with over 1,000 women and youth whom we have developed business skills within the ideals of entrepreneurship.

Out of the youth we've trained we have provided jobs to 52 youths who are now helping in providing the IT skill knowledge to their counterparts in the villages through our training and mentorship initiatives.

We believe that for meaningful development to be realized in rural areas, youth need to be law abiding citizens. To address this we go beyond borders and train youth in prisons especially those who are serving short sentences. Our initiative has seen rehabilitation of offenders through instilled IT skills. *A good example is Nelson Mutua who was held in Kilifi Prison and now runs his retail shop. He is managing his business records using a computer.* He had this to say; *" I am now more equipped being in the society and hardly do I think of committing crime".* **Cynthia** *on the other hand is now taking care of her siblings*

*in Machakos having secured a job as a clerk in her village coffee factory. She says' "I now can take care of my siblings from the money I get every month from my job in the village"*. This is the impact of our program to the society.



**Figure 3: Prisoners in Kilifi Prison learning computers**

## 5.0 Future development Plan/Projects

Equipping the youth and women with IT skills is not enough to fully empower the population towards self-sufficiency trajectory. We have more to do together with our already recruited youth and women. We are targeting the different facets of development using the available resources with IT as a strategic enabler.

We seek partners to aid in the establishment of the following Projects:-

### i. Community Resource Centers

Our Community resource centre goal is to bring services closer to the community, if possible in every village we train. The Centre is a small structure


Figure 4: A sample community resource centre

the size of a typical Kiosk equipped with a maximum 5 computers all connected to the internet, a printer and a photocopier.

A small tent and benches would then be set around to provide shade for a workspace. This would then be turned into a *one stop shop for information* that is required in the community e.g. Government documents, constitution, policies as well as a repository of community history either stored in video, text or photo formats.

Furthermore, the computers would be *storages for success documentaries* either on education, agriculture or environmental conservation etc. With a portable projector communities would have an opportunity to come and learn on *best farming practices* as well as share their own ideas. The centre will be a platform for idea exchange and also for information.

To harness the importance of information and to remain informed of the daily occurrences, youth would run a simulated virtual news center by *creating a local village television station* that would roam providing latest news within the villages. To achieve this, the platform would partner with other villages and market centers to provide a platform to watch local news from their own youth and their own community occurrences. This shall be a platform to harness creativity and talents.

Within this setup *women will be taught on reproductive health* and *equipped with tools to manage Maternal Child Health*. They will be equipped with smartphones loaded with a mobile application that would help in data collection of all the women within their reproductive age as well as those that are already pregnant and those with children undergoing immunization. With this we would setup a reminder system for mothers to be notified of their appointment dates, a system that we would eventually link with the health centers within their villages. For enhanced services we will partner with Huduma center to provide more citizen services.

### ii. Establish a training college

To advance the skills to youth and women in IT and business we would setup a college where we would provide training at subsidized costs to our beneficiaries. This would target advanced level training such as mobile programming, networking, web development, digital marketing as well as entrepreneurship. With this we would align our villages with the demands of the current world's requirement in development.

The college's work other than IT and business will be equipped with sections to train youth on other practical skills that can easily propel them into self-employment. This would involve skills such as; plumbing, welding, gardening, fashion design, cookery, electrical wiring, masonry, tile making among others. This would thus become a hub for skills development all targeting the rural populations.

### iii. Mentoring girls and young women

The lack of role models for girls in rural Kenya is detrimental to their own development and empowerment. We have developed a program where we are mentoring young school going girls by creating a link between girls in primary, secondary, university and career women. This program currently running in Kilifi initially with twenty girls from Kilimo primary school has created a link between them and High school girls all the way in San Francisco.

The linkage bonds the girls who in turn are mentored by their seniors here in Kenya and the chain goes up the ladder. We envisage that this cross linkages can build a strong relationship where girls and women mentor each other and share in their own realities. This linkage utilizes technology thus making use of our strategic enabler to development.

Our plan is to grow this to cover a wider number of girls, women and mentors across board.



**Figure 5: A mentoring session between girls and their peers in San Francisco on skype**

## iv.    Community Recovery Centre

The rural populations we work with are highly prone to Gender based Violence mainly revolving around rape, incest, sodomy, wife battering and early pregnancies for school going girls. In most cases the victims of such violence do not get the care, counseling and support required and some end up with lifelong depressions as well as reduced self confidence to participate in public issues.

On the other hand victims of natural calamities such as floods hardly get shelter as well as counseling services. The Community Recovery Centre would thus provide shelter for such victims as well as exposure to counseling services from professionals. It will also be an opportunity of equipping the victims with post exposure training both in IT as well as equipping them with other entrepreneurial skills.

For girls it will be an opportunity to restore confidence by ensuring that they engage with the right mentors as well as having them join our girl mentorship program. At the same time we would ensure that legal re-dress is pursued to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice.

### Community Donation Centre

The community recovery centre shall also act as a donation centre. In the quest of promoting community needs, different fund raising as well as donation drives have been approached in a disjoint manner with no defined rules of engagement as well as disbursement of such donations. Again most of the donation drives only present themselves during calamities or times of need.

Our Community Donation Centre would be a one stop Centre that will not be calamity driven but an ongoing activity. We envisage even getting human resource donation of their expertise such as volunteer professionals in different vocations joining our beneficiaries to deliver skills based training or getting physical donations such as food, books, clothing, education kits etc.

The Centre would also double up as an evening study Centre for school going children where they would have access to a well lit room, revision materials as well as a basic meal for school going children. Donations received through the Centre would be disbursed on a need to need basis at the same time ensuring that the hard hit individuals benefit accordingly.