**Educate & Empower, Change a Life in Kenya.**

Progressive Volunteers as a social community organization implements programs and initiatives to assist and support the healthy and positive development of Kenya’s youth culture.

1. **Education Support Program**

The goal of the education programme is to enable children and youth to access high quality and affordable educational opportunities.

Progressive Volunteers understands the power of education for Kenya’s communities and why we promote volunteer initiatives that focus on enabling accessible education for all children. Improving the standard of education, and consequential academic skills, in these communities is a vital step to reduce poverty and to achieve better qualities of life throughout the nation. Education influences the wellbeing and standards of living for all community members.

There are many informal schools in Kenya that struggle to provide an adequate level of education to children living in the community’s overcrowded, low-income areas. These schools are not state-funded; as a result, they are severely under-resourced, under-staffed and often face additional problems such as poor sanitation and dilapidated structures. Progressive Volunteers works with these informal schools to provide and fill the gap with resources such as textbooks and essential learning materials.

a. Adopt-A-Student, Change a Life.

 Progressive Volunteers is working with a team of dedicated volunteers to improve the quality of education, promote access to reading materials and help students gain essential life skills. This entails connecting a student with a benefactor to pay tuition fee and help supply educational materials, and engaging volunteers in the mentorship programme.

Through the mentorship programme, the organisation identifies on an annual basis 60 academically gifted students who need support to continue their education. The organization through a team of dedicated volunteers provide free teaching assistance and support the most underprivileged students through mentorship, and organising extra-curricular activities.

Progressive Volunteers uses school performance in end term exams and national exams to track the impact of our work and longitudinally monitor the progress of the individual students we provide intensive support to. It is envisioned that more students will complete schooling with a high level of literacy and core skills, enabling them to succeed in life.

b. Progressive Community Library project.

Progressive Volunteers established a community library project in Ruaraka to improve access to education and empower local communities. Together with our partners, we established a library within the organisation premise, provided the library with 3,520 textbooks for primary and secondary schools and created a book-lending programme and reading clubs in 12 schools in Ruaraka.

1. **Skills development program**

The goal of the skills development program is to empower people with the skills and opportunities to gain and stay in employment.

Looking beyond the deprivation of Kenyan communities, one of the biggest problems facing communities is a lack of economic opportunities. In many cases people do not have the skills or resources to access employment or generate their own income, despite having the ambition to do so. In other cases, there are those with skills who simply cannot find work. Unemployment is a massive problem and challenge in Kenya – statistics show that the unemployment rate is around 40% and that an estimated 64% of those unemployed are youth. We know that there are a variety of causes contributing to this such as rural to urban migration (caused in part by population growth), economic growth not keeping pace with a growing population and associated large numbers of youth finishing school, significant school drop-out numbers and an education system that does not adequately equip the youth with the right skills to gain employment or entrepreneurial grounding to start their own businesses.

Through our volunteering programme and projects, we seek to address these root causes of unemployment in our communities. We have already gained experience in running small business fund projects and will explore opportunities to expand this including the possibility of partnering with organisations that have specific expertise in the field.

1. Financial Literacy and Small Business Grants projects

Financial Literacy and Small Business Grants project offers grants to women and youth in Ruaraka. Progressive Volunteers identifies women and youth in need to realize their dreams of financial self-sufficiency. The organization conducts business skills trainings on business idea generation, business plan development, sales management, management of finances and reporting. After successful completion of the training, the beneficiaries are given a small grant for business start-up. A $300 grant helps these families start or expand small businesses like shops, tailoring, bakeries, kiosks, shoe shining booths, carpentry shops, cafes, farms etc.

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**Summary**

Thousands of families in Kenya struggle to meet basic needs and provide quality education for children. 29% of students who enroll in secondary schools drop out before completing secondary cycle. This means that opportunities for these semi-literate children are severely limited. This project is helping boost education of 60 children by providing needed resources and breaking the cycle of poverty and unemployment of 40 youth and women through 2 areas: skills training and small business start-ups.

**Challenge**

Drop out in education is a big loss to individuals and societies in Kenya. Dropouts may be due to several factors including; high level of poverty and high cost of education. Thousands of youth and young women struggle to find a meaningful existence and without education, they are caught in a vicious cycle of powerlessness and poverty, with many unfortunately turning to a lifestyle of vices and destructive occupations. They desperately need opportunities and a viable path to self-sufficiency.

**Solution**

This project brings hope and boosts education of 60 students from needy families through provision of tuition and learning resources. This will enhance learning, boost attendance and ensure they complete schooling with high level of literacy and core skills, enabling them to succeed in life. The project also provides training in entrepreneurship and small business startup capital to 40 youth and women. This would help them to start or expand their small businesses and become more self-reliant.

**Long-term Impact**

We are helping to transform communities and the entire nation. The project will raise the literacy level of children and transform lives of youth and women. Individuals and small businesses are able to grow from living in deprivation to a point where they become more self-sufficient and stable.