

Youth sponsorship in vocational skills

Mission Statement: Aspire Rwanda equips vulnerable women and youth with knowledge and skills to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty.

I. A. Background:

Aspire Rwanda is Nonprofit Organization established in 2009 and offers a variety of programs to empower women and youth: vocational skills training, business skills training, micro-credit loans, agricultural support (for participants living in rural areas) and a robust social empowerment and health education program. With new skills as well as knowledge and confidence, our participants are able to secure jobs and/or start their own businesses. In doing so, they acquire a steady source of income improving their financial standing and lives. In the past 7 years, through its various programs, Aspire Rwanda has been able to assist 1300 women and 350 youth.

- **Project/Program Title:** Youth sponsorship-Vocational skills training
- **Funding Focus Area:** Youth Economic Development
- **Requested Cash Amount:** \$ 73,000
- **Project/Program Status:** Pilot
- **Project/Program Start Date :** 01/01/2019
- **Project/Program End Date:** 31/12/2019

II. Project/Program Description

A. Need

The Youth sponsorship program is based on our experience of empowering women economically through vocational skills training. We have seen the significant impact that the vocational skills trainings have on our participants leading to job opportunities and financial independence. In this line of work, we have also identified young people (18-35years) as a

vulnerable group that can equally benefit from vocational skills training. In the neighborhoods that we serve we have met many young high school drop outs unable to find employment and affected by extreme poverty. We would therefore like to expand our services to this group and start a program that will help young people (women and men) improve their livelihood through vocational skills training.

There is a need to implement programs that help young people secure jobs and obtain a steady source of income. This requires investing in programs that provide the youth with marketable skills matching those in need in the labor market. In particular, the labor market in Rwanda is affected by a low level of vocational/entrepreneurship skills among Rwandan youth.

Consequently, technical and vocational skills are central to job creation for this group (Youth Sector Strategy 2013-2018) and it is important to invest in programs that support technical and vocational education training (TVET) for young people.

It is this need that Aspire Rwanda would like to address through the program that will assist vulnerable young people through TVET education. The goal of the sponsorship will be to provide the young people with skills they can use to find employment, acquire a steady source of income and break the cycle of poverty.

C. Program Components

1)TVET education

Aspire Rwanda will identify 100 vulnerable young people from the lowest socio economic class-- in the neighborhoods that we serve and cover expenses for a one year TVET program for them. The selected young people will be high school drop outs or young people with a high school certificate but unable to attend university or secure a job. Selected young people will have the choice to enroll either within a program offered by Aspire (currently hairdressing and Culinary arts) or in an accredited program by another school. This is to ensure that all sponsored students train in a marketable field suited to their natural talents giving them an edge.

D. Sustainability

This initial project is going to serve as a pilot for this program during which we are committed to research models to make it sustainable over the long term. We will follow-up with all 100 students six months after the completion of their training and collect information on their employment status and monthly income.

Aspire Rwanda has extensive experience in the field of vocational skills training and economic empowerment. Since 2009, the organization has offered vocational skills training in hairdressing and beauty as well as home management, housekeeping, cookery, and childcare to vulnerable women to empower them economically and improve their lives. Graduates of the program are able to use their skills to secure jobs and/or start their own businesses. More than 1000 women have received vocational skills training through Aspire and have been able to improve their lives with 85 % graduates currently doing business.

Over the years, the program has been improved to continually meet the needs of our participants. We offer quality training programs accredited by the Workforce Development Authority (WDA) in Rwanda making our graduates more competitive in the job market. Additionally, we consistently work with our graduates to help them find employment. We connect them with potential employers, internship opportunities, and coach them on various work readiness topics (interviews, making resumes, communication, self-confidence etc.). Furthermore, we also offer social and health education training since we are aware that issues such as gender based violence, violation of workers' rights or unplanned pregnancies significantly hinder our participants' economic productivity keeping them from reaching their potential. Finally, to instill an entrepreneurship spirit, we also offer business skills development training to help our participants understand how to start and manage a small business successfully and we offer microcredit loans to a select number of participants with good business proposals.

This holistic approach has been successful as program evaluations demonstrate that our participants are able to use their skills to acquire a steady source of income, improve their lives, and break the cycle of poverty. It is this intervention model that we will implement in the program targeting vulnerable young people with the exception that the program will be opened to both young women and men and we will not restrict program participants to the vocational skills trainings we offer. We will allow participants to select other training programs (e.g. carpentry, electricity, and plumbing) as long as the training can be completed within a year and is accredited by WDA.

E. Team

Behind the successful intervention model described above, Aspire Rwanda has a dedicated team with diverse and complementary professional and educational backgrounds that will help ensure the successful implementation of the program. This team has extensive experience in helping vulnerable people gain vocational skills, find jobs and develop an entrepreneurial spirit.

F. Project Expenses Budget

.Salaries and Benefits: \$11,964

.Administrative Expenses: \$240

.Sponsorship for students: \$60,000

.Other: \$796

.Expenses Total: \$73,000

III. Overall Expected Outcomes

1. Beneficiaries of the program gain knowledge in a specific vocational skills training area by the end of their one-year training.
2. All beneficiaries have a regular monthly income between 6 to 12 months after the program.