LCHOKUTI FOUNDATION PROFILE

Lchokuti Foundation draws its name from the Samburu word meaning “herder/grazer/pastoralist”.

Mission: Empowerment of the local community to alleviate poverty, improve quality of life and achieve general development through facilitation of knowledge, life skills, advice and other assistance both in the formal and informal education sector, while maintaining cultural values and tradition in the process

Core values: transparency, self-sufficiency, sustainability, culture-preserving

The organization was founded by Wilfred Wale Anunda and Marion Ziller as a community based-organization.

The foundation targets pastoralist communities which usually show a high degree of illiteracy and poverty. It was established in 2016 after recognizing the main issues of concern affecting the area of Merille town, Rendille tribe, but might in future be expanded to other pastoralist tribes in Northern Kenya. It aims to aid communities to develop in personal, social and economic aspects (opening up new avenues for them) and abstain from harmful practices in order to grant everybody, be it child or adult, a life respecting basic human rights and needs.

In order to achieve development effectively, we promote education, business and health, ultimately resulting in wealth, higher standard of living, more civilized thinking and increased economic ability. This is more self-sufficient than merely supplying communities with financial help or food.

We try to preserve culture as much as possible in the process, and as long as it is not contradictory to the core beliefs of the foundation

A) Cultural Background and Assessment of the Project Area

The foundation is placed within Merille community tribe of Rendille. This tribe is one of the pastoralist tribes in Northern Kenya, and still very much adheres to and believes in their culture. They are sub-devided into clan which is equivalent to the surname. Rendille people live in manyattas made of sticks covered with cardboard/pieces of clothes. The man is always the head of the family. If he dies, the responsibility will be taken over by the first-born son. In mid-march there ia a specific day when all camels and first-borns come home, and goats are slaughtered at each house and blood being put on the doors.

They are semi-nomadic people, who have inter-married with Samburu tribe, therefore using Samburu language, one of the nilotic languages. They stay as pastoralists with big herds of lifestock which they take to graze at places called fora where more pasture can be found for the animals, as the area is very dry. During dry season most even migrate to faraway places in search for water and pasture staying in the bush. This lifestock is their wealth. However there is still a high level of poverty in the area and food is scarce as the semi-arid area is not suitable for farming. As the infrastructure in the area is still very under-developed, there are not too many opportunities for employment.

There is a high degree of illiteracy amongst the local population. A high proportion of the local population never went to school. They have little or no knowledge of language apart from mothertongue, and in most cases don’t know how to write etc.

Many women are found idling around the manyattas.As farming is not possible in the area due to the dry climate, many people especially women have no activity to engage themselves in.

They also show different reactions to conflict resolution and generally have a different way of thinking. When engaging in a conversation with for example a moran is easily noticeable that the way they view and understand things differs immensely from when you talk with an educated person. They tend to be narrow-minded, having little or no imagination of the outside world and may react differently in situations of disagreement. It might even lead to physical violence.

Those few who did attend formal education have adopted a more modern way of life, but still believe in many cultural rituals and practices such as rules of morans, marriage etc.

Many children are sent to the bush/ fora to graze the family’s lifestock. They can be identified by the characteristic beadwork they put on. They tend to be married at an early age. Apart from those who are send to look after goats, they usually just tend to idle around the manyattas. They have been observed passing the school sometimes in the afternoons, curiously looking at books, and it is obvious they are very eager to learn.

Children are dropped out of school by their parents despite being clever. Quite a few of them are being dropped out of school a few years after they started. This does not happen because the child is not following the lessons, in fact those children are often very clever.

Children who are registered at schools also don’t attend very regularly. At New Dawn Primary School the standard of children has been assessed as very much below average and quite a number also shows signs of problems concerning attention.

This school was started by the current headteacher in 2011 with teaching under a tree, and currently has 157 registered pupils. Below is a detailed assessment of the situation at New Dawn Primary.

* **Ignorance of Parents**

o There are two main pathways a child’s life can go, either they are wearing traditional beads and clothing or they go to school. Those wearing bead are ready to be married even at early ages, and in most cases go to graze the familiy’s lifestock. A considerable number of parents prefer the first option for their children. It is very rare to find a family who sends all children to school.

o Some parents decide to drop their children out of school after a few years at around class 2, joining the above mentioned bead pathway.

o Parents of children who are registered at the school are not overseeing and/or pressuring their children enough to attend school regularly. A considerable number of children are absent each day. The child itself decides whether on a particular day he/she feels like sitting in class or rather staying at home playing. This happens for

usually no reason as opposed to sickness, and parents should encourage daily attendance to achieve good performance. This can be attributed to them not seeing much value in education mostly being illiterate themselves. Generally there is a big lack of support.

o Children are supposed to come both with firewood and water for cooking the free lunch they are provided with at school. Despite many reminders only a small proportion of children come with these necessities each morning, hence delaying or compromising meal preparation.

o School parents’ meetings are only attended by very low percentage of parents, as low as three or four out of a hundred.

*Reason:*

o Many parents tend not to see the importance and the advantages of education. Themselves they usually never went to school and thus do not foresee the benefits education can bring to somebody’s future life, both regarding broader way of thinking and financial gain.

* **Problems in the teaching/learning process**

o There is a very low standard of all, but especially the lower classes, when compared to other parts of the country. For example 2/3 of class 3 pupils don’t know how to read.

o Most children are lacking a good foundation. Without certain basic skills it is almost impossible for them to be able to grasp the advanced knowledge they are supposed to be taught in the following year. Particularly skills like knowing letters, numbers and ability to read are posing a big challenge during lessons.

o A huge challenge in most classes is lack of attention and insufficient co-operation of pupils during classwork. Children are found to be occupying themselves with other

things than they are told to, completely refuse to answer the teacher or copy down notes from the blackboard, or even as far as packing up their books in the middle of an ongoing lesson walking out of the classroom. Generally there is a high level of idling and noise-making.

o Pupils of the same class differ a lot in what they are able to do and what they fail to understand completely. Some very few are well up to their expectations, whereas others should go back down two classes in a particular subject in order to catch up, which thus makes teaching one class as a whole very challenging.

*Reasons:*

o Insufficient class time due to lack of sufficient teachers. There are only two trained teachers and 5 classes plus nursery.

o Teacher goes out of class during exercise time, i.e. lack of proper follow-up whether pupils complete their work and/or are able to do what they are expected to

o Different teachers deliver many “one time teachings” rather than a continued structured lesson plan.

o Insufficient learning resources including textbooks. For example one textbook has to serve the whole class forcing the teacher to copy everything to the blackboard.

o Insufficient class rooms resulting in pupils getting distracted by parallel teaching of the other class the room is shared with. The school has five classes plus nursery, but only 3 classrooms.

* **Hygiene/ food intake issue**

o Children eat their food with their bare unwashed dirty hands, possibly even from plastic bags/ empty oil containers

o No direct water source on the compound

o There is the same type of food at school every day, and at home many children are also not provided with sufficient food (e.g. no dinner, breakfast) and not supplied with a balanced healthy diet.

*Reasons:*

o Poverty

o No growth of crops possible due to drought climate

B) Programmes of the Foundation

1. Informal Education/Advisory Programme

This programme targets all age sets in the local population of Rendille, i. e. warriors, women, school-dropouts, elders. *These people are generally non-educated and many of them are illiterate and only know their tribal language. As most never attended school, they have a different understanding and view of life.*

It aims to empower them by teaching literacy, health issues (e.g. hygiene, first aid, reproductive health, FGM), life skills, and others. This will be done in two groups divided by age.

Furthermore, as part of this programme sporting competitions and entertainment events will be organized providing sensible spending of time reducing engagement in illegal activities.

Occasionally guest speakers might be invited to increase impact on the messages that are supposed to reach the minds of these members of the community.

Generally the foundation will also advocate against harmful cultural practices such as FGM and child marriage.

In future technical training like tailoring, carpentry are planned to be established.

This programme is conducted in a way which aims not to interfere or extinguish their lifely culture and traditional values. Therefore it is not our goal to force Western lifestyle upon them, but rather integrate and combine both in order to improve their quality of life.

2. School Programme

This programme targets all children who are supposed to attend formal primary education, i.e. up to class 8. It is aimed to improve their learning environment regarding resources including classrooms, books and other material, as well as regarding number of teachers.

Furthermore, parental attitude towards education is addressed, as it substantially contributes to pupils’ general progress.

Besides, the programme aims at campaigning for more children to start their lives as school going pupils rather than the other option as lifestock grazing children.

On the financial side, we are looking for sponsorships and other financial assistance for children from especially poor backgrounds.

Specific steps planned:

* Establish prize system rewarding attendance and good behavior
* Put up wall posters easily visible to all pupils
* Entice parents to attend meetings by providing snacks
* Initiate meeting by bigger introduction meeting providing food and informing them about foundation’s aims and practices as well as planned prize system
* Supply free uniform/ pay school fees for families who send all children to school
* Engage people with higher impact on them to address them regarding their attitude
* Provide pupils with individual help to bring pupils to the same level, and generally increase their low standard
* Employ untrained low-paid teachers

3. Business Programme

This programme targets anybody with a lot of free time, business ideas, and/or no network or capital to market their products.

Specifically we aim to support women crafting bead products by opening up an opportunity for them to earn some extra money through finding of a market abroad to sell their beadwork. *Many of them are found idling in their manyattas each and every day with no activity around as for example farming.*

In future, if funds allow, an interest-free loan scheme is planned providing capital in order to help locals establish small businesses.

Furthermore assistance in form of transfer of business skill and other advice will be obtainable.

These objectives will be achieved through engagement of local staff in exchange for a small compensation. On top of aiding the organization this way locals themselves also benefit directly.

Furthermore, we recruit international volunteers to assist with the projects. They pay a small fee catering for their food and accommodation plus a contribution which assists in sustaining the programmes. The advantage of engaging people from outside Kenya is also that the local community gets exposed to the outside world as they generally don’t get the chance to engage in travelling. They can hear and learn from each other about their respective cultures.

Besides, on an occasional basis, the foundation might draw the aid of free local helpers like parents to cater for a special events they benefit from in exchange for snacks.

Concerning finance, the foundation draws its funds from proposals and well-wishers.

The process of establishing links with partner organisations, both in-country and abroad is ongoing.