

Education is better than Donations

(Original)

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(Age 24, Tanzania <Living in Australia>)

Being born and raised in a third world country, I've always seen the struggle of poverty. In 2011, I began my research to identify the diverse needs of children in my society especially the ones living in poverty. People and organisations visit orphanages to give out donations and it's helpful. However, I asked myself "Is this sustainable?"

One Saturday afternoon, I planned to visit an orphanage. I struggled as the road was not accessible by car. As I approached the place, strangers were staring at me and whispering. I noticed that people rarely visited the orphanage unless it was a special season. And whenever visitors went there, the kids knew that they were getting donations.

After speaking with some local men, I was given directions on how to get there. Something like turn left, walk, turn right, jump over, and walk up the hill then left. As I got closer to the orphanage, I could hear sounds of children running. They came running towards me with open arms and hugged me so tight. They held my hand and told me 'Karibu' which means 'Welcome'. I must say, the joy in their faces was unexplainable.

They took me to their house and sang for me a welcome song. I got a bit nervous knowing that I did not have any donations. Moreover, I didn't want to see their joy turn into disappointment. I told them that I wanted to spend time with them, get to know them then next time I would bring my friends to do more activities with them.

Their reaction really touched my heart. I could see the excitement in their eyes. Some of them jumped up and said "Yes, I want to be a designer"; "Look, I can draw"; "Aunty, see I can dance"; "I want to be a footballer". They began to speak out their dreams boldly. They were very happy to hear that I was interested to know about their talents. I took time to see what each of them had to present and we also went outside for sports. It was such an amazing evening, they were genuinely happy and I thought to myself "What kind of donation would have made them happy like that?".

On that day, the children didn't want me to leave. I said a word of prayer with them and promised them that I would be back. I told them I had to leave since it was getting dark.

Some of them kept on hugging me, saying '*Usiondoke*' which means '*Please don't go*'. Finally, one of them said, "*Aunty, you prayed for us, now can we pray for you too before you go?*" They came around me and one of them was leading the prayer as the rest of them repeated after him. They asked Angels of God to go ahead of me everywhere I go; and prayed that God would protect me; and that whenever I go visit them, I would feel safe with them.

Right there and then, I could tell that these kids were longing to have good relationships. They need people who can visit them regularly and not just on a one-time occasion. If we listen beyond their prayer, we will realise that they don't need people to give donations and leave. They need people who can stay. Let us put the donations down and look at them like our own children, our sisters and brothers. Let us engage with them and help them grow. They need love just like you and me. They don't need to be tagged '*poor*' to get our attention. I choose to see them just like I see every other child, they are precious.

This experience led me to pioneer a social enterprise with a mission of educating and training their talents to equip them with competent skills that will be a catalyst for their sustainable growth and development.

"Donations can't bring sustainable change. My passion is to educate the young generation who are not able to attend school due to poverty. I believe this can help them become independent and reduce poverty in the long run".

- Fortunate Prosper (Tanzania)