

Reborn Kyoto project boosting the TVET government strategy on skills development



A trainee displays one of the products. Quality of the products is one of the most considered factor

By Grace Mugoya

Last year, Reborn Kyoto, a non profit organization working to nurture the economic independence of young and old women in developing countries through the instruction of dressing and textile technology using donated Japanese traditional dress known as Kimono extended its operations to Rwanda; the first African country the organization decided to have a foot print.



Concurrent teching in English and Kinyarwanda has contributed to easy learning

The organization that is implementing a project dubbed “Life Empowerment

Project through acquiring high level cloth fabrication skill” is being funded

by the Grant Assistance NGO Project by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

In partnership with the Government of Rwanda through the Workforce Development Authority; the government’s body charged with the mandate to promote, facilitate and guide the development and upgrading of skills and competencies of the national workforce to enhance competitiveness and employability, the three year’s project boosting the Technical Vocational Education Training programme (TVET).



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – WDA

Empowering people with employable skills and entrepreneurship capacity



Daniel Nshimiimana another teacher attends to trainees

Government target is to increase students pursuing Technical and Vocational Education and Training courses to 60 per cent of the total secondary school student population in the country by 2017. This is aimed at putting much emphasis on courses that are demand-driven and which increase job-creation opportunities.

“Two years ago, our organization conducted a survey and found out that in this country, there are well motivated youth with the courage to work but with no opportunities to actually break through the economically disadvantage youth groups; the reason the organization decided that we must start from here to work hand in hand with government to empower these youths,” says Yasuko Yamahira, the Project Director.

In the World, the organization also operates in Yemen, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; and according to Yamahira, the programmes has been successful and that what the organization is doing in the country is to ensure that it also boosts the national strategy of skills development to enable the local population especially the youth to produce products that will effectively contribute towards sustainable development.

To achieve this, the project has devel-



In addition to using the sewing machines, there are also tasks that requires trainees to use other equipments and tools

oped a mechanism to impart skills to the youth to come up with finished products basically with the Made in Rwanda style through modernizing fashion and style; products expected to creation of employment opportunities.

Operating with in Gacuriro Vocational Training Center, Gasabo district, the programme is currently benefiting 50 youth free of charge. The project start-

ed in June last year but actual training of the beneficiaries kicked off in September; and they will be graduating in late June this year.

Yamahira is optimistic that the project will enable beneficiaries to live a life they hope for; saying that it will further bridge the gaps and build capacity as well as promote fashion in the country.

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Cloth Fabrication Specialist Tsukasa Suzuki displays one of the products

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She urges that high quality skills are always competitive on the market and that products of their graduates or quality of the clothes have a very big role it plays when it comes to prices and marketing.

Capacity to provide skills to beneficiaries

Before the beginning of this project, there was a training of trainers which enabled building the capacity of Rwandan instructors to teach students as the programme requires. The training was conducted by instructors from Japan from June last year to September.

This according to officials has contributed to having an effective team that has seen them teaching in both Kinyarwanda and English concurrently. Learners are allowed to express themselves in the two languages; and that this too has been one factor that has enabled easy and fast learning.

Since the project started, officials say that students have at least managed to make four items including the Kikondo fabrication which is 100 per cent silk; and it's the first step for any beneficiary. After the five products, beneficiaries will then concentrate on producing innovative and modern traditional wear from the common cloth known as 'Ikitenge'.

"The very reason we are also training trainers is due to the fact that this is a government project and after three years, the Japan's team will have to leave but this project will remain; meaning that Rwanda's must own it right from the beginning because they will have to take it to the next level even without us so that it benefits quite a bigger number," she says.

Just like those who had the chance to benefit from this, officials note that there is a big number out there very much in need of the life skills and that this is evident by the number of applicants who turned up in a very short time from which the 52 were selected.

The minimum requirements for one to benefit from the project is that this person must at least have completed senior three and it is of advantage if he or she can speak English. In addition to that, the person undergoes an exclusive interview to test one's intellect.

However, despite the need and com-



Yasuko Yamahira supports trainees during their group work



One the Kinyarwanda instructor, Neol Nkubito during a one on one with trainees



Staff members with the Project Director, Yasuko Yamahira (C)

mitment, the support and equipment available for the programme is limited to the number of beneficiaries. Currently, the programme is run on thirteen electronic industrial sewing machines which were imported from Singapore. Students go for training in shifts. There is a morning and evening shift.

After the three years, the centre will then be used as a production unit where first beneficiaries will be in position to pass on the skills to other youths. In promoting the project, officials say that shop should be opened in strategic positions to attract foreigners as well as locals to get market for such products.

"After being able to make the required products, it is equally important to market these products if people are to remain in business and by opening up shop, we shall then be sure that the public or our clients will be able to get access to our products," Yamahira says.

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Some of the trainees pose for a group photo with a team of staff members

Beneficiaries speak out

The project is benefiting youths with different education back ground from across the country. Most of those who were interviewed are drop outs with no financial means to go for further education while others do not have any life skills.

Looking excited, the beneficiaries say the future is bright attributing it to the skills they are currently getting. Twenty Seven years old Jean Claude Hagumintwali is one of those with great ambitions after completing his course.

“I did not have any life skills but with this training, am sure I will not only be able to seek for a job, but also with the capacity to start my own,” he says. Hagumintwali is a youth leader of Nyakabanda Sector in Nyarugenge district.

He says that upon completion, he will automatically seek for a job before he looks around to buying his own sewing machine. There are quite a number of things or plans that Hagumintwali looks up to. However, he is very sensitive on starting his own business to further pass on the skills he is acquiring to other youths.

“It all starts with having an ambition and this will actually give me a task of looking around to fulfill my dream; and what I actually want is to ensure that I work and start my own life, have a family but all this can never happen if I do not have somewhere to start from—the reason I insist to buy this sewing machines,”

she said. The high tech machines cost USD 650 each, according to Yamahira.

The student is very much aware of how hard it is to raise the much the sewing machine costs, but says

through determination, he is sure he will have one.

Fatty Francine Usanase, another beneficiary says that since she started the course, there is a lot she has achieved based on her capacity to come up with finished products of various styles or fashion.

Usanase is a former student of Epanya secondary School in Nyanza district, Southern Province. She did accountancy and has worked with various Sacco's. The twenty six year old says that she decided to join the others to building on her ability to take on other works.

“The more skilled labour becomes, the more chances to get a job or even move from one place to another; therefore, I believe that with my decision to enroll for this training, it will help me in a sense that I will be able to work in this field,” Usanase says.

Usanase says that the government should come up with a mechanism through which support can be challenged to boost the project which she says is required with a big number especially those out of Kigali or in the rural areas.

The twenty six year old acknowledges that it was by lack that she was given the opportunity out of the many who wish to have the chance. She notes that it will not be of much importance for graduates to have the skills with out put it in proper use due to the lack on startup kits or the machines.

The president of cloth fabrication of Reborn Kyoto to visit

In line with checking on the progress of the project the president and head of the cloth fabrication of the project will end of this month visit from Japan. This will also be an opportunity for the project to officially open door.



Fatty Francine Usanase, one of the trainees putting on her own make of the dress.

WDA committed to supporting the project



Last year, Yamahira shared a progress report for the project with the Director General of WDA, Jerome Gasana in which trainees were commended for their quick learning and mastering. In the period of two months, the trainees had mastered the techniques that enable them to tailor very nice skirts and blouses which are 100 percent Japanese silk Kimono.

The first class will be graduating in June this year while selections for the next intake will begin in July. Classes will then begin in August. Although the project is slated to last three years, officials say the third year will be used to concentrate more on how the project can easily be sustained.

Gasana says that the project is a pilot project to check on its effectiveness in contributing the government's bigger Technical, Vocational Education and Training programme. He says that based on the information in the progress report, the project is good and that plans are underway to further support it.

"Immediately after the graduation or when the first batch of students is out, we intend to open shop and this

will actually help in giving the pioneers a chance to use their skills since we believe there will be market for the products that they will be producing," Gasana says.

He noted that already there is clear evidence that the project is helping trainees to earn even before they have completed their studies. The project, Gasana says, has po-

tential to contribute towards government's efforts to tame the problem of youth unemployment.

Gasana further more commends the project for its entrepreneurship component. According to him, through forming cooperatives, trainees will easily benefit from the project. He believes that this will create both manu-

facturers and sales people. The Government of Rwanda has of late put more focus on vocational and technical training as a way of streamlining the education system to suit the pressing demands of the labour market. It is the same trend in neighbouring Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

WDA's intervention in skills

development programmes was to be hands-on, away from the theoretical knowledge often offered by formal education and to reach out to more of the student population.

According to Gasana, the target is to have mass production but that most important thing to be considered is market response; and that marketing strategies have a very significant role to play in the success of this project. On sustaining the project after the three years, WDA says that it has already started making concrete plans that will make it benefit more youths in the long-run.

Unlike the ordinary form of education system that experts urge has not guaranteed employment despite the increased number of higher learning institutions and universities, WDA is optimistic that the policy to promote vocational education will address the unemployment problem.

The policy is considered to be one of the factors that will enable the government to achieve the long term object of Vision 2020. This is much anticipated to effectively contribute towards transforming the country into a middle income class.



The Director General of WDA, Jerome Gasana checking some of the products made by the trainees. Yamahira had also presented the progress report of the project