

## **CREDIT UNION DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM-**

### **PROJECT: PARTNERING FOR EXCELLENCE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE RURAL AREA - NYAMNINIA PRIMARY SCHOOL, SIAYA COUNTY, KENYA**

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#### **1. Background**

I am a member and delegate of Stima Sacco Cooperative Society Limited domiciled in Kenya where I have served as both a board member and a member of the supervisory committee. I undertook the African Credit Union Development Education program held in Mombasa in Kenya in 2018 and the American Credit Union Development Education Program held in Madison, Wisconsin, in the USA in early 2019. I decided in 2018 that my project would focus on education that is related to the seventh co-operative principle, which is 'Concern for the Community'. The Cooperative movement is community-minded and plays a significant role on the sustainable development of communities. Education is a precursor to development especially in uplifting communities, is an essential human virtue, a necessity of society, basis of the good life, and a sign of freedom. Education can be both an objective and component of development, as well as "fundamental to the broader notion of expanded human capabilities that lie at the heart of the meaning of development" (Todaro and Smith, 2011, p.359).

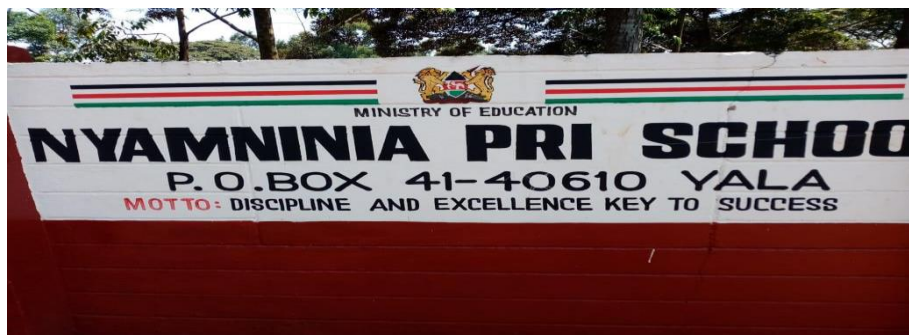
Investment in education is essential for development, and is of critical importance in addressing key challenges to educational outcomes as well as achievement of developmental goals. Education, in particular, is essential for both economic growth and development; numerous models of economic growth include human capital as an important explanatory variable in the achievement of economic growth. Focus on education impacts a large number of persons in the community as it secures one's future by opening opportunities to improve on one's livelihood. Based on this background I selected one of the rural schools in the village. I decided to choose a school in the rural area, as there is a tendency to concentrate on schools in the urban areas whilst neglecting or putting very little interest in schools in the rural area. Nyamininia Primary School stood out as one of the projects for community service as I was interested in nurturing the education of pupils at the primary level to build a strong educational foundation. In my interaction with the school for the past three years, my focus has been on the girl child, improving education standards, and improving on water, sanitation, and hygiene. To this end during the last three years, I have carried out various activities that boosted the morale of the students to work hard and achieve higher grades.

#### **2. Overview of Nyamininia Primary School**

Nyamininia Primary School was started by the Anglican Church in 1929 to cater to the community and was built together with the church. The school served the community for a long time before other additional schools were established. Nyamininia Primary School is a public primary school based in Yala Township, Gem sub-county Siaya County, Kenya. Incidentally, my father schooled

here in the 1930s. The school was one of the institutions identified in 2004 for support by the Millennium project. The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) was a project of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, the United Nations Development Programme, and Millennium Promise. Millennium Villages designed a programme to demonstrate how to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in rural Africa over 10 years through integrated, community-led development at a very low cost. The first Millennium Village started in Sauri, which includes Yala Township in Kenya in August 2004 and exited in 2015. The Millennium Villages Program aimed to promote an integrated approach to rural development. By improving access to clean water, sanitation, and other essential infrastructure such as education, food production, basic health care, and by focusing on environmental sustainability.

Currently, Nyamninia Primary School has a population of 608 pupils, 327 boys, and 281 girls. It has eleven classrooms and classes start from Preprimary 1, Preprimary 2, and then standard one right up to standard eight. Most pupils are day scholars although the school has fifty-one boarders mainly from upper primary classes. The school has fourteen teachers' sponsored by the government and three teachers sponsored by the Board of Management, as well as six support staff. The school motto is Discipline and Excellence Key to Success. A significant partner in this program is the Rotary Club of Karura where am a member.



*The school motto, which is at the gate, reminds the children of where they need to put their focus.*



*The school vision and mission*

### 3. Donation of books to the school in March 2019

I initiated a program together with my friends and associates to assist the school in various, ways, the first being to donate learning books to the early childhood education pupils as well as revision books on all subjects to the Standard eight pupils who were to sit the national examinations at the end of their primary education. I also mentored the pupils and gave advice together with my husband on the virtues of studying hard to better their lives and afford them more opportunities in the future. Being a role model from the community the pupils were able to identify with me and therefore assured me of their success in the forthcoming national examinations.



*Donation of school books to preprimary pupils and the Head teacher, Ms Florence Ong'anda by myself.*



*Dr. Anne Owuor talking to the pre-primary pupils with the donated schoolbooks,*





*The head teacher Ms Florence Ong'anda together with the pupils receiving the donation of books from - Dr. Anne Owuor. The books given laid a basis for the pupils to intensify their reading.*



*Pupils listening to Dr. Anne E. Owuor*

Standard eight pupils listening to advice from me (Dr. Anne Owuor) on utilization of the books to achieve excellence in the examinations. The revision books engaged the learners to undertake maximum revision. The pupils assured that they would receive an improved average score at the end of the year national examinations.

#### **4. Spelling Bee Competition**

The American Scripps National Spelling Bee is an over 80-year old educational contest open to English-speaking nations around the world. Spelling bees originated in the USA in the late 1700s. The earliest known example is a spinning bee in 1769. Other early occurrences are a husking bee (1816), an apple bee (1827), and a logging bee (1836). Today's term "Spelling bee" originated from the USA, as first seen printed in 1875, but it is assumed that it was in use several years before that.

#### 4a) Kenya National Spelling Bee

The Kenya National Spelling Bee (KNSB) is Kenya's largest English Language Spelling Championship started in a quest to promote a reading culture. It helps Learners improve their communication skills; develop & nurture intra-personal skills and values such as self-esteem, self-awareness, confidence, personal integrity, encourage critical literacy & reflection; inspire intercultural understanding by creating learning communities in which Learners can increase their understanding of language and culture deliberately designed to help them become more globally engaged. The Spelling Bee competition held annually and conducted in partnership, with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, the Kenya Private Schools Association, and the Kenya Primary Head Teachers Association, among others. The Spelling Bee phenomenon introduced in Kenya through a pilot phase in Nairobi County before the National roll out to other Counties. In 2016, the program rolled out to all the Sub-Counties in Nairobi – The prize was a fully paid trip to Johannesburg, South Africa for the top three students and their teachers.

In 2019, Nyamninia Primary school enrolled Samantha Milan to represent the school in the competition. The school had adopted a strong reading culture, enhanced by the revision study books that I had presented. The 2019 competition kicked off whereby Pupils sat for a Spelling Bee written test from which the top three Pupils proceeded to the Sub County & County Championships in the 40 participating Counties. The top three Spellers from the County Championships then proceeded to Nairobi County for the National Spelling Bee Championship & TV Show.



*Samantha Milan Bolo with a cheque and the bus she won for the school*

Samantha received a brand new 29 Seater School Bus for her school from DT Dobie Kenya, a cash prize of half a million Kenyan shillings for her, a laptop for her & her teacher from Office Mart Kenya, a paint makeover for her school by Crown Paints. The school also received a 5,000-litre water tank from Kentank, a Shs 50,000 school fees sponsorship from Kentainers Ltd, a Shs 50,000

cash prize for her teacher, and gift hampers from Festive Bread, TingTing (Kenafric Industries Ltd), Kentainers Ltd, Crown Paints, and I&M Bank Ltd. Samantha thereafter proceeded to the African Competition held in Jinja, Uganda.



*The 26 seater bus branded with the school name and the name of Samantha Milan*



*The scholarship cheque for Shs50, 000 together with the 5000 litres water tank.*

#### **4b) 4<sup>th</sup> African Spelling Bee Championship**

The Champions of the 2019 Kenya National Spelling Bee Championship travelled to Jinja, Uganda with their Teachers for the fourth African Spelling Bee Championship where they faced



Champions from 11 other Countries. Samantha Milan proved that she could Spell Like a Champion and emerged the top Speller in the Junior category whilst Team Kenya emerged position 2 overall.



*Part of the Kenyan Team to the fourth African Spelling Bee Competition*



*The trophies received by the Kenyan team and smiling faces of the triumphant winners- Samantha who won first position and was the top seller in her category and the overall 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize for Kenya .*

## **5. School performance in 2019/2020**

In the year 2019, the school performed well in the Kenya Certificate for Primary Education examinations as they managed to achieve a mean score of 331 out of 500 from an enrollment of 63 candidates. That is an average of 66% and the highest score was 413 from an orphaned boy whilst Samantha was the best performing girl as she achieved a mean score of 382 or 76.5%. The lowest score was 259 or 54.5% an indication that the school achieved a 100% pass rate. In the year 2020 the school improved and achieved a mean score of 351.41 out of 500 with an enrollment of 57 candidates getting an average score of 70% with the four highest scores being achieved by girls.

## 6. Presentation of COVID 19 prevention kits

The first confirmed COVID-19 reported case was on March 14, 2020, in Kenya. The government adopted several containment measures, including social distancing and heightened restrictions in most non-essential social spaces to gatherings; encouragement of teleworking where possible; establishment of isolation facilities; declaration of night curfew and limitations on public transportation passenger capacity. With this situation at hand, I contacted the school head teacher to find out what type of assistance could we offer the school during these circumstances. The interest was primarily to assist the institution to comply with the measures announced by the government on how to be prepared in taking COVID 19 preventative measures especially in the opening of schools. It with this in mind that I managed to get the resources required to be able to donate eight hand-washing stations, three thermo-guns that measure body temperature, twenty litres of sanitizers, ten kilograms of soap, 200 face masks and 1000 sanitary pads for the 90 girls young who had reached menstruation age to cover one year.



*Presentation of Covid 19 prevention items and sanitary pads to the head teacher Ms Florence Ong'anda by me (Dr. Anne Owuor)*

The presentation of sanitary pads boosted the school as the girls attendance to all their classe was assured. UNESCO estimating that around half of all school-age girls do not have access to sanitary pads. Indeed the 2016 UNESCO report estimates that one in 10 girls in Sub-Saharan Africa is



absent from school during their menstrual cycle. Without sanitary pads, girls are not able to participate and attending school because they feel ashamed or “unclean”. This has led to many girls dropping out of school once they start their menstrual periods leaving them vulnerable to early marriage, which is a violation of their rights. Managing menstruation for young girls improves their dignity and has a remarkable influence on their educational performance as they will not be absent from school when they are menstruating. The Covid 19 prevention items presented to the school consisting of handwashing sets, thermoguns, sanitizers, facemasks and soap were a real motivation and a booster in ensuring the children remained safe during the COVID 19 epidemic; as they were able continuously to wash their hands.



*Presentation of sanitary pads and message to the pupils*

One of the girls in the school receiving a package of sanitary pads from the Chairman of the school in addition to myself. The girls were very happy and promised to surprise us with their examination results. Addressing the pupils and informing them of the importance of keeping hygiene in school and especially washing their hands at all times.

## **7. School feeding program**

The school feeding program initially started by the MVP continued even after the sponsor's exit. The school continued to feed the pupils through the farm produce of bananas, maize and vegetable plantation, keeping dairy cows for milk and chickens for eggs as well as meat.



*Bananas and vegetable plantation*



*Livestock in the farm- dairy cows and chicken*

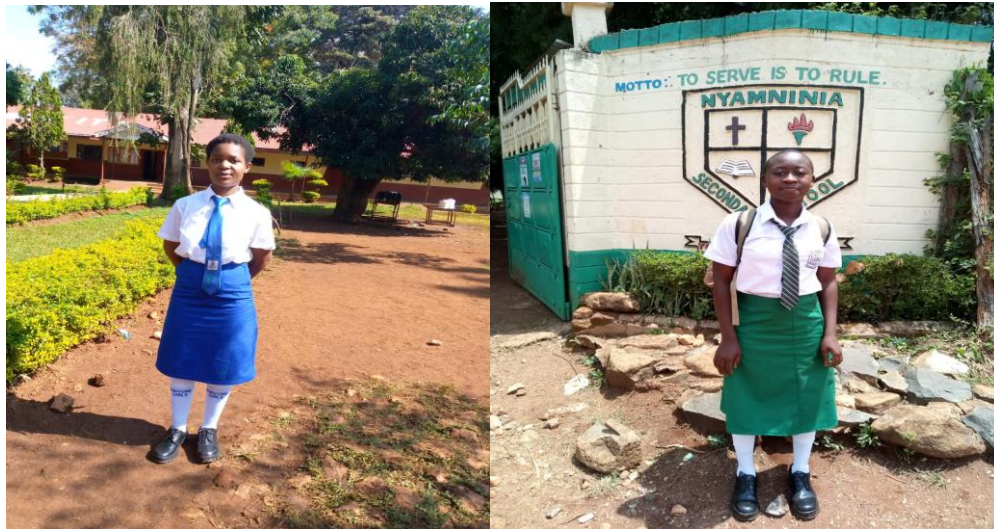
Parents are also encouraged to bring maize and beans to supplement the school's farm produce. The parents apart from offering cereals also pay the cooks engaged in the feeding program. This ensures that pupils partake of meals as part of the school program and remain healthy and well fed, thus able to concentrate on their studies. The school farm also doubles as a learning venture as pupils are taught farming as part of the extra-curricular activities.

## **8. School performance in 2021**

In the year 2020 due to the CORONA 19 epidemic schools remained closed for most of the year and no examinations were held. In early 2021 the KCPE examinations were held in March 2021 and the school performed well. The results were exemplary as the school had three top students with over 400 marks all girls, Florence Akinyi 406 marks or 81.2%, Ivy Achieng 404 marks or 80.8% , and Milka Awuor 402 marks or 80.4% whilst the boy with the highest mark had 392marks or 78.4%. The lowest student had 283 marks or 56.6% whilst the average mean for the school was



351.4 marks or 70.3%. Again the school had a 100% pass rate with the best performing subject being Science with an average mean of 72.47% followed by Mathematics with an average score of 71.36%.



The two girls I am sponsoring in secondary school in the left Milka Owino who obtained 402 points or an average of 80% and is at Bunyore Girls School. We have Sharon Otieno who got 357 points or an average of 71% but her mother was unable to fund her further education due to poverty as she had initially lost her father and later on also lost her guardian leaving the mother to fend for her and her siblings.

## 9. Conclusion

It has been very fulfilling being part of the school community and mentoring the pupils as well as assisting the school in its activities. The pupils especially the girls have surprised me with their performance in their examination and I believe they were highly motivated by my visits and contributions to the school. I believe I have influenced their lives and played a part in their success. On all my visits, the reception overflowed with warmth, love, and gratitude. My delight is to see happy faces and an empowered teaching fraternity who together with the pupils focused on one direction of achieving success. The school still faces various challenges such as funds to support the extra teachers employed by the school Board of Management, furnishing the dining hall constructed with the assistance of the Siaya county government, additional classrooms as well as more dormitories to cater to the growing demand for boarding facilities as well as building a library. We aim to continue collaborating with the school in safeguarding the interests of the pupils to quality education in addition to assisting with the development of the school. We believe in working in harmony with the school management to create a friendly, self-sustaining centre of excellence that provides valuable education to the community.

*AE Owuor*

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