

Improving lives through small scale training in computer skills: Ndola Resource Cooperative Society, Zambia

The IICD-supported Resource Cooperative Society in Ndola, in the Copperbelt region of Zambia, trains its students in life long skills enabling them to improve their standard of living. Isaac Chanda, the administrative director of the resource centre explains the approach and how individuals and the community benefit from their trainings.

Privatisation and closure of most industries has left Zambia in a deplorable state. Unemployment has greatly increased which has brought about high levels of poverty. The few employed people are subjected to poor conditions of service. Recent statistical information entails that an average Zambian family feeds on less than a dollar a day. Most Zambians have resorted to peasant farming, although an average Zambian finds it difficult to buy necessary farm inputs such as fertiliser seeds. Due to the above and other factors, most Zambian youths have resorted to beer drinking, stealing, smoking, prostitution and other immoral vices as they happen to find refuge in them.

The rapid population growth, and the spread of ignorance among youths and the general population is threatening. Most youths and women regard themselves as failures. This thought is in the minds of people in Zambia. Most of them rely on the aid that comes from government and other wellwishers to sustain their lives. Such thoughts are not needed since, as the Christian Bible says "As a man thinks, so he is". Every person can agree with us that when one thinks low of oneself, it results in low standard achievements. Generally it is because of this kind of thinking that causes them to think that they can never do anything constructive in life, and risk always being subjected to low education, illiteracy and poverty.

The Resource Cooperative Society

As Resource Cooperative Society, we believe that if we succumb to our weaknesses, we give up in everything that we are determined to do. However when we highlight our strengths, we shall endure to reach our goal. We think that thoughts can give rise to destiny, either good or bad. "Thoughts give rise to decision", "Decision gives rise to action", "Actions give rise to habit", "Habit gives rise to character and Character shall give rise to Destiny".



Kawama youth outside the centre.

We are situated within the heart of peoples' home and interact constantly with the local surroundings, allowing us to understand that Zambian people are psychologically disturbed by their negative thoughts. We have been trying to change people's thoughts, and encourage self-reliance. We have been training youths and women in pottery, brick making, tailoring, carpentry, joinery and last, but not least, Computer Skills. Together with these skills, we impart good morals and elicit certain human values from them so that they live and work with people in harmony.

The impact of training

The skills that are imparted to them enable them to either work independently or be employed. The materials involved are very cheap, allowing them to work and live independently. In tailoring for instance, we have trained about ten women, a few which have been employed while most of them are running independent businesses after acquiring a sewing machine. In other instances, a lot of saving has been experienced as most women can now sew their children's clothing when they get torn and in some instances clothes are sewn in houses which are cheaper than those bought in shops, thereby reducing certain costs and expenses within the vicinity of the house.



Products from the brick making work.

Brick training has seen about thirty youths working independently. They make bricks using ordinary clay which is free of charge. These bricks are burnt using fire wood and later sold. Some youths are hired to do some construction work which is also a skill obtained at our centre.

Even though our impact has not been felt very much by the Ndola population at large, we have at least made a difference with the people that we have managed to train.

Introduction of computers

The introduction of computers has greatly strengthened our training programmes and empowered a lot of youths. Knowledge and skills in handling computers and programmes is very vital and necessary. Resource Cooperative Society is now a training centre for computer skills. We have conducted computer lessons for not only our registered members but to also for the general community. Despite having only three computers we have managed to train over eighty students since last year. Most of our graduates have found employment as secretaries and other relevant jobs pertaining to the use of computers. We have been able to generate income for the centre by offering computer lessons at a fee that is affordable for our surrounding community.

From all the training programmes conducted at the centre, the desire to be trained in computer courses from the general public has greatly increased. Our centre has been receiving orders from recognised firms and institutions of up to seventy students to be trained; for example, we will conduct lessons for AWM College amounting to almost seventy students.

Most of these well established institutions are offering courses which require computer training, and since they do not have computer lab, we want to partner with them. When it is time for computer lessons they send their students to our centre and obtain our services, in turn generating income for our centre. It has however been difficult to run such big orders since we only have three computers and one printer.

Moving on as a Resource Centre

By increasing the number of computers we could meet the demand of the community, as well as improving the quality and nature of training, improve the standard of education offered at the centre, and increase the income that we generate. That income will in turn be used to improve the quality of other training skills offered at the centre such as pottery and brick making. We can use the proceeds to decorate our product and improve on the mankind and quality. Among other things, we are also looking at the acquisition of an overhead projector, as this would facilitate our release of information to our students and would again improve on our quality of education.

We are a team that believes in selfless service, where service is above self. Like what one man said; "The greatest reward a man can ever get out of his toil is not what he earns out of it, but what he becomes by it." We are a team that would like to see Zambia change and consequently Africa.

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