

I'll Go
Will Robertson
robertw2

This project is concerned about getting people out of poverty. The goal of this project is to teach relevant and valuable skills to people living in poverty. By teaching people skills that can help them earn money this project could help many people get out, and stay out, of poverty. What makes this project different than other humanitarian projects is that this project's goal is to keep people out of poverty, for good. Many charities and organizations go to suffering communities and build houses, schools, and infrastructure to help people. While these are helpful, teaching people skills that can get them a job and a steady income is much more valuable.

According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. And they "die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death." [1] People become poor because they cannot work for compensation. How people ended up in poverty varies greatly, but people get out of poverty by finding a stable income. This project can help people find that stable income by teaching them skills that are relevant to their community and can help them earn a steady income.

For example, consider this anecdote. A child is born in a rural area of the Dominican Republic. The mother is not able to work because she is taking care of the children and the father loses his job. The father worked as a manual laborer and has no other skills. He cannot find work to provide for his children or their mother. What if nearby there is a factory that assembles furniture using various tools and machines? If the father has worked in the fields his entire life, he won't have the necessary skills to work at that factory. This project could send someone with experience with the tools used at the factory, bring a few tools to let people learn, and help people in the community gain the skills to work at the factory.

What is frustrating about the above situation is that the father always had the ability to learn how to use the tools and machines, but not the resources. Nearly everyone is able to learn a skill that can help them succeed, but may not have the resources to gain those skills or the knowledge on how to acquire them. This project would bring both the necessary resources and the required knowledge to precisely where it is needed. While there are exceptions and personal motivation will be needed, this project can help people change their lives for the better by tapping into the ability that people already have. If this project was implemented successfully more people could reach their full potential and help develop the impoverished communities they come from.

While the above anecdote focuses on someone who has worked at another trade for a long time and then loses their job. Youth in impoverished areas are at an even greater risk. Consider this quote. "Dominican youth, particularly the poor, face structural barriers to labor markets, including insufficient education, poor life skills, and weak job skills to transition from school to work" [2].

The above quote plays itself out in the following anecdotes. A young Dominican cannot finish school because she must stay at home to help grow food and help with her younger relatives. She does not finish high school and has weak job skills. She has trouble finding consistent work because other Dominicans have skills more valued by the economy. If this young woman was able to get the skills and knowledge to work at a nearby factory, store, hotel, etc, she could find consistent work and be able to better her life. Even without finishing school she could still contribute to an organization. This is a perfect example of how this system could help people in suffering communities.

Here is another anecdote illustrating the issues that come with the lack of relevant skills. A young Dominican is not able to finish high school because his father and mother become ill and he must care for them. The family uses all their savings on medical care. He isn't able to find a reliable job because he has spent his time caring for his mother and father and not learning valued skills. As with the previous example, this anecdote illustrates how this system could help perfectly. If this project conducted a training session in this young man's area he could gain the skills needed to work in his community.

A software system to solve this problem would be an online network that connects donors, poor communities, and people willing to volunteer their time to educate those communities. The basic idea is not complex. The key part of the system is the identification of poor communities. These communities could be inside or outside of the United States and someone would have to be in charge of identifying them, and more importantly identifying what skills should be taught in that area. The community in need could be identified in a number of ways. Someone may travel to an area and recognize a need, see a documentary and become inspired to help, or have family living in an area that needs help. The system should have a way for people to submit communities they believe need help and what skills could help the people living there. There would then need to be a few employees of the project to vet these requests and make sure that these areas indeed need help, confirm the skills that are needed, and organize where the training would take place, what materials would be needed, etc. Once the communities in need are confirmed they are loaded into the system for viewing by donors and volunteers. Donors are able to contribute money to projects they want to see done and volunteers are able to sign up for projects they feel strongly about. Once a project has been fully funded the volunteers signed up for it are sent on location to teach for the specified amount of time.

The project will have many important facets to it, however, the three most important are: Displaying information about suffering communities, the ability to donate to specific communities, and the ability to sign up as an educator. Each of these features is vital to the success of the project.

Clearly communicating information about suffering communities would be a critical part of getting people to use this service. If volunteers and donors are not able to find out about these suffering communities then the project isn't worth building. This project will be most effective when the information about these suffering communities is clearly

presented to volunteers and donors. Many people want to help do good but don't have the time to help, with impactful information about various impoverished communities available these people will be more likely to help. On that same token, many people are looking for ways to make an impact with their time. If the system represents the projects needed in each community, more people will sign up.

The second important feature mentioned above was the ability to donate to specific communities. This is one of the biggest draws of this system. Instead of throwing money at a large charity this system allows people to make direct and measured donations. For whatever reason, people who donate are likely connected to the community they are supporting. This system makes it easy for donors to find the community they care about and make a direct impact in it. Instead of a large charity that focuses on all of the Dominican Republic, or Haiti, or Chad, this system will focus on specific towns, neighborhoods, and regions. When people are inspired to help one of these areas, this system is there for them.

The final feature in the aforementioned list is the ability to sign up as an educator. It is clear why this is a priority. If people are not able to sign up as a volunteer, the system fails and people continue to live in poverty. While donors want to make a difference with their money, volunteers want to make a difference with their time. This system would allow motivated volunteers to engage with specific communities they are interested in helping. It would provide a gateway for volunteers looking to make a tangible difference in someone less fortunate's life.

Of the three features discussed, the most important is the ability for donor's to make donations. Without this feature, the system would not exist. The fact is that the volunteers are willing to sacrifice their time to make a difference because they likely feel they don't have enough money to make a meaningful donation. Assisting these impoverished communities would likely require international travel, lodging, food, and other supplies for volunteers. The price would add up quickly. On the flip side, the least important of the three mentioned features is clearly communicating the information. This is by default. If there are no donors and there are no volunteers then it doesn't matter if the information is clearly communicated because nobody can act on it.

Because this system would require only a handful of full time employees and is completely donation driven, it would be economically viable. While donations are low there will be less employees and as donations rise there will be more. Overall, there would likely need to be 10-20 full time employees of the project. The biggest need for employees is verifying what skills suffering communities would need. There would need to be a team of people that traveled to suggested communities and figured out what skills could be of use there. The cost of all employees would have to come out of the donations received by the site. In addition, there would be other employees handling different facets of the project including; travel arrangements, IT, Human Resources, etc. While the costs of these employees and the other costs that come with running a business are significant, the total cost of the project would be relatively low. Because the volunteers are just that, volunteers, they would not be owed anything. At the start of this project the number of employees would have to be low. When donations become

larger and more consistent more employees could be added to server more communities. Also assisting in making this project economically viable is the fact that it is not out to make money. Any money coming into the project would be from donors and used to facilitate the planning, coordination, and execution of the volunteer missions.

This project could make a real difference in people's lives. Getting out of poverty is a great challenge but one that can be conquered if given the right tools. People learning skills to earn a living helps everyone. The people living in poverty would be able to find work and a paycheck. The businesses hiring people who have gone through this system will also benefit from a better skilled and more educated workforce. What separates this system from other charities is that it aims to make a lasting impact. This system could connect people with resources and knowledge to people who need resources and knowledge more than anything. It will help improve and develop communities by targeting things that they really need. People will live better lives, communities will be stronger, and opportunities will increase if this system is effectively implemented.

Overall, this project has the potential to make a difference in the world in an economically viable way. By identifying real needs within communities this system would connect people willing to teach a specific skill to communities who desperately need that skill. Since this project would be donation driven it would have to start small and build up a steady, reliable stream of donations. Even at the inception of the project a few full-time employees would be needed to validate the needs in suffering communities and organize the travel and accommodations for volunteers. As donations rise so will the number of employees. Because the project is not aimed at making money, one hundred percent of donations will go towards helping impoverished communities. If implemented, this system can make a tangible difference in the lives of many people living in poverty.

[1] <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats#src4>

[2] <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2014/04/08/more-promising-future-poor-youth-dominican-republic>