

Sierra Palmer

As a representative of the WPI Global Projects Program, my main goal is to create a higher standard of living for the community I'm working for. I realized this while reading about the work of Evariste Akoumian, an inhabitant of the Ivory Coast who works for a computer hardware delivery company. As he was delivering supplies around the country, he noticed that people living in the rural communities did not have any light to work by after the sun set. This negatively impacted school children in that area because they could only work on homework for about an hour after returning home from their classes. After seeing this, Akoumian developed a solar panel backpack and lamp combination that consisted of a lamp that would plug in to a backpack that had been charging in the sun all day. He felt that by distributing a small-scale technology such as this, he could help to improve the education of the rural children by giving them the opportunity to keep learning after the sun went down. However, with these great ideas came some setbacks. Akoumian wanted to use this new technology as a way to create more jobs in his area, but his funds were too low, despite national acclaim. Due to the monetary constraints, he started outsourcing to China for solar panels and assembling the backpack units in the Ivory Coast.

This man's desire for change exemplifies much of what I want to achieve and meet setbacks on IQP. I was especially inspired by his determination to innovate a solution that could make such a big impact. His actions demonstrate that even the smallest of ideas can help the most. Another lesson Akoumian's journey has taught me is that all goals come with adversity. He wanted to be able to create jobs in the Ivory Coast while helping the rural children, but was un-

able to due to funds. It does not mean that he is going to give up on that goal, but that he will continue to work hard in order to make sure that goal is attained in the future. This applies to me because I know that there will be setbacks in my team's project and I may get disappointed if we cannot reach the end goal, but I know that if we keep working and innovating, those goals can be achieved one day. Finally, the biggest lesson that Evariste Akoumian taught me is that analyzing the needs of the people and making a small change can make a world of difference.

Capron, Alexandre. "Solar Backpacks Help Kids Do Homework in the Ivory Coast." The France 24 Observers. N.p., 09 Sept. 2016. Web. 28 Sept. 2016.