Development, Microfinance, and Storytelling in Rwanda

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Abstract

Through the Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation, I was chosen as a GU Impacts Fellow for Summer 2018, and connected with Akazi Kanoze Access, a youth development NGO in Rwanda focused on supporting vulnerable youth through teaching them skills to join the workforce or start their own business.

For 10 weeks, I worked with AKA as a Business Development and Communications Intern, focusing on a variety of projects to improve the organization’s efficiency and mission-driven projects. Through this experience, I learned about the specifics of the NGO and business development industries in Rwanda, and how organizations can work with minimal resources to have a maximum impact on their beneficiaries.

About Akazi Kanoze Access

Akazi Kanoze Access was founded in 2015, through a successful USAID project, and has the mission of providing youth with employability skills, access to capital, and other support services to take advantage of economic opportunities.

Access to Finance in Rwanda

Since the devastating Rwandan Genocide in 1994, the country has grown rapidly in every way, but those who were impacted most by the genocide became a part of the vulnerable population of the country. In the past decade, the Rwandan government has enacted unique and successful policies for these populations to access financial support, such as the Umurenge SACCO program, which now represents 33% of the entire finance sector. While this program has supported a significant amount of the population, many vulnerable populations, especially youth, lack the support from government and financial organizations that could help them improve their standard of living.

Partnership with Kiva Microfunds

Through conducting an organizational analysis, market assessment, and field visits, I realized that there was more that AKA can do to support its youth. So I spentresearched the fields of microfinance in Rwanda, and came up with a project proposal:

By working as a field partner for Kiva Microfunds, an international microfinance crowdfunding platform, Akazi Kanoze Access can provide group loans to their youth entrepreneurs.

Since there was little knowledge of Kiva at AKA, I spent a majority of my internship conducting in-depth research on Rwandan NGO Law, the risks of microfinance, and what a loan program would look like. To supplement this research, I conducted meetings with the National Bank of Rwanda, Business Development Fund, Capital Markets Authority, the Association of Microfinance Institutions in Rwanda, and current Kiva Field Partners.

Communication and Storytelling

As part of my internship, I was also tasked with improving AKA communications through updating our social media and creating a new website. I spent the first weeks of my internship rewriting the organization’s external communication guidelines, and then implemented them on a daily basis on our Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages.

Perhaps the most valuable experience was the field visits I conducted in rural Rwanda, speaking with our beneficiaries and colleagues to write success stories about their efforts. Their stories not only inspired me to research the Kiva project, but showed me how AKA has improved their lives, and motivated them to improve the lives of others.

Social Media Results

Facebook:
- 41% greater outreach
- 51% more post engagement
- 26% increase in overall views

Twitter:
- 80% increase in posts
- 23.4% more profile visits
- 295.6% increase in impressions

LinkedIn:
- Creation of Profile

Future Directions

I continue to follow up with my AKA supervisor on a regular basis to ensure that the Kiva project is being executed according to plan, and respond to any questions they may have about the project. Personally, I will continue to explore my newfound passion for microfinance and economic development at Georgetown and beyond.

References


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