

# Confronting Inequality Through Access to Income Initiatives for Single Mother Families in Africa

Regis Shema 29 August 2019



Young people especially in Africa are a large portion of the population with youth comprising more than 38 percent of the population. The youth are the essence of the mission of our nations and the continent as a whole and are a vital resource of Africa. They must be involved to a big extent in the future planning of the continent. For those who are

already motivated, they must be committed to push their peers in implementing different projects. Yet, we can't ignore the large part of the youth who are struggling because they were born and raised by single mothers and often lack the basic necessities of life.

I have sat down and realized that in my country of Rwanda, there are a large number of single mother families and that the number of these families is increasing daily. I am afraid the number will continue to rise from the high rate of girls who get pregnant under the age of 18 in local areas where I come from, we have a responsibility to take action now to make sure this is prevented.

Several factors make it difficult for women in Rwanda to achieve their full potential. Limited schooling is crucial, along with a high rate of pregnancy among women entering child-bearing age. In fact, the percentage of pregnancy among adolescents and young women is one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. These factors contribute to the deterioration of health, housing, and economic conditions of the household.

For women having to support their households, a reliable source of income is crucial. However, as highlighted by several studies, there is a lack of formal work opportunities for women living in slums that would allow them to obtain a stable income. So, this issue must be addressed, we can start with my input, by ensuring that all

African problems are addressed by Africans. I want to tackle this before we convert challenges into opportunities through different ways and one of the first ideas which comes to mind is an initiative, I have named NYANGE Women Sewing Initiative (N.W.S.I.)

N.W.S.I is my project to teach mainly tailoring along with trainings like conflict management, project management, design thinking, among others to vulnerable, single mothers in my region of NYANGE which is where I proposed to start the initiative. In each of the five cells of this area we must choose committed vulnerable single mothers who are ready to change their quality of life. Thus far, we have gathered them together to explain the vision of N.W.S.I -- where we want to bring the voice of single mother families to the table to help them with collaborating with the Rwandan government. We believe they will help to teach and implement this initiative which will bring more than 40 single mothers to working markets in less than two years and they will be ready to compete at the country level even abroad in the coming years. The Nyange Sector, my native community, has a high percentage of girls who are under 18 and who have already given birth or are ready for the birth of a new child and receive little support coupled with a lot of criticism from their respective families.

I believe that the tailoring project is a tremendous opportunity for those wives because it doesn't require a large number of classes that single mothers would have to

attend and it offers direct feedback from mothers who have participated in the six-month intensive training with qualified trainers. In our country we have a policy of reducing the amount of second-hand clothes because they often bring various problems to buyers like skin diseases and other manifestations, this effort will be furthered as part of what we are doing with our initiative MADE IN RWANDA. With this project single mothers who participate will be privileged to help the country in the implementation of this project and the idea of giving the youth a voice which must be counted at the village level and in larger scale down the road. We plan to reach all of the single mothers across the country and to keep collaborating with other single mothers until we reach the whole of Africa. The new era of free trade in Africa will help to encourage African single mothers to take part in business and related activities across the continent as a whole.

I hope that everyone will collaborate in these efforts to help single mother families reach their fullest potential through the Made in RWANDA initiative. I believe that I will be saying Made In Africa in the coming years -- I am ready to work with those in need to empower them through our initiative and the faith that Africa can again lift the voices of our youth for the betterment of our continent.



## Author bio



**Regis Shema** is a sixth-year medical student and active RVCP Kigali Chapter Coordinator. Regis is a conscientious, flexible, committed, and motivated volunteer in community-based activities that help to improve people's health. She served as Rotation officer as part of a mission

to expand the activities of the RVCP to the whole country. Abroad, Regis served as director of hygiene and water sanitation in Organization of Rwanda Village Community Promoters (RVCP), furthering its mission to improve the standards of living for vulnerable people across the country. In addition, she has volunteered and participated in numerous activities organized by RVCP and gained experience as a coordinator of NWSI.