

THE COMMUNITY CHANGERS – POWER OF SIX CORONA SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Community Changers is a group of six high school students from Corona Secondary School Agbara, Ogun State in Nigeria, West Africa. The inception of the Community Changers Group was inspired by a field trip we undertook to an orphanage. This opened our eyes to the painful reality that many people were not as fortunate as we were and as such, were being denied their rights for that reason. So, we decided it was time to make a change. The six of us reflected on the issues in our society, as well as possible solutions we could offer. We decided to work on the most pressing issues. They fell in line perfectly with the Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and 4 (Quality Education).



Our logo was designed by our Vice President (Logistics), Tamara Akika and our Design Manager, Nicola Iyke-Edoga. The two triangles are symbolic of the Greek Delta, which means change. The globe is a representation of our world, which we plan to change, starting with communities around us.

Over a six months period, we spent countless hours working on projects to achieve our aim of becoming active members of our society by supporting the less privileged within our community in little ways we can and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. On average we would spend about eight hours every week working on these community projects. So far, we had concluded five of our planned projects before the coronavirus pandemic set in.

Our first project was 'Project - Zero Hunger', named after Goal Two of the SDGs: Zero Hunger. We planned to donate food items to the less privileged within our community. We solicited for donations from parents in our school – Corona Secondary School, on our visiting day. We used the money collected to purchase non-perishable food items such as spaghetti, rice and vegetable oil. The food items were packaged into 200 bags for distribution to families within our community, with the help of 10 volunteers and the supervision of two teachers. We also bought packaged noodles, specifically for children in the community. This project taught us tolerance and compassion because the members of the community became very frantic while the distribution of the items was taking place, and this made us realise how it felt to be unsure of your next meal. One of the positive outcomes of this project was that it motivated the ten volunteers to kick off their own community service program. The feedback we received from the members of the community exceeded our expectations. Our project had sensitized the community on the importance of the prevention of food wastage. It was also a wake-up call for many of the members as they began to do more productive things that could help them live sustainable lives.



Our next three projects were in line with Goal 4: Quality Education. The first of the three was 'Quality Education on Snake Island'. We were on Snake Island, Lagos State for a Leadership and Citizenship Training. During our training, we realized that children who schooled on the island did not have materials required for effective learning. We contributed a certain amount from the allowance we were all given by our parents to procure educational materials, which we packed into file jackets for each school-aged child on the island. We distributed the file jackets to each child. For us, the most rewarding part of this project was the grins we saw on the faces of the children after they had received

the materials. The project was a huge success and it brought us closer together, not just as a team, but as friends as well. We handed the remaining items from the project over to the Leadership and Citizenship Training Centre, Snake Island, Lagos State to continue the distribution to the children we could not reach. We also used it as an

opportunity to encourage other students who attended the training programme and other students who would attend future programmes of the centre to be more charitable.

Our next project was an upgrade of the Library at Agbara Community High School, a school in Ogun State, Nigeria. We used some of the money we had left, from our first project to purchase wall fans, which we installed in the library, to create a comfortable reading environment for the students at the school. We also donated our old books and partnered up with another community service group in our school called the Book Bank. We bought colourful bookshelves into which we arranged and sorted the books, donated by us and the Book Bank, according to the subjects they related to. We visited the school from time to time to see the impact of the project on the students. We were glad to know that more students had been using the library and were doing better academically. We also made questionnaires to get feedback from the students. The feedback we got was impressive.

Our final project on quality education was the donation of a printer to African Community High School, a school in Otta, Ogun State, Nigeria. We purchased a LaserJet Printer for the school. We visited the school on several occasions to ensure that the printer was useful to the students and staff. We also ensured a system was put in place for proper maintenance of the printer.

The last goal we were able to work on was Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being. According to the World Health Organisation, Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. We decided to work on all aspects of well-being. We were, however, only able to complete our project on mental health. During the Christmas Period, the Community Changers visited an orphanage, called Hephzibah Homes. We held a fundraiser at our school, one which we called 'Extra Yakata'. We delivered snacks and confectioneries to students in our school at a higher price than its market value. We used the profit from this fundraiser to acquire Christmas themed hats, wrist bands and glasses, as well as food items such as 'Indomie Noodles'.



Furthermore, we hired a 'Santa Claus' to spread joy and cheer with us to the children of the orphanage. Several items of students at Corona Secondary School, termed 'seized contrabands', consisting of snacks and confectioneries were given to the children at the home. We donated our old clothes and books to the children at the orphanage. We spent the afternoon with the 30 residents of Hephzibah Homes, dancing, singing and spreading cheer. It is easy for people to be ignorant to the feelings of neglect that children in orphanages are often burdened by. Our goal was to try to fill up the gaping hole that lingered in their hearts. The smiles and laughter of the children was more than enough proof of our success.

Being members of the Community Changers taught us plenty. We were exposed to the travails of people who could not afford the luxuries we procure so easily and were glad we could offer a helping hand. Our journey has not been easy, but we have learnt a lot. The gruelling task of writing proposals to our school for certain projects taught us responsibility, teamwork and accuracy. Organising fund raisers was never a simple task, but it taught us to be accountable, transparent, honourable and independent. We would never have achieved everything we did if we depended on hand-outs. Meeting people who were not as fortunate as us always left us with sombre expressions, but it taught us compassion and love. We plan to pass on all these skills to our successors.

The Community Changers may have started with six students, but we can assure you it will not end with just us six. We are extremely committed to this group and our successors will be just as committed after the six of us graduate. The Community Changers will be another set of students who will keep our vision going. We are pleased to know we have been able to make an impact on our society and will continue to do whatever we can to keep the flag flying.