



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Education for All

May 2018

Introduction

“Urged by the love of Christ, we choose to express our mission through ministry directed towards education. For us, education means enabling persons to reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God’s image and assisting them to direct their gifts toward building the earth. Like Mother Theresa, we educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons. Thus, our ministry demands a Christian vision of what the human person is called to be and what the world is destined to become.”
(YAS C 22)

“Education cannot be neutral. It is either positive or negative; it either enriches or impoverishes; it either makes a person develop or depresses him, it can even corrupt him. ... A school’s mission is to develop the sense of the true, the sense of the good and the sense of the beautiful. And this happens through a rich journey made up of many ‘ingredients’. That is why there are so many subjects! Because development is the result of various elements which interact and stimulate the mind, the conscience, the affections, the body, etc.” *(A quote from Pope Francis’ Address to Students and Teachers from Schools across Italy, May 10, 2014)*

Call to Prayer

Creator God, you made us in your image and likeness sharing your gifts of knowledge and wisdom. Reawaken the desire and zeal in us to share our gifts unconditionally. As we empower others to reach their full potential of being and becoming, may we impact their lives positively. Bless the efforts of teachers, parents, guardians, and people of good will who continue to support educational programs in various parts of the world. May we, in the spirit of our founder Blessed M. Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, reach out to the poor of the poorest, transforming their lives. Amen.

Experience

Kenya as a country has undergone many reforms when it comes to education. Some of these reforms are in formal education where the mandate is that everyone must know how to read and write.

Formal education faces a number of challenges in the country because not everyone embraces it. The most negatively affected people are girls and women. As an African country, embracing formal education for women and girls is a challenge since the culture considers men superior to women.

As an educator in Kenya, I have had an opportunity to journey with one of the girls in secondary school. Nekesa comes from a family that is financially challenged, but her parents have encouraged their children to go to school and get a formal education.

Education as a whole involves many aspects of life; one challenging aspect is the importance of performing well academically. Nekesa, as a young person thirsting for education, has been performing well in her academics. She even tops her class. But her challenge is that there is no one in her class who can compete with her academically. She is always leading her class in performance. Even though Nekesa was selected for admission to the National school with the best performing students, her parents could only afford fees for a local school which admits low-performing students.

Apart from lacking a performance competitor, Nekesa faces another challenge in school: a lack of basic needs. Nekesa is in boarding school and her parents must purchase for her the basic necessities required by the school. However, they cannot always afford to provide these for her, since their income is very low and they have other children in the family to take care of as well.

As a student in a secondary school she is in her teenage years and faces the challenge of peer pressure. Her classmates keep teasing her to know if she has a boyfriend. This disturbs her very much since for her education comes first. So there is this extra challenge of not fitting into society, given the fact that she is not conforming to peer demands. All in all, she has many challenges in her journey of acquiring an education to better her future.

Reflection

- What challenges do students face in your schools? How can we help them to successfully face these challenges?
- What can we do to help students who perform well in academics yet cannot afford to go to better schools? How can we help them “reach the fullness of their potential”?
- What avenues can be used to support students who cannot afford the basic necessities so as to better their education?

Action

- Help a person facing an educational challenge during this Easter season.
- Contribute material or financial aid to a school in order to purchase teaching and learning aids which will promote quality education in local areas.
- Find creative ways to educate women who will in turn benefit society through their education.

Closing Prayer

We thank and praise you Loving God for the gift of education. Enable each one of us to find new creative ways to educate with a passion of transforming of self and others. Bless all educators with a world vision in their service to humanity. May Education continue to brighten our way to God. Amen.