



Aimers Coffee and Tea Limited – Youth Empowerment Initiative

2 years ago, Aimers Coffee and Tea Ltd embarked on a 3 year (now extended by a further 7 years) Youth Empowerment Initiative in Tanzania to establish a Coffee Club in conjunction with Msia Secondary School.

The key objective was to empower teenagers to enhance their education through engaging them in skills associated with coffee production. In a country where less than 2% of teenagers attend university, future employment and prospects are an enormous challenge. In the face of adversity many struggle to gain a viable source of income so we are striving to give them a platform from which to acquire critical skills and knowledge to make coffee farming a tangible and sustainable occupation for them in years to come.

With guidance from trained agronomists, 50 pupils have been enrolled into the programme sponsored by Aimers. Each has received 20 seedlings to plant on their parent's farms as well as having a coffee nursery established at the school. Embracing the belief that "seeing and doing" is an effective learning model allows us to maximise the benefit for the students and all proceeds from the sale of their coffee is paid back to them directly.

The training programme is intensive as it encompasses agronomy practices including nursery preparation, pruning, fertilization and pest management as well as integrating skills vital to running a successful and sustainable business such as record keeping and accounting. The course also provides insight into milling processes and quality control to leverage an understanding of the whole coffee supply chain. Many of the students have left their local area for the first time ever to visit the city of Mbeya to see the Coffee Mill located there. Travelling to the site has developed their appreciation of what happens to green coffee when it leaves their farms and the quality standards that are demanded by Coffee Roasters around the world.

Evaluating the value of the programme is crucial and shortly we will be able to ascertain the number of students who progress from this coffee club into coffee farming. Productivity of coffee farmers who have been part of the initiative will be measured against those who haven't benefitted from any such project to allow us to recognise the difference and positive impact that our support has helped to secure for the future livelihoods and success of these teenagers.

In addition to the education programme Aimers have established 2 coffee blends using Tanzanian coffee beans. Profits from the sale of these products are paid into a foundation trust which finances selected projects to further enhance the learning environment for the school. Basic amenities that we all take for granted have been greatly lacking up until now. Each child has been required to walk to school on a daily basis carrying 2 litres of water with them as the school has had no water supply. In conjunction with both the headmaster and local coordinators we have approved plans during our most recent visit to commence drilling of a borehole in the school grounds to provide a running water supply. We are looking forward to returning shortly to check on progress and see the difference this direct action at the school has made to the students and teaching staff alike. Even the most basic support we have facilitated, (things most of us take for granted in terms of the education our own children and grandchildren receive) have been greatly appreciated and welcomed by pupils and teachers. The supply of essential commodity items such as coloured pencils, dictionaries and photocopy equipment have made dramatic differences to the day to day schooling at Msia Secondary school.

The educational journey of these students is continuing right now. Its important to us to keep the momentum going as we are truly making a difference to the opportunities and prospects that are possible for these young people in the future. We plan more visits and more activity as things progress but are confident we have got the basic foundations in place to allow more effective learning and development moving forward.

“EDUCATION IS A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE”

Nelson Mandela once said;

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”

In many ways the education process is very similar to that of growing plants and farming. (A fitting analogy given we are assisting youngsters to develop better farming and coffee growing practices). We plant seeds of knowledge in the young, provide the right environment to thrive, cultivate and feed them with information and hopefully see them grow and flourish in the same way as you would watch a plant grow from seed to bloom.

Education reduces poverty, decreases social inequality and empowers individuals to reach their full potential. Recognising all these elements makes the team at Aimers excited and proud to be participating in this initiative and we all hope that the fruits of this programme flourish in years to come.

We don't aspire to “change the world” but are committed to playing our part in taking responsibility for the livelihoods of those individuals that supply our industry with commodities we build our business upon.