Project Name: Plant a tree, plant the future

Big Idea: Climate Change Action

Essential Question: How can we improve conservation efforts in our community in order to control natural disasters and other effects of climate change?


School/Organization Name: Gayaza High School

Location: Kampala, Uganda
Engage Phase

What challenge does your project address?
Our project seeks to address the global challenge of climate change. There are various effects of climate change that range from global warming to desertification. These issues bring about natural catastrophes that affect the people in our community and nation as a whole. We believe that our tree planting project will be able to impact our community in a positive way as we plant trees and advocate for their importance in our ecosystem.

Photo Credit: Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda
Day by day, in our community and country as a whole we witness various natural calamities brought about by the impact of climate change. Livelihoods have been greatly impacted especially in a nation like ours where 72% of our working population engages in agriculture. Unpredictable weather patterns and long dry spells have been quite a challenge. In addition to that, natural disasters such as wildfires, floods and landslides which have led to death of many, destruction of property and national infrastructure. These are the issues that motivated us to contribute to the solution and educate our community about the importance of forests in mitigating these challenges.
Climate change is a real world concern especially today, in the 21st century. Deserts are expanding worldwide and many natural disasters happen today more than ever ranging from heatwaves to wildfires and warming of oceans making them acidic. Today we are witnessing irreversible effects of climate change to the geological, biological and ecological systems not just in our community or nation but worldwide. Climate change contributes to cold snaps due to disruptions in the polar vortex as well as impact the spread of diseases such as dengue fever, malaria, tick borne diseases and Ebola as well. WHO estimates that the number of deaths caused by climatic changes will be 250,000 annually between 2030 and 2050. Climate change worldwide has led to loss of biodiversity and food insecurity. We believe that trees hold the future and can go a long way in reducing these effects.
To understand the challenge before us, we decided to conduct a survey in our various communities and to obtained some valuable information.
Carrying out a random community survey

Some of the questions included:
1. Have you ever planted a tree?
2. When was the last time you ever planted a tree?
3. Why is / was the tree being planted?
4. When was the last time you cut a tree?
5. Do you think we need more trees planted in our communities?
6. Please specify your age range?
   - 11 – 25
   - 26 – 40
   - 41 and above
Out of 40 respondents, we found that 35 had planted trees before. On average, our respondents said that they had at least planted a tree in the last 3 years. Most of our respondents planted trees for fruits, shade and a few of them for timber. Out of 40 respondents, at least 15 have cut trees before. These findings are summarized in the shown tables.
Action Phase: Our team has undertaken two major activities

Tree planting:

We planted two major species of trees namely avocado and the broad leaved yellow wood trees. The avocado tree is a source of fruit and is commonly grown in Uganda, on the other hand, the broad leaved yellow wood tree provides shade and although it doesn’t provide fruit, it is beautiful and we believe that these trees will go a long way in promoting conservation efforts in our community. Our team believes that these trees will provide more than just timber or shade and fruit.
These trees are a call to action to the people in our community and nation as well to realize the role of trees on our planet and know that it is our responsibility to protect them.
Second activity was Community Sensitization

Our communities needed to understand deeply the importance of trees to further widen their scope when it comes to trees, looking at them beyond a source of food or timber but to also appreciate the fact that trees hold our future as a planet hence the need to protect them.
We used School Assemblies to sensitize our peers on the need to save the environment.

Schools hold the key to making a difference in our communities since these students are good ambassadors.
We used the school notice boards to sensitize our peers on the need to conserve the environment.

School notice boards are placed strategically in schools and are key to sharing information to the students and staff members.
The team also embarked on building a blog that will be used to reach a wider audience going forward.

https://treeplantinggayazahigh.mystrikingly.com/
We are planning to reach out to schools in the neighborhood as we build the movement of Youth Conserving the environment for their own future and the generations to come.