

Teachers Debate Institute

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Office of The President

Project Budget:

\$25,000

Abstract:

A Teachers Debate Institute in Rwanda will provide a program for training teachers to coach debate and create the right environment for building democratic ideas and values among the Rwandan students.

Project:

SUMMARY

The NGO iDebate Rwanda has worked tirelessly since 2012 to build a new generation of politically engaged Rwandan citizens that are not afraid to speak their minds. iDebate believes that democracy starts with civic education and is achieved through critical thinking and freedom of speech. In a country where blind obedience to authority and lack of critical thinking has led to mass violence, it is of the utmost importance to develop critical thinking from a young age and give the youth the tools to solve problems creatively, without resulting to violence.

Should I receive funding for the proposed project, I plan to work with iDebate Rwanda to support the Teacher's Debate Institute project in Rwanda.

Throughout this proposal, I will demonstrate how iDebate's program aligns with key objectives of James Madison University. My proposal is focused on:

1. Innovation
2. Creativity

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Ervin Staub, the founding director of the Doctoral Program on the Psychology of Peace and Violence at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, claims that several cultural characteristics facilitate mass violence, including blind obedience to authority due to a lack of critical thinking. Staub also predicts that a society is vulnerable to relapse if characteristics that lead to violence are not addressed.

Rwanda's history with the horrific genocide against the Tutsis in 1994 confirms the above study. The role played by the education system in fostering critical thinking is crucial. As demonstrated in a study published by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) titled “The Role of Education in Driving Conflict and Building Peace – The Case of Rwanda,” one of the significant challenges that remain in the current educational system is the teaching methods that remain largely teacher-centered, resulting in a lack of open debate amongst pupils and poor development of the critical thinking skills needed for independent thought.

In another study by Dr. Rebecca Schendel, “Adapting, not adopting: Barriers affecting teaching for critical thinking at two Rwandan universities,” Schendel found that Rwandan secondary schools continue to use traditional teaching methods, making the classroom an authoritarian one.

The root cause of traditional teaching methods, as demonstrated in the above studies, is the apparent lack of pedagogical training which has limited educators' ability to improve their students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, sustained and substantial teacher development programs are crucial to creating the right environment for building democratic ideas and values among the youth.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

iDebate Rwanda is a Non-Governmental Organization founded in 2012 and registered with the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) since 2014. Our mission is to improve the critical thinking and communication skills of secondary students so that they become engaged and active citizens in their communities. iDebate Rwanda has provided debate-based programs for youths aged 12 and above who are enrolled in secondary schools. The vision is to build a society where differences are embraced, and conflicts are resolved through debate without resorting to violence.

THE PROJECT:

Through the Teachers Debate Institute, iDebate aims to equip teachers and trainers with skills that will consequently improve the accessibility to quality debate in Rwandan schools. The Teacher Debate Institute project will have three programs:

1. Teachers Debate Training: We will train 100 teachers from 100 schools across the country on how to incorporate debate in their classrooms thus making their classes more democratic.
2. Teachers Resource Center: We will provide an online and physical platform with resources accessible to all teachers across the country. The platform will include materials such as videos, lesson plans, activity plans, and more.
3. Civic Debate Activities: In those 100 schools, students trained by teachers will be engaged in debate activities, and each student will have to participate in at least one activity and submit a final project. These activities will include public debates about issues that are affecting the community as well as advocacy campaigns.

The Teachers Debate Institute’s activities are aligned with key objectives regarding this grant allocation.

- Innovation: Create a democratic classroom by equipping 100 teachers and trainers with the skills to teach and support students in the National debate leagues while providing them with resources and tools.
- Creativity: Create digital resources: the goal of this platform will be to help teachers create lesson plans and activities to foster democratic classrooms that increase student engagement. Enhance students' awareness of political and social issues by participating in different civic education activities.

<u>Project Budget Amount:</u>	\$25,000
Personnel:	\$12,000
Travel:	\$3,000
Equipment:	\$300
Supplies/Materials:	\$2,900
Postage/Printing:	\$500
Other:	\$6,399

Additional information to explain or expand on budgetary needs:

- Personnel: Teachers Debate Institute Program Coordinator (\$5,000), Training Coordinator (\$4,000), Administrative Assistant (\$2,000), Communication Allowances: \$1000
- Travel: U.S. trainer airfare (US-Kigali-US) = \$2,500, Local Transportation for the U.S. trainer: \$500
- Equipment: Projector: \$300
- Supplies & Materials: Website Creation: \$1,400, Content Creation (Videos, classes): \$1,500;
- Postage & Printing: Printing manuals (for 100 teachers): \$500;
- Other: Accommodation for US trainers in Rwanda: \$1500, Feeding for US trainer in Rwanda: \$1000, In-Person Teachers Training Breakfast: \$800, Teachers Per Diem: \$2,000, In-Person Teachers Training Renting Venue: \$1,000.