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# Saving the Africa of the Future

## Harambee Official Discusses Perspective on Education

ROME, JUNE 21, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Investing in the education of African youth might not appear as spectacular as, say, donating to African health care. But education is a deep investment, and one with clear consequences for the future of Africa, according to the [Harambee](http://www.harambee.org) Association.

The international group, founded in 2002 in Italy, organized a roundtable discussion in Rome. The president of its Scientific and Cultural Committee, Giovanni Mottini, spoke to ZENIT about the association and its goals.

ZENIT: Does your association support projects from religious or secular institutions?

Mottini: Harambee supports both religious as well as secular education. The only condition is that the projects be local realities. Though they might be useful and effective, we are not interested in supporting European NGOs that work in Africa.

Instead, we are interested in the people themselves being the protagonists who are involved directly, because when we support a project we also carry out training that in turn makes the local protagonist a beneficiary, who in addition grows through the project we have given him.

We also teach him to document the project so that this first experience with us -- which in any case can be repeated -- is also an increase of knowledge that makes it possible to propose it to other public or private financial backers.

ZENIT: What is the percentage of projects that Harambee has supported between the religious and civil institutions?

Mottini: Approximately half and half. Religions are a very significant reality in developing countries; they give the strongest witness.

I always say that to understand what missionaries in Africa do, the best thing is to go and see the local cemetery, because one doesn't find there the tombs of officials of the World Health Organization, or of the United Nations Organization, but of missionaries. Because they are with the people to the end, suffering with them, running the same risks and sharing their own experience, because it is an experience born of a vocation, hence lived fully.

ZENIT: What was addressed in this last meeting in Rome?

Mottini: In today's round table we wished to talk about a world that is increasingly present in the reality of the African continent.

Because at this time Africa continues to be "terra incognita" in many ways -- a new America where everyone is going.

The market's economic or commercial interest in Africa must not be demonized or criminalized. However, we wish to make a contribution that will reinforce especially the dimension of humanization, which is necessary in the market. Hence, to make it understood that the first capital is the human one.

And the success itself that is desired for a business in Africa passes through profound and genuine attention to the local interlocutor, who will be one's partner or collaborator.

Otherwise, even that market experience runs the risk of being destined to failure or will end up by being an economy of assault or speculation.

ZENIT: How was the Harambee project born a few years ago?

Mottini: Harambee was born as a spontaneous initiative at the time of St. Josemaría Escrivá's canonization, with the idea of leaving a sign, through an initiative of gratitude to St. Josemaría for his teaching on Christian formation and holiness, in addition to a concrete Christian commitment in the social reality, specifically, in a paradigmatic reality such as Africa is.

Therefore, what we propose is to intervene to support educational projects. The specific field is education understood as "educere" from the Latin, that is to draw out especially from African young people and children the greatest potential as a premise to build the continent's future.

ZENIT: What are some of the most interesting initiatives that have been carried out?

Mottini: We have supported educational projects in some 20 African countries, very different among themselves, such as the schools in the refugee camps in Sudan, run by the Canossian nuns, or, for example, projects to form teachers in Kenya, knowing that in Africa it is necessary to improve the quality of school formation. The children go to school but the quality of the teaching is insufficient.

ZENIT: Why education?

Mottini: Our motto is not "to build schools" but "to be schools," and to create an effective system of quality teaching. We have also engaged in professional formation, but we address especially children between 8 and 10 years old, when they have the greatest receptivity and when they can build the intellectual instruments that later will give them autonomy, the ability to choose, to initiate, and the capacity to get things started.

We know we are making a choice that requires courage, in a sector that is not very spectacular, unlike for example, that of health. To save a child is more spectacular of course, but the question is: once the child is saved, what sort of adult does one need to form?

An educated child is not distinguished from an uneducated one, although his future is very different. This calls for courage and a great perspective on our part and that of the donors. That is why we also carry out intense work in Europe in favor of education and formation. It is a real solidarity that is not only solidarity in giving but in being, which implies personal commitment and gives our participating donors an innovative project. We ask our donors to invest in something that they don't see and will not be able to see, but which is far more intellectual and profound.

[Translation by ZENIT]

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On the Net:

Harambee: [www.harambee-africa.org](http://www.harambee-africa.org)

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