

Project document of Miss Africa – Denmark 2009

Role model and cultural ambassador for Africa in Denmark

Store Vega, 6th of June 2009

What is Miss Africa?

Miss Africa is a different and untraditional competition for African girls in Denmark, where the success criteria in order to do well are to have a personality, charisma and something at heart. It is a charity show at the same time, where we try to collect as many donations as possible for a chosen project. This year, we have decided to support a project dealing with trauma recovery for orphans and young people in Rwanda.

How is Miss Africa?

- Miss Africa is the ambassador for the diversity.
- She contributes to broaden the knowledge about Africa and builds a bridge between the African and the Danish and culture.
- She is between 18 and 28 years old and is keen on making a difference.
- At least one of her parents has an African background, and she has kept a relationship to Africa even though she lives in Denmark.
- Miss Africa embraces African and Danish culture and she inspires others to do the same.
- She represents the *whole* of Africa and engages herself lively into activities and debates as a representative for African groups in Denmark.
- Miss Africa speaks Danish, as it is important in order to be able to engage herself actively in the Danish society.

Why Miss Africa?

Because there is a need for it! A number of African girls that live in Denmark experience being different – finding themselves divided between two cultures and many have felt that they did not really “fit in” growing up – in class, among friends and at work. One of this year’s contestants has expressed this very comprehensively when she met the many African girls at the audition:

”This is amazing and it almost doesn’t matter whether I go on to the final round.. Being here today and having met other African girls has been one of the greatest experiences I have had since I came to Denmark. Imagine – this is the first time I feel that I belong, that there is someone that understands me and thinks like me – it’s all worth it!”

All the girls have different backgrounds, but they have kept the “African spirit”. Many of them are fighting to get an education, but also engage themselves in voluntary work

regarding integration or fundraising campaigns to Africa. As one of the girls wrote in her application at this year's audition:

"Sometimes, I feel ashamed of what I spend my money on – completely worthless things. When I think about what my family must abstain from I get embarrassed – and this is one of the reasons why I wanted to participate this year! I want to take part in collecting money to make a difference – I owe it to my mother to make a difference – that is the least I can do".

In the light of numerous stories like these, Felex Mose and Maria Thandie Stensgaard, who both have African backgrounds, decided to find a way to show people that there are strong girls in Denmark, who want to come forward and tell how and why they are doing very well.

This is how the idea of an untraditional Miss competition was created, and it was about the total opposite of what one normally sees in these kinds of competitions. On this show, it was not important to be skinny and look fine in a bikini, but on the other hand have a message, be able to pass it on to the public and this way be able to inspire others to do the same – and this is how the idea came to life. Later on, the group was joined by a webmaster, a choreographer, producers, a designer, a coach, a photographer and a fundraiser. Moreover, the project counts various volunteers who all engage themselves a hundred percent every year to make the show a success.

What do we want to achieve with Miss Africa – what is the purpose?

The purpose of the project is:

- to create unity, pride and optimism among all Africans in Denmark
- to show positive and new sides of Africa and Africans
- to draw attention to relevant issues for African women
- to find a positive role model and one who inspires the young Africans in Denmark
- to show the world some strong girls who fight for a good life in Denmark

Who are we and what is the story behind the project?

First and foremost we are all volunteers, which means that we all work without payment. The group consists more or less of the same members as when we started. We all have very different backgrounds and incitement to participate in the project, but common for us all is the passion. We have held Miss Africa Denmark three times previously in May 2006, May 2007, June 2008 and now again in June 2009, in Vega in Copenhagen.

There has been a good press cover every time and should out tickets to Store Vega, where there is space for approximately 1,100 guests. We have been on the 6 o'clock national news TV-avisen, Aftenshowet and TV2 News broadcasted live from the show in 2007. The support for the show has been massive and is still growing – more and more have come to

the audition and we sell more tickets. After all, there is not anyone that has not heard about the project one way or the other. All the Miss Africa winners have participated in several interviews – on radio as well as on TV, concerts, national fundraising campaigns, commercials etc. News papers like Jyllandsposten, Urban and Metro Express have printed portraits of the winners and last year our show was on the whole front page of Politiken. After we started, the first Miss Africa Sweden competition was initiated in Sweden inspired by us, which we of course are very proud of.

But the one thing we are mostly proud of is the immense support we get every year from many voluntary, as well as preceding contestants whose passion for the project is as high as ours. This definitely shows, that it is worth it and that there is a need to continue – and that people are interested in hearing some different and positive stories about Africans in Denmark.

How do we find the girls?

We have held a major introductory audition in Copenhagen throughout all 3 years of the project. But as the interest for the project had been growing rapidly, this year we extended the concept with an extra audition day in Århus. Approximately 50 girls signed up for the audition and out of these girls we choose 12-15 finalists. There are 4 judges to the audition each year that all have a profound knowledge about African and Danish culture. The girls are mainly judged by their stories, who they are and what their passion is.

What are their wishes for the future and how they see themselves as a potential Miss Africa – what exactly can they contribute with and pass on to others? Once the girls are chosen at the audition an exiting “travel” is awaiting where the main focus is on personal development, unity, identity and other relevant issues. The girls will be presented to a number of professional people who will, throughout an intensive period before the show in Vega, help them disseminate their message among other things. And also give them the confidence to be able to stand on a stage in front of 1000 people and show them who they are.

What do I get for a ticket to the Miss Africa show 2009?

A unforgettable all evening show with dancing and a lot of Danish and African live music from acknowledged artists, a fantastic vibe and the possibility to meet our wonderful finalists and listen to what they have to say.

How do we raise money?

The project only uses voluntary labor and support from private sponsors. The surplus comes from the ticket sales from the show on 6th of June 2009 and goes directly to the selected charity project. No one get any kind of payment, not even the artists that perform at the show itself.

How can one support/sponsor the project?

One can support/sponsor the project in many ways for instance by donating a certain amount to one or many of our expenditure posts (see enclosed budget).

Donate a chosen amount directly to our Miss Africa 2009 account – Danske Bank: Registration no.: 3124 Account no.: 3124 230810 or support the project by buying tickets to the show in Vega on the 6th of June 2009 available on www.billetlugen.dk or in all Fona stores.

There are other alternatives to support our project. . In 2008 an artist by the named Leif Sylvester painted 4 paintings with the theme Africa. The paintings we sold on an internet auction and Leif Sylvester donated all the surplus Dkk. 66,000 to Miss Africa.

If you have similar ideas as the abovementioned, do not hesitate to contact our fundraiser Hannebritt Abrahamsen hannebritt@missafrica.dk. All means to support the project are welcome.

What are the donations used for?

Each year we chose to support a new project, and this year [Miss Africa Denmark 2009](#) has chosen to support a project dealing with trauma recovery for orphans and young people in Rwanda.

The project description is enclosed as an attachment to this project description.

What are the success criteria of the project?

- that at least 1000 guests attende the show and that they get an evening with a positive atmosphere and a new experience of what it means to be an African in Denmark
- that the public is a good blend of Africans, friends of Africa, people with another ethnic background and not least Danish.
- that the surplus that will be donated to the chosen Rwanda project is at least 75,000 Dkk.
- to find a positive role model who has the will and ability to be a serious representative for Africa and Africans in Denmark
- that schools, unions, embassies, politicians, funds and other people with interest in Africa use the winner and the contestants of the Miss Africa Denmark competition.

Who are the previous sponsors of the show?

Among previous sponsors there is Leif Sylvester Galleri Pyhton, Brussels Airline, Western Union, Mode med Mening, Flow Dance Academy, Nyah Beauty etc.

Project team:

Project leader and organizer: Maria Thandie Stensgaard

Press, communication and web: Jacob Crawford

Idea initiator and co-organizer: Felix Mose

Choreographers and show producers: Mia Sylvester and Lea Marie Holst-Jensen

Fundraiser: Hannebritt Abrahamsen

Coach: Tine Marie Balck Sørensen

Styling: Cheche Gachery

Co-organizers and assistants: Mercy Mangara, Chaline Hyldgaard, Marie-Bénédicte

Benihirwe, Mary Owolabi

Website:

www.missafrika.dk

Contact:**Project leader:**

Maria Thandie Stensgaard

maria@missafrika.dk

Mobile: 27 50 64 96

Press contact:

Jacob Crawford:

jacob@missafrika.dk

Mobile: 40 73 70 79

Sponsor contact/fundraiser:

Hannebritt Abrahamsen

hannebritt@missafrika.dk

Mobile: 29 62 90 32

THE SUPPORTED PROJECT OF MISS AFRICA DENMARK 2009

'Between loneliness and unity – trauma treatment for orphans in Rwanda'

Background:

The genocide in Rwanda, 1994, is often described as “the most effective genocide of the 20th century”. Besides destroying economic and social structures, most of the population experienced violence, death and abuse - first hand. Former perpetrators and victims live side by side, and though the genocide officially ended nearly 15 years ago, the juridical aftermath is still on-going. Thus, the genocide is continuously present in everyday-living - in which people continue to struggle with their own traumatic experiences. Unfortunately, the current health system has very limited resources within the *mental* health sector – both concerning financial and personal resources; in Rwanda there is, at the moment, one psychiatrist and few psychologists working. Within the medical studies the sessions on relevant issues are limited as well, and it is not possible for physicians to specialize as psychiatrists in Rwanda. In other words: Psychiatric and psychological knowledge and know-how is a commodity in high command in this society which is profoundly traumatized in so many ways.

Implementation and partners:

Medical students Mental Health Association (MMHA) is the Rwandan organization which has developed the present project based on their experiences with the still on-going *Mental Health Empowerment Project*. Thus, it is *MMHA* who is the main responsible for implementation of the project.

The Danish partner called *Mental Health Rwanda (MHR)* is the main responsible of the budget and will work in close cooperation with *MMHA* – embracing their role as project co-consultants. *MHR* is an organisation under *International Medical Cooperation Committee (IMCC)*, the Danish medical students' international organisation.

Area of interest:

Many children lost their parents during the genocide. In addition to the financial and social insecurity that follows from losing parents, these orphans had to deal with missed educational opportunities, severe emotional losses and being witnesses to deeply traumatizing events. Together these factors represent challenging living conditions for everyone – but in particular for children and youth.

Goals and target-group:

There is an acute need of 40 medical- and psychology students to be trained in the area of psycho-education (education on trauma reactions/ Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) and possible coping strategies) in the hope of improving living conditions for 200 orphans in Rwanda's southern province.

Planning of the donation:

To meet the special needs of this particular target group, *MMHA (Rwanda)* and *MHR (Denmark)* will, in cooperation, arrange:

- A seminar that is developed specifically to dealing with traumatized youth and children. 40 members of MMHA will participate in the seminar and will afterwards make up the project taskforce.
- A 2 days workshop with 200 orphans.
- A follow-up of the workshop sessions.
- Final evaluation of the course.

Content of the seminar:

The seminar will focus on educating the orphans on psychological implications of trauma such as PTSD, grief reactions when losing close relatives (special focus on parental loss), psycho-education, communication, psychological counselling and capacity building in the local community. The overall idea is that the target group itself will be empowered to take part in creating their own future – a future which will hold new opportunities for personal growth and positive living. The seminar comprises teaching modules, discussions and group work.

Workshop and follow-up:

The goal of the workshop is to educate the orphans about normal reactions to trauma and mourning reactions, and how you, yourself can shape your own developmental possibilities. Afterwards the task force will work on capacity building by helping the orphans to carry out their own income-generating projects. Adjoining activities include a follow-up visit for support and monitoring of the initiated activities.

Contact Information:

Kirsten Vestergaard Andersen - Mobile: 28 11 13 72. Email: kirsten.v.andersen@gmail.com