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### **THIRD SESSION OF THE GAP YEAR PROGRAM.**

Building confidence and creating a brand for oneself was the theme for the day. Having arrived late for the session, very much unlike my custom, I missed out on the information given at the beginning. Determined to catch up and be in the know about everything that was being said, I made up my mind to participate and immerse myself fully in the ongoing conversation.

It was a day full of information. At one point, I felt like telling everybody to stop talking so as to give me time to internalize everything that was being said. The questions thrown at us were so unfamiliar that it required us to dive into our pockets, retrieve our smart phones and fire up Google. This inquisitive nature, Dr. Weche the team leader of AKAD Group said, is the type of character that we as the youth should aspire to have. There were some new comers in the room and were put on the task of making an introduction of themselves, giving the more common participants of the program a chance to review what one needs to state when making a pitch of themselves: one's identity, what he or she is currently doing and future ambitions or aspirations.

A particular question was asked that ensured that everybody spoke hence building self confidence: what are we as individuals currently working on in our lives? In the room were people with very different interests but one common goal: to achieve success in their fields of passion. I spoke about the environment, another focuses on helping street children and orphans, establishing a clothing line, venturing into entrepreneurship, creating an empire from a technology company, music and so much more. These activities, once carried out boost one's profile. Examples of Anthony Maina and Francis Wahome, peer mentors at AKAD, were given to us. It posed a challenge to learn that somebody, my agemate, has achieved that much.

Soon, it was time for tea. Quite a chatty session as we found out that among ourselves, there existed someone who chose to live life without eating meat! What would drive somebody to such a crazy decision? I made a resolution to never introduce him to my parent. As we continued to eat, it was time for Mike Farad, my fellow associate, and I to make presentations on our business ideas.



When somebody as young as me has an idea and shares it with her friends, they laugh. This is something I've experienced before. However, with the youth at AKAD, the situation

*"We need to conserve our forests!" I tell my fellow peers.*

However, with the youth at AKAD, the situation

changes. One's idea is welcomed and encouraged. A quote was shared with me during one of the sessions that it is the craziest ideas that make the best business plans. As I spoke about my plan to promote environmental conservation by planting trees and introducing recycling in schools, everybody listened and participated by answering my questions. From this exercise, I was able to become more confident as well as get positive feedback from the team of young leaders in the room. I was challenged to go back to the drawing board and figure out the budget, the type of trees that survive in the different environments in Kenya and the duration of the project.

In the afternoon, after the morning mentorship session, Mike Farad and I made our way back to Bellevue to Boma Hotel. Demo Africa was hosting an event where entrepreneurs could pitch their start up businesses to judges and stand an opportunity to get funding.



The atmosphere in the room was stiff. I saw the challenge that the adults, just as I, were having in making a pitch of their ideas. Often, the judges

*Mike and Priyanka, representing Red Cross, give their views on the Urembo business.*

complained that the information given was too little and urged the remaining businessmen to use their three minutes on stage wisely. Mentorship works when the mentee is taken out and shown the importance of all that he or she is being taught. This statement was made by a politician at a meeting I attended recently and I saw the truth of it in that conference room.

Having had to leave the conference room early, I did not get the opportunity to see the judges announce the winner. I was later informed that it is the businessman with the best powerpoint presentation who won. Earlier in the day, after giving my presentation, Dr. Weche had advised me to prepare a powerpoint presentation on the same idea. What a coincidence! These real experiences that followed what I had learned earlier on showed me just how important it is to apply what one is taught.

Laden with homework to watch a six hour documentary, make a powerpoint presentation, review my concept note, write an essay and continue implementing my idea, I felt exhausted but I was happy with the progress I was making. I had received tremendous support from not only my peers but also my mentor. Contacts of people in the same line of business as that I was heading into were shared with me by both my associate and mentor, to whom I am held accountable. Pressure, as it has been established, is one of the key things that pushes one to excel.

