Project Proposal: **Community Run Library and Learning Centre 2021**

**Msambwani, Kwale County, South Coast of Kenya**

**Summary**

Since 2013 Just be a Child (JBAC) works with Kenyan, remote but densely populated communities on projects and activities that lead to the community’s development. Development that is driven, guided, and implemented by the communities themselves. JBAC sees its role as an enabler**,** and advisor where necessary.

Our community engagement starts with a brief introduction where both parties learn a great deal from and about each other. The evaluation stage lasts for approximately nine months after which the community and JBAC enter into a full partnership. The partnership starts with the construction of **a** community run Library and Learning Centre (LLC) from a converted 40ft shipping container. The LLC becomes the community hub for activities such as group gatherings, village meetings, cultural learning as well as activities co-organised by us.

Since 2015 when we entered into our first official community partnership and thus buil**t** our first LLC we now work with five others. Every year we add another community and rely heavily on the existing community partners as Mentors to introduce us and our concept to the new partner.

Each community partner is expected to engage in the activities, which were developed in collaboration with all our existing partners. They include playground construction; multi-activity days (MADays); arts & crafts sessions; Young Writer Competition; youth training sessions on health, disabilities, business and mental health; and volunteer and librarians training programme.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic our LLC**s** were the only source of education to our community children and youth and the importance of LLCs has increased but the LLCs also strengthened the community partners.

We continue to work towards the construction of one new LLC in collaboration with new community partners every year. We aim to haveconstructed 30 LLCs by 2030.

**Brief history of Just be a Child**

Just be a Child (JBAC) was established in February 2013. The first two years were spent on researching how best JBAC can engage with Kenyan local communities: collaboration with small local schools was evaluated, but the impact of our work was short lived and required full time guidance. Community collaboration was much more effective and was put forward as the most suitable approach. Different LLC construction methods including repurposing of an existing building was analysed, but the most effective, both in cost and time, was the conversion of a 40ft shipping container. Importing books as an option was considered against thepurchase of books in Kenya, but the lack of availability of age appropriate books coupled with their high cost of purchase outweighed the burden of shipping them from the UK.

Our projects are heavily dependent on local communities and we therefore operate in a form of partnerships. Each new partner must meet our 12-point selection criteria before the LLC is constructed. From there on each community must show an interest and theinitiative in wanting to engage in the entire development programme.

Through interviews, focus groups and observation as well as capacity mapping and needs analysis community development activities were established. The individual activities were developed slowly over three years and were only included in the project cycle after extensive piloting. Each activity is continuously monitored to ensure it remains relevant to the participants. While offered to all community partners every activity is also tailored to the individual community needs.

All interactions between community partners and JBAC are closely monitored and their impacts evaluated. It is imperative that each activity becomes sustainable without JBAC’s direct leadership intervention. For that reason, we invest heavily in the development of the communities, librarians and volunteers’ skills. Our positive reinforcement of children’s creativity and engagement ensures they continue to improve and benefit from our activities. Additionally, the careful fostering of children’s abilities encourages them to become librarians and volunteers themselves.

The project cycle for the introduction of new community partner and engagement with all partners is:

1. Community meetings to introduce JBAC (new partner) October to December
2. Partner selection criteria (new partner) December to January
3. Playground construction and observation (new partner) January or February
4. Engagement in Multi-Activity Days (new & existing partners) February and November
5. Library and Learning Centre construction (new partner) June to August
6. Young Writer competition (new & existing partners) September
7. Arts & crafts sessions (new & existing partners) throughout the year
8. Youth Training sessions (new & existing partners) throughout the year
9. Volunteer & Librarians training (new & existing partners) throughout the year
10. Book collection in the UK (new & existing partners) throughout the year
11. Evaluation of impact (new & existing partners) throughout the year

**Brief description of the situation**

In Kenya reading for leisure or for academic purposes is extremely limited, both due to the lack of access to age appropriate books and their costs. The lack of enthusiasm for reading is further exacerbated by the negative attitude towards formal education shared by many communities in the South Coast of Kenya. Similarly, or perhaps even worse is children’s attitude towards writing, which is seen as only necessary to complete exams. Furthermore, communities have extraordinarily little opportunities to engage in creative activities and young people are labelled as ‘time wasters’ or ‘addicts’.

The South Coast of Kenya achieves the lowest results in exams across all subjects, suffers extremely high levels of unemployment mostly due to the dependency on declining travel tourism and has one of the highest crime rates and teenage pregnancies across Kenya. The South Coast of Kenya is inhabited by three local tribes as well as representatives from the remaining 40 tribes and the international settlers. This mix allows the local population to be very cosmopolitan, understanding of differences and being open to new influences. They also appreciate the need for an excellent knowledge of English, which they believe will give them the competitive edge when seeking employment in the local hotels. Conversely though, the South Coast of Kenyan tribes are perceived less favourable by other tribes of Kenya and until the recent devolution of the government (2017) this was reflected in the sporadic improvements in infrastructure and schools.

In the current global pandemic Kenyan government response was to close all schools from February 2020 to January 2021. Majority of children will therefore be left without any form of education for almost a year as their parents are uneducated or illiterate themselves. While the Kenyan government publishes worksheets online many of the children we deal with have no access to electronic devices. Our LLCs and the trained volunteers are therefore the only source of education these children will have. We have ensured that social distancing is observed, and that detailed hygiene protocol is followed.

**Project objectives**

Just be a Child inspires Kenyan children to read. That is the basic premise on which JBAC was formed, but we consider literacy as much more than simply reading a book. We believe in enabling each of our community partners to find ways in which they can lead their own community out of poverty.

***JBAC’s objectives are:***

1. To provide access to age appropriate reading material to members of our partner communities and beyond.
2. To create, in varied communities, 30 Library and Learning Centres by 2030.
3. To train and continue supporting young leaders in the communities we work with.
4. To maintain supportive role to all our partner communities.
5. To help facilitate and organise activities leading to children’s and volunteer’s skills, knowledge, and creativity.

***The Project’s objectives are:***

1. To build a Library and Learning Centre in collaboration with a newly identified partner.
2. To supply age appropriate books to the new LLC, resupply existing ones and donate excess books to carefully selected organisations.
3. To train local volunteers, librarians, and leaders.

**Project results**

We have six Libraries and Learning Centres all making positive and sustainable impacts on their local communities. We therefore anticipate that the LLC we aim to build in 2021 will follow the same progression path.

We expect:

* 50-70 community members will participate in introduction, partnership set-up and follow- up meetings.
* 7-9 LLC committee will be formed.
* 7-9 librarians will be trained.
* 15-25 volunteers will participate in the playground installation.
* 250 children will use the playground each month.
* 45 UK volunteers will participate in collecting, sorting, counting, and loading of books.
* 40,000 books will be prevented from being discarded and sent to Kenya instead.
* 15-25 volunteers will participate in the LLC construction in Kenya.
* 450 individuals will enrol as LLC members in the first day and further 650 will enrol in the first 6 months.
* 120 children will use the LLC every month and 1,200 school children will use the LLC as part of their lessons.
* 32 children will participate in the two MADays.
* 100 children will take part in the weekly arts sessions.
* 25 children will submit a story to our Young Writer Competition.
* 60 young people will participate in the four Youth Training Sessions.
* 15-25 volunteers and librarians will attend the Volunteer and Librarians Training.
* The entire community will experience a positive shift towards reading and education; and
* Informal groups will form, and cultural teaching will take place in the LLC.

**Project description and action plan**

As described above, we follow a well-established project cycle where the new community partner is added every year. The LLC we propose for 2021 will be the 7th LLC we have built.

1. 40,000 books out of which 10,000 will be textbooks will be donated, sorted, and counted by the UK volunteers. Approximately 24 schools and 7 Rotary Clubs contribute towards reaching our target. Individuals as well as charity shops such as Oxfam Books donate books too. In the recent years we receive increased donations of stationery and books from corporate partners.

Shipping typically happens in June.

Timing: throughout the year, with **an** intense period of collection between October and May.

1. Three communities will be evaluated and one, meeting the 12-point selection criteria will be selected.

Timing: October to December

1. Playground is constructed with the help of the community volunteers. An observation period follows.

Timing: January or February. Observation period February to May.

1. MADay is organised. This is the first cross-LLC activity. The new community volunteers are expected to help organise and manage the day.

Timing: February

1. **We are seeking financial support for this part of the project.**

The 40ft shipping container is purchased in the UK, loaded by volunteers, and sent to Kenya. The sea voyage takes approximately 35 days, with further 9 working days at port where we complete the import legalities. Upon arrival at the new community’s site volunteers empty the container and proceed to convert it into the LLC. The process takes 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the weather. The following activities take place:

* 1. Welder (skilled and paid labour) cuts and installs 6 windows.
  2. Community members paint the container inside and out.
  3. Community children decorate the outside of the container with their handprints.
  4. Local artist paints a logo and other signs on the outside of the container.
  5. Volunteers make and paint bookshelves and the welder welds them to the sides of the container.
  6. Books are placed on the bookshelves.
  7. Librarians are trained by JBAC and sign up to our governing policies such as Safeguarding and Ethical Principles.
  8. Open Day is help typically on aSaturday.
  9. First enrolment day is on Sunday **-** unless the community is predominantly Christian.

Timing: July to August

1. Children participate in the Young Writer Competition.

Timing: September

1. The assigned Mentor (an experienced librarian from older LLC) assists with the launch of the Arts and Crafts Sessions.

Timing: From September throughout the year

1. Another 16 children participate in the second MADay.

Timing: November

1. Four Youth Training Sessions are organised following discussions with the local youth to determine which topics (JBAC developed 9 training topics) are most relevant to them. The Disability Training Session is compulsory for all LLCs to participate in.

Timing: from November throughout the year

1. Volunteer and librarians training is organised for the quieter months.

Timing: from November throughout the year

1. Evaluation and monitoring is an integral part of our work and we collect qualitative and quantitative data for all our activities. The data is interpreted whenever possible to capture gender and age at the very minimum.

Timing: since commencement of partnership

We participate in local (UK and Kenya) fundraising throughout the year and we do so by organising events as well as writing bids. Our thematic fundraising allows us to support each element of the project from different budgets.

Maintenance and repairs happen as needed.

**Monitoring & evaluation**

We have developed **a** detailed Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning manual, which forms the basis for all our monitoring and reporting. We rely on limited form of self-reporting when we interview children but prefer to prove their claims by independent evaluation. We collect financial data for comparison and budgeting using fixed exchange rate.

Our volunteers and librarians are trained at using our monitoring procedures and they are required to submit progression reports every quarter. The information captured is both qualitative and quantitative. We use feedback forms following our training sessions and evaluate official school results where possible to determine what progress has been made by children attending our LLCs. We interview teachers on **a** regular basis and collect longitudinal data on several children.

We also conduct observation carried out by our staff and engage in oral feedback gathering too. Our photographic evidence is vast, and the participating children numbers continue to rise even in the oldest LLCs.

**Implementation timeline & schedule**

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|  | **2020** | | | **2021** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar  Rain season | Apr  Rain season | May  Rain season | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
| Partner selection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Playground construction |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| MADay 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shipping |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LLC construction |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing competition |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Arts & Crafts |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| MADay 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Youth Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| V&L Training |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Activities undertaken at all times** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Book collection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| M&E |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| JBAC’s support |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Repair & maintenance |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Budget**

The cost of LLC construction, for which we are seeking financial support, is below:

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| --- | --- |
| **Construction Elements** | **Cost (£)** |
| Book collection and packing (UK) | £2,000 |
| 40ft shipping container purchase (UK) | £1,500 |
| Compliance paperwork (e.g. CoC, fumigation) (UK) | £1,000 |
| Shipping cost (UK) | £1,500 |
| Port and Forwarder charges (Kenya) | £2,200 |
| Import taxes (Kenya) | £1,000 |
| Container delivery to site (Kenya) | £1,200 |
| Offloading from lorry (Kenya) | £1,000 |
| Window construction and welding (Kenya) | £900 |
| Painting (Kenya) | £300 |
| Bookshelves (Kenya) | £350 |
| Stationery (UK) | £200 |
| Entry and security (Kenya) | £350 |
| Electricity supply for construction (Kenya) | £100 |
| Transport (persons and material) (Kenya) | £250 |
| Food for volunteers (UK loading day and Kenya) | £350 |
| Librarians training | £150 |
| Opening party | £550 |
| Librarians t-shirts | £100 |
| **TOTAL** | **£15,000** |

The cost of the entire project cycle is depicted below:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Cost 2020 (£)** | **New community increase for cross-LLC activities** |
| Looking for new partner community | £200 |  |
| MADay (November) | £500 |  |
| Playground | £1,000 |  |
| MADay | £575 | +15% |
| LLC construction | £15,000 |  |
| Arts & Crafts | £1,200 | +25% |
| Young Writer Competition | £2,000 | +15% |
| Youth Training Sessions | £3,500 | +30% |
| Volunteers and librarians Training | £1,200 | +10% |
| **TOTAL** | **£25,175** |  |