

The Sunflower Foundation (Australia) Inc.

Pass the Mic!

The Sunflower Kenya project (2018-2021)



SUNFLOWER
FOUNDATION

Seeding Hope Through Education

Our Partner

In 2015, Gianna Biaggi studied abroad in the Kibera Slums of Nairobi, Kenya, and worked as a teacher and literacy tutor at an informal school in the Karanja neighbourhood. After working extensively with a student in class 8 (age 14) that was functionally illiterate, she began to study literacy, brain development and the best intervention methods.

In 2017, Gianna met Rukia, a Kibera local with ten years of experience working in the community, who shared her disbelief at the amount of illiterate, or functionally illiterate students in Nairobi's informal schools. Together, they established the Sunflower Kibera in September 2017, in the Kibera Slums of Nairobi. Their organisation is dedicated to building the leadership potential of all girls and young women.

The Challenge

Kibera slums are located just three miles outside of Nairobi, Kenya. This informal settlement has an estimated population of about one million people ¹. Of these one million people, an estimated 52% are youth under the age of eighteen years old ². Youth living in Kibera face a unique set of challenges, including unemployment, drug abuse, and a lack of opportunities for education and advancement ³; illiteracy rates are high among youth in Kibera. Illiteracy disproportionately affects people of informal settlements, where limited access to educational opportunities and resources, such as libraries, hinder the development of literacy skills ⁴.

Unfortunately, in Kenya, the majority of sponsorship programs target the best students. Though understandable, this means that girls who have performed poorly in school, often through no fault of their own, are more likely to find child marriage, prostitution or sexual exploitation because these are the only options. Since we value the potential of every girl, Pass the Mic! will give these girls a chance in life. By recruiting those students abandoned by the school system, we intend to resolve the economical and social security issues women and child face at their roots.

Our Response

Our Pass the Mic program is about giving a voice to the voiceless, literally “passing the mic” to let individuals speak for themselves. Recruiting the most vulnerable, low-performing students, allows us to focus on energy and efforts on girls and young women that are traditionally ignored or underserved by other large organizations in Kibera. In giving a preference to this demographic, we are actively preventing child marriage, abuse and prostitution; when you educate a girl in an informal

¹ The Economist and Amnesty International; Wale Wale USA and Wale Kenya recognize that it is difficult to collect accurate data in large informal settlements

² Emina et al 2011, Journal of Public Health

³ Chr. Michelsen Institute Study, 2015

⁴ UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, 2016

settlement, she will have fewer and healthier children, who are less likely to contact HIV, and more likely to be enrolled in school⁵. Giving a girl or young woman the opportunity to attend school.

Pass the Mic literacy, art and public speaking program will enable our girls to gain the academic skills they need to become positive leaders within their community, while creating literary magazines, and comic books that will be distributed throughout Kibera. This approach simultaneously builds the reading, writing and comprehension skills of our students, while raising the status of girls in the community, as their writing and art is published and distributed to individuals and schools.

The Pass the Mic literacy program will be delivered weekly to our students during our after-school sessions, as well as once a month on the weekends, to an open class of 30 girls throughout Kibera. Moreover, students will come daily to the Sunflower literacy lab after school, where they participate in academic support sessions, technology labs, literacy support, art, and LEADership sessions. On Saturdays, our girls participate in community service, meetings with their mentors, and extended literacy programs, parent workshops and field trips. Every girl undergoes counselling sessions at least once a month, and writes in a journal.

Through our holistic approach to community literacy, Sunflower will also bring the curriculum to our five informal partner schools within Kibera, giving more students the opportunity to participate in literacy and art programming.

The purpose of this program is to train our 100 Primary and 60 Secondary students (total 160 girls) in literacy skills, which includes, but is not limited to, phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension, ensuring that they are able to read and write at their appropriate grade level. Instead of traditional literacy classes, that typically involve memorization and do not utilize critical thinking skills, the Pass the Mic literacy program focuses on storytelling, bookmaking and art and design, integrating learning into fun activities that teach students skills while giving them the opportunity to participate in art and technology classes that are unavailable within their local schools. Through the integrated literacy, artistic and digital skills training, our students, who are typically far below grade level in reading and writing, will vastly improve their literacy skills, while learning computer skills, as well as participating in art and design classes. Through the creation of a Sunflower Literary Magazine, personal journals and comic books, the girls will showcase their hard work and growth in literacy to their schools and the entire community; these books will be distributed to our students' homes, schools and the larger Kibera community, giving hundreds of people the opportunity to read and appreciate the writing of girls, raising the status of girls in the community while providing everyone with the benefits of additional books and written materials.

The objectives for the Pass the Mic Project are as follows:

- Through intensive weekly reading, writing and thinking sessions, raise the literacy levels of our 160 pupils, with a focus on phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension and writing skills.
- Build critical thinking skills through reading, writing and art, challenging students to think outside the box, create and build something unique for themselves and their community
- Publish, distribute and showcase culturally relevant comic books, literary magazines and stories once every three months within the wider Nairobi and Kibera community, demonstrating the power of girls writing, and providing Kenyans with books and materials with specifically created content for them.
- Invite and encourage more young women to participate in literacy programming through open Saturday programming, reaching even more young girls throughout Kibera, and providing more homes and schools with culturally relevant books.

⁵ <http://kgsafoundation.org/holistic-approach/why-girls>

- Work with our 5 partner schools to build a “Pass the Mic” curriculum into their Reading, English and Literacy classes, ensuring that more students get the benefits of reading, creative writing and art. This will allow more students of both genders to participate in literacy programming and art, ensuring even more people can read and write.

Our Impact

Students Educational Development

Through Pass the Mic, students are brought up to grade level in reading, while learning basic computer skills as they type and develop their stories on the computer, and illustrate them. This holistic model of literacy training gives our students access to three new types of programs that they do not get in school; creative writing, technology and art, while raising their reading levels, comprehension and fluency.

After the completion of the Pass the Mic literacy program, all of our students will be reading at or above their appropriate grade level, while having learned new skills in technology, art and creative writing. Our girls will have created a safe where they can think critically, and will have encouraged their peers and local community members to trust, learn from, and listen to, young women.

Wider Community Benefits

The Sunflower works directly with informal schools in Kibera to find and recruit our pupils, ensuring that the most vulnerable young women with significantly interrupted schooling are able to participate in our holistic program model.

Through the creation of literary magazines, journals and comic books that are then distributed to the families of our student, their schools and the wider community, the entire community can read and appreciate the work of young women and girls, while improving their own literacy skills, through access to books and literary materials. Through the distribution of these materials, more families in Kibera will have access to books and written materials within their homes, encouraging more parents and guardians to read to their children of both genders, inspiring future authors and writers to think creatively and critically. The Pass the Mic curriculum and distribution plan also includes bringing the literary magazine and comic book program to our five informal partner schools, building Pass the Mic clubs that focus on creative writing and art, and working with teachers to integrate the Pass the Mic curriculum into their daily classroom lessons, changing the calibre of curriculum at some of the lowest performing schools in Kenya.

Pass the Mic is a community literacy program; though our students will have the most direct time with the curriculum, through the distribution of Sunflower’s books, comic books and written materials to schools, and through working with our informal school partners to build Pass the Mic into their curriculum, the entire Kibera community will benefit. The long-term benefits of the publication of written materials and bringing Pass the Mic to our partner schools is twofold; giving thousands of families, schools and libraries in Kibera and Nairobi culturally relevant reading materials by local authors, and secondly, allowing hundreds of male and female students in Kibera’s informal schools to participate in creative writing and art programming that will make them better readers, inspiring creativity and critical thinking in generations to come.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the success of Pass the Mic, we use a model driven by data and rigorous testing, measuring phonological awareness, fluency, and comprehension, the major factors in building full literacy. Through assessments, pre-year, midyear and post-year, our students' literacy levels will be tracked and measured, and growth will be determined. Through the work of our literacy specialist, we will pull out students who are not markedly improving for additional basic tutoring, while continuing with the curriculum and programming for the rest of the group. The basic literacy test will be used to determine the reading levels of our participants, and the skills they are building. We will also monitor student academic progress and grades before, during and after the program has ended, to determine whether the literacy intervention is improving their overall academic performance. Should the majority student literacy levels not be improving, we will revert back to more standardized literacy tutoring, through memorization and basic teaching, while still incorporating small portions of the art and technology book making sessions, until students are at basic fluency to complete more intricate tasks.

These literacy tests alone will not determine the success of the project. To ensure that our students are improving their critical thinking skills and self-confidence, we will administer surveys and hold pre and post interviews at the end of quarter, to determine what is working and what is not. Likewise, we will survey parents and guardians to find out if the published books and materials are being properly utilized, and if so, how often are they being read. Should families not be reading the books created by their daughters at home, we will hold Family Read Aloud Days, where students bring a parent, guardian or neighbour for a half day showcase of their work, and a healthy lunch.

In bringing Pass the Mic into schools, we will work with teachers to test for student literacy levels, as measure grades and test scores before, during and after the intervention. We will also look at student attendance on the days that Pass the Mic clubs are holding sessions- whether or not more students are attending school on those days and if that has a positive correlation to our literacy programming. Should student literacy levels not improve from Pass the Mic, we will again revert back to traditional literacy tutoring, while slowly incorporating art and technology components as students improve their overall abilities.

Detailed Budget

Item(s) description	Annual Cost \$	Total Cost \$
Sunflower Literacy Lab Rent: This will allow our fellows to participate in activities at the building daily.	1070	3210
Sunflower Literacy Lab Electricity: This will allow our fellows to use computers and technology to type their stories.	80	240
Sunflower Literacy Lab- Security: This will ensure that our books, technology and curriculum are safe and able to be distributed.	230	690
Sunflower Literacy Lab Internet: This will allow our fellows to build blogs and write about their lives.	230	690
Pass the Mic Literacy Supplies, Curriculum and Book Printing: This will allow our fellows to receive hands on literacy training, as well as produce and print their own books and magazines.	610	1830
Pass the Mic Parental Involvement Literacy Classes and Training: This will give our fellows and their families additional literacy classes on the weekends, as well as workshops about the effectiveness of literacy and reading to your child.	610	1830
Pass the Mic Saturday Open Literacy Classes for Girls (non Sunflower Fellows): This will expand the Pass the Mic program into the community, allowing more girls to participate and widening our impact.	1460	4380
Pass the Mic Art Supplies: This will give our fellows the tools to be creative and illustrate their own literary magazines, books and comic books.	305	915
Partner Teacher and School Literacy and Art Training: This will widen our impact to our 5 partner, informal schools, as well as give more students, boys and girls, the chance to participate in Pass the Mic.	305	915
Field Trips: This will give our Sunflower Fellows the opportunity to see, write and create new things for their literary magazines and comic books. We will host one field trip per term.	150	450
TOTAL	AUD \$5,050	AUD \$15,150