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CHILDRENS BOOK NETWORK – 10 years of reading

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

INTRODUCTION

We sometimes forget that this gigantic task will never go away. We are now looking at a fifth generation of ten to twelve-year-old reading with CBN. Some of the first children we worked with have children of their own. It would be wonderful to think that they remember that reading can be fun and reading can be *everything* to a child and are passing on the idea.

Nothing has changed about our goals and aims. We still want to bring books to children – and a love of reading – that can change their lives and futures. WE haven't changed – but the children have.

In our ten years of existence, we have seen three huge changes in the lives of children in South Africa, but in many cases also globally.

1

The dumbing down of education as offered in average South African schools. (There are wonderful exceptions, but the mythical 'average South African child' isn't at them, and is not enjoying the skills of some of our truly exceptional educators.)

The current curriculum places a strong emphasis on conformity. 'The facts' have to be covered in a very short time, and there are so many facts to absorb, or at least to have seen briefly in a textbook. The important focus is on being able to assemble these facts again in tests and evaluation. There is a crying need for imagination and passion in the lives of children who learn to read – but don't read. They need books. They need to be able to imagine the worlds of other people and other places.

2

MULTIPLE MEDIA AND HEAVY INFORMATION OVERLOAD.

Children's attention span narrows every year we work with them. This is a global phenomenon and applies to adults too. To catch children's interest, reading must deliver quickly and not challenge them too much – and this also leads to a shortage of creativity and – most of all – lack of imagination.

3

COVID

Not enough has been said about the effects of the pandemic on the lives of children. Estimates are that they have lost, on average, 1.3 years of education during the last two years. How can they ever catch up again? (Answer: They can't.)

CONCLUSION

Now, more than ever, they need reading. We see it as the only survival skill that can help them escape. If they can read, they can do anything they set their minds and hearts to do.

OUR CORE FUNCTIONS REMAIN ...

WORKSHOPS

Wilien continues to give workshops to children in Stanford South with Stanford Library workshops weekly. We also give regular workshops at De Bron and Okkie Smuts Primary Schools, and have started of a programme at Enlighten Trust (Zwelihle). At De Kop some children work at home and some with Vuyo at the community hall in the informal settlement. We were recently given permission by the principal of De Bron to arrange workshops on Saturdays as well as after school.

De Kop informal settlement:

Vuyo Siza, after five years with CBN, is now working full time at The Butterfly School (for children with special needs), as well as working with the choir on other music projects. The De Kop workshops have been suspended for now – but the children living at De Kop attend De Bron and Okkie Smuts schools and are in our catchment area there. We need to thank her for all her efforts with our Lockdown Learning programme, which she ran with efficient dedication.

Zwelihle (Enlighten Educational Trust) We have already begun a series of workshops there and will start the new season in March, hopefully with Terry Takuma and Inge Mafuzi as facilitators.

COSTS

**Our full audited financials for the year are at
www.childrensbook.co.za**

WORKSHOPS AND BOOK CLUB COST

Costs over the year R113 710

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT COSTS R770 120

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT COSTS R30 000

TOOLBOX REPORT

RED TOOLBOX

The Red Toolbox is finished! Well not finished, exactly. It still needs professional editing and some illustration, proper design and layout and printing. But the text is written. The multitude of stories, poems, ideas and activities are safely stored on a hard drive (and elsewhere) and copies of the three handbooks (each of over 100 pages) have been printed and distributed for peer review.

The Main topic of this box is *Books and Stories*, aimed at the youngest level we work with (Grade 4 or 10-11 years-old). We are trialing it with children at one of the local schools and it remains a constant resource for all the work we do.

GREEN TOOLBOX

This was the focus of our Lockdown Learning project in 2020 when we handed out 100 reading packs every week to our core group of children. These were shared with siblings and the result was a massive reading outreach to children who were not permitted to attend school during lockdown, who were bored, frightened and traumatized.

This work needs revision and organizing into the Toolbox format, but it also serves as a resource when we need it. (Aimed at Grade 5, the 11–12-year-olds.)

BLUE TOOLBOX

Time and Landscape is the most difficult, the most challenging and the most fun. The writing is more than half-way done and the organizing of material and books complete. We will be trialing this in the Tankwa Karoo (one of the least inhabited bits of Africa), in August as part of an Archaeology outreach from UK, America and Portugal. This one **MUST** be finished, as there are possibilities for funding of this through other outreach programmes concerning Archaeology, History and deep time. (Aimed at 12-13 Year-olds.)

BOOK BOXES AND BOOK CLUBS (Report to insert)

This was always a goal as an extension of, and back-up to, the workshops. Our 9 Book boxes circulating Stanford South and De Kop are an integral part of our efforts. Report by Wilien attached.

WEBSITE

Our website was ten years old and completely outdated. Drupal (in which it was constructed) will no longer offer support for this package after the end of 2022.

REBRANDING AND UPGRADING COMMUNICATIONS

It became essential to upgrade the website for two reasons:

- Our old site was never cellphone compatible.
- CBN needed a fresher image – although this was only supplementary to the first, and second, main, reasons.
- Critical for fundraising, this upgrade was beyond our in-house skills and has to be outsourced. Octopi Communications – who gave us special social responsibility rates to bring us up to a fresher, more modern look.

CHANGE

Due to the pandemic, we have had to change our methods. Technology has also caught up with us, and the attached budget reflects some of these changes as well. We have dismissed several ideas as impractical in the circumstances, but the following remain crucial.

Insert budget from funding appeal- check figures with financials

OTHER COSTS

THIRD PARTY INSURANCE TO PROTECT CHILDREN

R4 500 per year – R2 250 for six months

RENT – None. We use public venues for workshops. A hut was kindly donated (by William and Penny Lowe when our venue was sold). The CBN Book collection and the CBN office is housed at Lesley's home.

TECHNOLOGY

We have a donated data projector, printer, and scanner (which is currently being replaced due to overwork!). William and Penny Lowe generously donated an iPad Pro, which is absolutely invaluable, in a hundred ways, but particularly at workshops.

BANK CHARGES

Accounting	Approximately R1000 per month	R6 000
Auditing	Approx 2 500 for six months.	R2 500
Communications	– phone and Internet R700 per month	R4 200
Entertaining	– Board meetings and staff meetings R300 per month	R1 800

TENTATIVE TOTAL APPROX R14 700

GRAND TOTAL R

288 400

MANAGEMENT

We desperately need an additional staff member, particularly in the areas of fund-raising and materials creation

JOB CREATION

A priority for 2022 is to create jobs for local people as facilitators for workshops, community contacts for running book-boxes and outreach programmes. We are aiming at three people – four would be better.

SUSTAINABILITY

The plan has always been that we would create income for CBN through the toolboxes. We have also initiated a small publishing project. Proceeds from this will go entirely to CBN after costs. The first book (*Poppy*) will be available in first quarter next year. We hope sales from that will generate income.

DONORS AND FUND-RAISING

PENNY