

THE LEARNING CENTRE AND EDUCATIONAL COURSES BUSINESS PLAN
- A PROJECT SPONSORED BY NETWORK FOR AFRICA -
For more information about the administration of N4A UK and N4A US, please
see the Network for Africa business plan at www.network4africa.org.

In the summer of 2007, a small team of Network for Africa (N4A) volunteer teachers taught English literacy classes to students in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The courses were offered in partnership with Solace Ministries, a genocide survivors' support center. Enthusiasm for the courses were such that the volunteer teachers wished to create for the eager students a more permanent means of learning and access to books and other educational materials. Within two weeks, the volunteers had raised enough money from supporters in the UK and the US to establish the Learning Centre, a room housed at Solace where students of all ages could come to read, interact with other students, and receive English lessons from a Rwandan tutor. They also secured the agreement of an employee of the British Embassy to monitor the Centre on a weekly basis, to ensure that it was being appropriately used. N4A representatives have also made numerous unannounced visits to the Centre and have consistently found there to be dozens of students taking advantage of the facility.

Indeed, the Centre has become so popular that Solace Ministries has approached N4A with a proposition for expanding the project. In partnership with Solace, N4A would like to build a larger space on the Solace property to house the Centre. The old Centre will then be fully converted into a library.

Additionally, N4A hopes to use its Summer '08 volunteer team to build on the successes of last summer. Specifically, N4A is making plans to expand both the English literacy courses and a business & enterprise course. The Learning Centre will serve as the base for both projects.

The following outlines the expansion plans for the Learning Centre and the courses, as well as a budget and administrative information for N4A.

The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre, currently a small room within an existing Solace Ministries building, will be moved to a larger room on site. The larger space will be constructed solely for the purposes of housing the Centre. The small room where the Centre is currently located will be converted into a full library. In addition to the construction for a new Centre area and refurbishing of the library, Solace has proposed, and N4A has agreed pending available funds, to the construction of a permanent counselling room, in conjunction with N4A's psychotherapy training program (see the Network for Africa Business Plan, available at www.network4africa.org). A corridor will be built to link these rooms.

The cost for the construction and basic equipment for the new Learning Centre will be £19,800.

English Literacy and Business & Enterprise Courses

English Literacy

In August 2007, N4A began teaching English. Before the courses began, volunteers in Canada worked with teaching team leader Roz Gater to create a curriculum especially designed for teaching English as a second language in Rwanda.

The courses involved a team of five volunteer teachers and 150 students ranging in ability from beginners to students who were verging on fluent. Students were eager to learn, with some walking as much as 12.5 miles a day to attend lessons. In addition to students, many of them orphans, in their teens and twenties, widows also attended the courses. Students received a certificate of completion at the end of the course, and there is great enthusiasm for N4A volunteer teachers to return for summer 2008.

Learning Centre on Wheels

In addition to English classes on site at Solace, N4A would like to develop the literacy project further by taking a mobile literacy unit to other areas in Kigali and surrounding communities. This would involve transporting educational materials, such as textbooks and stationery supplies, with a volunteer teacher who would organize makeshift English literacy classes wherever the mobile unit travels on a given day.

Currently, we plan to hire drivers to transport the volunteers and materials, and this is included in the budget for educational courses. However, we hope that in the future we may be able to purchase a van that will function as a "Learning Centre on wheels."

Business & Enterprise

A second education project undertaken in 2007 was a business & enterprise endeavor. Roz Gater was invited to teach a class at a local school; she used the opportunity to implement a lesson on enterprise and basic business skills. Roz divided the class into "companies", identified by an original name and logo. These companies participated in informal seminars in which they were taught business vocabulary, how to write a business plan, and ultimately how to turn innovative ideas into practical business enterprises. Each company was then given a small amount of capital (less than \$10) and a further two weeks to make a profit from their capital and their company's business idea. If they made a profit, it was the company's to keep. At the end of the two week period, every company had made a profit, with one making three times the amount of the original investment. During the last seminar, the class reflected on the companies' successes, as well as what they could have done better as a company and what makes a successful business.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of two key tools with which students are equipped by the business and enterprise project: initiative and confidence. With few employment opportunities and a culture in which independent thought has been discouraged, Rwandan students desperately need these skills in order to make better lives for themselves. Thus, N4A proposes to replicate the business and enterprise project model in other schools and community groups in Kigali and surrounding areas. The proposal has already attracted the support of entrepreneurs such as Richard Lamb, who has served as a founder, CEO, and president of several successful companies. Mr. Lamb is making plans to serve as a volunteer with the 2008 projects, specifically as an instructor for the business and enterprise course.