Welcome to Mama Mtoto Story Time!
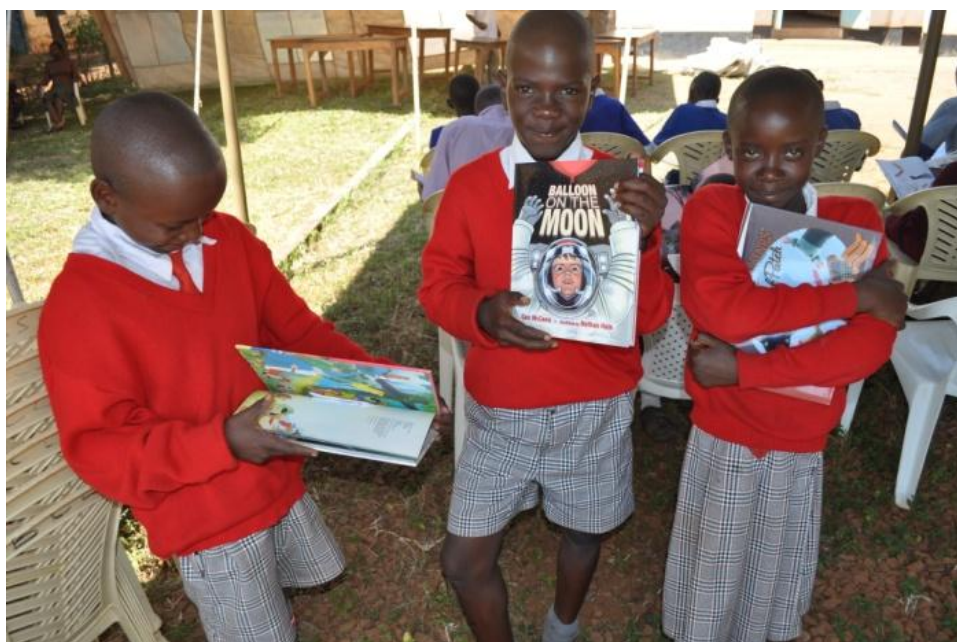
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I. Summary of Mama Mtoto/ Mother Child Story Time

Overview

Mama Mtoto/Mother Child Story Time will introduce books and a love of reading to young mothers and their pre-school children in five libraries across Kenya. Mothers and children will work with locally published story books with the help of librarians trained in the exploration of a new book, including reading out loud, engaging children with the story, and answering children's questions. The mothers and children will keep these books to read at home, and begin to build their own personal libraries. Librarians will also work with the mothers to create a storybook from their own oral tradition. The project will develop literary skills in young mothers while exposing pre-school children to a love of stories, promote and encourage the production of local children's books, and increase the capacity of libraries and librarians to run other community programs. The libraries involved are the Busia Community Library (Busia), Elangata Wuas Resource Center (Elangata Wuas), Garissa Community Library (Garissa), SIDEREC Youth Library (Kibera), and Lamu Cultural Center (Lamu). Connecting mothers to libraries, children to stories, and communities to each other, Mama Mtoto Story Time will sew literacy and cultural exchange throughout Kenya.
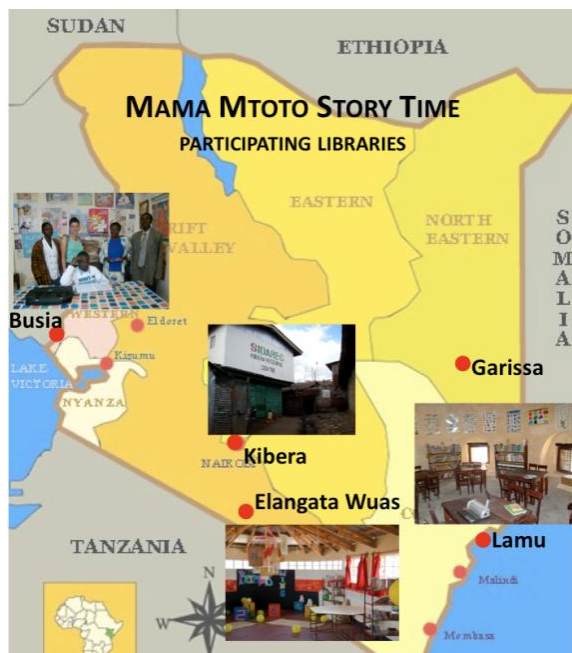
Problem

Kenyans dedicated to library projects in their communities have remarked that there is not a reading culture in Kenya. Despite the fact that newspapers are read voraciously and the culture of education in Kenya is quite pronounced, reading for personal enrichment and pleasure is not prevalent in Kenyan communities. This is reflective of a vicious circle, since in most communities in Kenya, books are simply not available. In order to build a reading culture, people need to have access to books. But without the demand, books will remain absent in all but the big cities in Kenya. Developing a love of books, however, is about much more than simply providing books. Access to books is the first step, but books also need to be proactively introduced into communities in relevant ways, so that communities can see themselves and their lives reflected in the books they read.

This project uses mother-child story time to introduce books and a love of reading to young mothers and their children. The project increases the literacy skills of the mother (women's education has been shown to be directly related to the education of children, particularly girls), and introduces books for entertainment and education at a very early age among the participants in our program. The project will also buy locally published books to use in the program which supports and encourages local publishers, and showcases writers that can act as role models for both the mothers and the children. The recording and exchange of traditional stories across communities in story book form will demonstrate to participants and the general community that story books are reflective of their own lives, and that there is value in learning about the stories of others.

Project details
In each of our 5 sites, a group of young mothers will be selected to participate in the 4 month program. Every two weeks, participants will meet at the library to be introduced to a new children's book, bought from local publisher Storymoja. Librarians are trained to facilitate an exploration of the new book (reading out loud, discussing strategies on how to engage children with the story, with the pictures, how to answer children's questions, etc.). The mothers then each take this new book home and to read it to their children as many times as they can over the next two weeks. Following this, participants meet again and discuss their experience with the book and learn a new book. Throughout the course of the 4 months, mothers will have worked with 7 different story books, 6 of which are bought from local Kenyan publisher Storymoja. All story books will be theirs to keep at home in their own personal library. In the last month of the program, the librarians will use a book that is produced by the women in the program themselves. The book will be developed in the final stages of the program as a collaboration between each town's citizen archivists[1], the librarian, and the mothers participating in the program, and will reflect their collective favorite oral traditional children's story and their agreed-upon telling of this story. This storybook will be disseminated to each of the Mothers in the different sites, and using this book, librarians from one library will travel to another site to facilitate the presentation to Mothers of the portion of book which comes from their community. This way they can teach the young mothers about life in these communities and point out things in the stories which might otherwise go unnoticed.

Potential impact
This project is designed to have both short and long term impacts in several ways.

Short-term Direct Impacts
The impacts of this project will be directly beneficial to its participants, with very specific outcomes:

- 75 total mamas trained to read story books to their children
- 75 total pre school children who have direct access to age- and culturally-appropriate story books
- 5 total librarians trained on how to implement a literacy program

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[1] The Citizen Archivists Project, another project done in conjunction with another NGO Smallbean, trained community members to record stories from their communities.

- 5 total communities with access to both new books and trained librarians
- 6 new Kenyan-published story books for each library and each mama
- 5 new traditional story book for each library, including traditional stories from all over Kenya as told by the mamas at each site
- 4 cultural visits received by each library

Long term Impacts

In addition to the direct affects of participating in the program, the project is designed to have long term impact in several areas.

First, by introducing reading at a young age, we hope that this project will have a long term affect for all of the participants. Studies show that reading at early ages has positive cognitive affects on children. Further, women's education has been shown to be directly and positively related to the education of children, particularly girls. While this program promotes a reading culture directly in a mother and child pair, long-term impacts should be felt as the mother passes this value on to the rest of her children.

Second, we will have trained librarians at 5 sites to run literacy programs and work with other libraries. We will support them in their efforts to run this program again, or develop new programs based on feedback from the communities, and their own ideas.

Third, the relationships that we build by promoting communications between these five sites we hope will foster positive cultural exchange. In these five sites, not only will they have discussed traditional stories from all five sites, we will have laid the groundwork for future collaboration, which we will support.

Finally, the lessons learned from this experience will be compiled into a training manual for other community libraries to implement. Maria's Libraries will promote the manual and offer instructions in how to use it.

I.   Kitabu Kenya Training Program

Objectives
To develop and institute a training program for librarians in Kenya based on (1) flexibility in catering for needs in rural, semi-urban, and slum areas in Kenya, and across different communities; (2) a re-conceptualization of the understood role of libraries based on specific community-based challenges; (3) an emphasis not only on information management, but service delivery, long term planning and programming; and (4) the importance of a library as a public good, both in its function as repository for information and resources, and its function as a public space. Further, once designed, the training will be implemented in 5 sites with the specific objectives of (1) regularizing participant community libraries' methods of library management; (2) allowing participants to access resources between sites and at the national level; (3) creating a platform for future programs between sites; and (4) running the Mama-Mtoto Story Time Practicum to trouble shoot programming while promoting literacy, a love of reading, and early childhood development though cognitive development.

Background and Impetus for a new Library Training Program
Libraries
The importance of libraries in developed countries has long been understood. Benjamin Franklin founded the first library in the United States, stating that libraries were critical to a successful democracy. In the US and other developed countries, libraries have certainly performed this function, enabling an informed citizenry both for participation in the political process, and in the economic and cultural sphere as well.

However, their functions have always been much broader than that. Among other things, the importance of libraries as *public spaces* cannot be under rated. As pointed to in Robert Putnam's influential work *Bowling Alone*, the importance of public spaces to create social capital has a number of positive societal outcomes, including social cohesion and an increased capacity for economic growth. Later work on social capital has highlighted the potential for negative social capital as well—for example, in enabling criminal networks or other anti-social goods. Libraries have a great potential in promoting positive social capital.

These motivations are very much at the heart of many library initiatives in Kenya as well. Indeed, these goals are all the more salient in places where there are very few other spaces to access published materials, and almost no public spaces. Operating a library in Kenya, however, may also require a reconsideration and expansion of the very notion of how libraries are used. This is true for two primary reasons. First, the needs and currently available resources looks very different in many Kenyan communities than it did in many Western countries. The diversity of indigenous languages is perhaps the simplest example of this. Differences in relationships to land, health and education across Kenya are a more complex example of this.

Second, the technological capacity in Kenya today is very different than it was even 5 years ago, and is constantly changing. However, the capacity in terms of infrastructure and availability to enable leapfrogging some Western librarianship is coupled by a low capacity to actually take advantage of that technology.

Therefore, the resources needed by the communities and the potentials of libraries to provide require a training program specifically dedicated to the needs of Kenyan communities, taking advantages to opportunities equally specific to Kenya.

The Network: Kitabu Kenya
While individual libraries have a large role in addressing information gaps at the local level, in assisting one community with developing its library, it became clear that the real potential of library development lies not in isolated project that are happening all over Kenya; but in a network of libraries that can share information, resources and experiences. To that end, Maria's Libraries has been developing a list of all the libraries in Kenya. There are currently 54 libraries within the Kenya National Library Services network. However, there is no clear idea how many community libraries exist outside the KNLS network, and the number is potentially equally high or higher.

While this "library mapping" takes place, Maria's Libraries, in conjunction with Africa Soma, has developed a 4-library network, or *Kitabu Kenya*, which is currently engaging in a Citizen Archivist Project through another NGO Smallbean. In June- July of 2010, Smallbean volunteers trained archivists and librarians in all of the Kitabu Kenya sites to use technology to document key events, stories, and other items of interest in their communities. We are hoping to expand Kitabu Kenya to five libraries and to build from the experience of the Citizen Archivist Project to begin dialogue between these libraries. Participating Libraries include: Busia Community Library (Busia, Kenya), Elangata Wuas Resource Center (Elangata Wuas), SIDEREC Youth Library (Kibera), and Lamu Cultural Center (Lamu). The fifth library will be the Garissa Community Library (Garissa). All of these locations are currently operating and have programs and services in their communities. They are in very different parts of Kenya, and they service very different parts of Kenya's diverse populations. The staff at each of these libraries has different levels of training, both in terms of librarianship, technological know-how and programming. The infrastructure at each site is similarly diverse, with different power and internet capabilities.

While working with such a diverse set of libraries presents clear challenges, these sites were chosen specifically to represent a cross-section of the "Kenyan experience". Triangulating experiences between the sites and developing a training program that works across these sites will, we believe, go a long way towards establishing a training program that can be of use to a wide spectrum of Kenyan libraries and resource centers.

Training
Kenya has library training programs through polytechnics, or trade colleges, in several locations around the country. Of these, the polytechnic in Nairobi is the most reputable, as reported by Kenya National Library Services. However, not only are these services are largely oriented towards urban libraries, they constitute formal education, requiring two years of study. Most community libraries are not run by trained librarians, but by members of the community who are passionate about the services they are able to offer. The training manuals we propose will be designed for community leaders who do not have the opportunity to engage in formal education. They will in no way replace the certification process available by the Polytechnic, or qualify the

participants to work as librarians at KNLS. However, they will represent important skills enhancement for trained and non-trained librarians alike.

Other resources for libraries in Africa include the UNESCO publication *Libraries for All* (see Annex II) and the Friends of African Village Libraries manual (see Annex III). These publications provide sound and specific advice in basic library management. However, while both can be considered important resources for our network of libraries, there are two primary areas that require further work. First, both miss the *networking* and *programming* aspect of libraries. Second, these are both manuals, but they do not outline any particular training program.

In Kenya, perhaps uniquely among African countries at similar stages of development, it makes little sense to move forward with any development project without incorporating the latest available technologies. In respect to libraries, this means both training around basic internet skills, and introduction innovative uses of the internet and other technology. This includes the recently completed Citizen's Archivist Project, but also could potentially include a social network site designed specifically for Kenyan libraries. It could further include an appropriate on-line resource database, one created specifically based on the needs of these communities. These can be developed at the national level; however, they need to be based very specifically in the cross-cutting needs of Kenyan communities.

Clearly, taking advantage of technological opportunities will be for naught if the librarians themselves don't understand how to use or advance the technologies. A training program will have these considerations at its core- not solely in introducing the capacity, but also in training the librarians to first understand how to use the technologies and second to think creatively about programming both at the local level, and at the national level in conjunction with partner libraries.

<u>Program</u>
We would like to work with all five of the libraries in our network to create a training program which can both provide resources for managing individual libraries, and promote a network of libraries. We would like to take a participatory approach, allowing community leaders in each of our 5 sites to provide a comprehensive assessment of their needs and challenges. To create the actual program, we will tap into existing training programs in Kenya, including from the Polytechnic, relevant foreign embassies, and UNESCO.

We will use the lessons of the Citizen Archivist Project as a starting point for discussions. The training program will consist of 4-5 teaching units and one practicum. Crucially, it will require the librarians in our program to travel between sites to engage in focus group discussions. This is intended to serve three primary purposes: First, visiting other library sites itself constitutes skill enhancement, as it will showcase how other libraries are managing their libraries. Second, it will build bonds between the participants in our program, in particular through the Mama-Mtoto Story Time Practicum described below. We believe this "face time" will be critical as a first step for these libraries to begin joint programming, enhancing the internet communication that will follow. Finally, and crucially, we believe these focus group discussions between sites

will be the best way to fully understand the cross-cutting challenges faced by these libraries, as well as an excellent way to brainstorm for a "tool kit" of solutions.

Mama Mtoto Story Time Practicum
One important component to the Kitabu Kenya Training Program will be a final practicum in which all Kitabu Kenya libraries will undertake the task of initiating and implementing a library program which brings together and applies the range of skills and knowledge developed through the training. Inspired by a number of storytelling programs around the world, this program aims to teach and encourage young mothers to read to their pre-school children. The program will further take advantage of other work done by Maria's Libraries and their partner organizations, in particular the Citizen Archivist Project implemented by Smallbean. This component is critical to the success of the training network, serving the following goals:

- Fostering positive social capital between sites
- Inspire our network to engage in future collaboration.
- Troubleshoot on running national programs, both for the library sites, and for us as we develop our training manuals.

In addition to the benefits to the training network, the storytelling program has several specific goals itself:

- Expose young pre-school children to story telling (with all of the longer term cognitive and social advantages this is believed to foster)
- Help develop the literacy skills of young mothers
- Promote the culture of reading
- Include young mothers and pre-school children into the life of the community library
- Expose and raise the awareness of the different cultures and environments in Kenya
- Disseminate local folklore

The Mama-Mtoto Story Telling Program would have the following components:

- In each site 10-15 young mothers would be selected to participate in the 6 month program
- Every two weeks participants would meet at the library to be introduced to a new children's book, bought where possible from our network of local publishers
- Librarians would facilitate an exploration of the new book (reading out loud, discussing strategies on how to engage children with the story, with the pictures, how to answer children's questions, etc.)
- Mothers would each take this new book home and be expected to read it to their children as many times as they can over the next two weeks.
- Participants meet again and discuss their experience with the book and learn a new book
- Throughout the course of the 6 months, mothers will have worked with 6 different story books. All 6 story books will be theirs to keep at home in their own personal library.
- In the last month of the program, the librarians will use a book that is produced from the Citizen Archivist Project, which 4 of the 5 libraries in this network participated in.

- In addition, the trained Citizen Archivist will work with each group of Mothers from the different localities to choose their favorite local (oral) children's story and we will work with them and with local publishers to publish this story in a storybook format. This storybook will be disseminated to each of the Mothers in the different sites.
- Librarians from one library will shift to another to facilitate the presentation of the book which comes from their community. This way they can teach the young Mothers about life in these communities and point out things in the stories which might otherwise go unnoticed.

Timeline and description of activities

Literature review of existing resources	Dec- Jan 2010-2011
Meeting in Nairobi	Jan 2011
Needs assessment in each site	Feb-March 2011
Program development	March- May 2011
Training program for librarians	May- October 2011
Mama-Mtoto Story Time Practicum	July- October 2011
Publication of local stories	December 2011

Administrative support

Coordination between sites will be organized by Maria's Libraries and Africa Soma. To develop the program, it is anticipated that two full time staff will be required. One of these staff should be trained in librarianship and one should have a sound knowledge of how to operate in a rural Kenyan setting. These staff could be recruited either locally or internationally.

Expected outputs
- Resource handbook on existing manuals for training in resource poor settings
- Resource handbook for several different training modules and one practicum specifically oriented to resource-poor settings in Kenya and other African countries. Topics will be defined based on discussions at the sites, but current topics under discussion include:
  - General Library Management
  - Libraries for Early Childhood Development
  - General ICT/ ICT for Library Management
  - ICT for library programming
  - Local Fundraising for libraries
  - Language preservation
  - Working with other libraries
  - Libraries as public spaces: bringing in civil society for democracy and cultural exchange
  - Practicum on programming: Mama-Mtoto Story Time Practicum

- Library Training program in Kenya, run through Africa Soma and Maria's Libraries, hopefully in conjunction with the Polytechnic and several foreign embassies. The program will include each of the modules listed above, and will result in a certificate of participation. The training will be free for all participants. It is recognized that this training will not suffice for qualifying participants to work in a Kenya National Library Service library; however, it will be marketed as a skills-supplement to those librarians, as

well as its primary intended function of providing training to non-KNLS community librarians.