**LEADER AND ORGANIZATION INFORMATION**

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**NEW GRANT PROPOSAL GLOBAL GIVING.**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

* Statement of need:

**Safe Spaces needs to expand its digital library and to create a solution to the constant disruptions it experiences due to power outages.**

In Nairobi slums girls lack basic education. Poverty, violence, systemic exclusion and the burden of household responsibilities put girls at risk. Reading isn’t part of the slum’s culture and knowledge of the world is limited. Their environment and lack of knowledge limit girls’ life options resulting in forced marriages, prostitution, early pregnancies, HIV/AIDs and exploitation.

Safe Spaces (SS) is building a generation of women to become self-reliant through education and to become change leaders in their community.

 In 2020 Safe Spaces created a Library. Cisco Nairobi had chosen Safe Spaces as its local program of choice for an unprecedented two years. Cisco recommended Safe Spaces to Mars Wrigley for a grant and Safe Spaces was able to use this grant to buy 30 computers, software and Worldreader content to start the library.

**Education Lifeline**

The library proved to be an education lifeline in the Mathare slum. In 2020 Nairobi schools were locked down due to the pandemic. Schools were told to do remote learning. However, children in the slum had no electricity, much less computers to follow their courses or do homework. Safe Spaces teamed up with schools by putting school curricula on their computers and working with teachers to create a Covid Safe environment where the teachers and the librarian could guide students. The library allowed approximately 800 students in 2020 to continue to follow their studies and not fall behind. Safe Spaces allowed boys access as well as girls. Since 2020 use of the library has grown to about 1500 girls.

**Safe Spaces Digital Library Reading Club**

In 2022 Safe Spaces applied for a grant from FAWCO to start “Each One; Teach One” Girls Reading Club. The Reading Club seeks to broaden worldviews through reading and build girls’ leadership skills to be “pioneers” spreading a culture of reading in the slums.

Our reading club is not just about books; it's about cultivating the seeds of knowledge, curiosity, and empowerment in the hearts and minds of these young girls. It's a place where their imaginations take flight, where they can dive into stories that transport them to new worlds and introduce them to characters who inspire and empower.

Through the Safe Spaces Reading Club, these girls embark on exciting literary journeys, exploring tales of courage, friendship, and dreams. In a setting designed to be nurturing and supportive, they have the opportunity to read, discuss, and share their thoughts on books that speak to their unique experiences and aspirations.

This club is a sanctuary where their voices are not just heard but celebrated. It's a place where they can embrace the joys of reading and learning, helping them become not just proficient readers but confident, articulate, and empowered young individuals.

**Reading Club Activities:** The Reading Club, a vital component of our library program, remains a pivotal platform for empowering the young girls of Mathare. In 2022, each Saturday, approximately 90 girls gathered in distinct age groups of 20 (5-10yrs), 20(11-16yrs), and 20 above 16 yrs. This grouping is essential to tailor our activities to their specific developmental needs and provide an environment where they can engage with age-appropriate literature. Younger girls explore colorful picture books, while teenagers delve into more complex themes and narratives. This approach ensures that every girl benefits optimally from the program, fostering a deep connection to reading and learning. In 2023, by opening up a space where the 90 Reading Club girls could engage with their peers for presentations and discussions, the Reading Club has been able to welcome a total of 350 girls, many of whom would like to become Reading Club members. Additionally, we strengthened our Reading Club program by adding five more schools, bringing the total to 15 participating schools where we have trained 2 teachers (per school).

**Guest Speaker Sessions:** One of the remarkable features of the Safe Spaces Reading Club is the engagement of inspiring guest speakers. Throughout 2023, we had the privilege of hosting guest speakers once a month. These remarkable individuals shared their wisdom and experiences with our girls, focusing on topics that resonated with the community. Topics ranged from "Overcoming Challenges in Mathare" to "The Power of Education in Breaking Barriers." These sessions were also hosted at our Safe Spaces Library.

**Outcomes:** These interactions resulted in an increased sense of empowerment and motivation among the girls. They were exposed to diverse life stories that reflect the struggles and triumphs within Mathare. The speakers not only expanded their horizons but also instilled the belief that they can overcome adversities and reach their full potential, irrespective of their circumstances. It's a spark of hope, vital for young individuals growing up in a challenging environment.

**Reading Club Ripple Effects:**

The Reading Club is having a ripple effect in the community. It has planted the seeds of a Reading Culture in Mathare.

**Girls Becoming Mentors:** In 2022, 25 girls embraced leadership roles and became mentors - guiding and supporting their peers, encouraging and promoting reading within the community. In 2023, another 25 girls became mentors.

**Teacher Training:** In 2022 Safe Spaces commitment to empowering educators was realized through the training of 20 teachers; 2 from 10 different schools. The Librarian taught them computer research skills, enhancing their ability to support and engage their students effectively.

**Challenges that this project will address**

Demand for the library is exceeding capacity. Two major challenges that the digital library and the Reading club face are:

1. **Inadequate Resources**: *This proposal is requesting 20 additional computers, associated software and funding for the Reading Club to accommodate 150 club members.* We do not have enough computers in our library to accommodate all the girls simultaneously, leading to divided sessions or turning girls away. In addition to allowing some of the 350 girls who have shown interest in becoming Reading Club members, the additional computers will enable more children to participate in computer literacy training, schoolwork and homework support and other library activities.
2. **Disruptions due to Kenya’s rolling power outages**: *This proposal is asking for the funding to install a solar system on the building* so that the library can continue to operate during the frequent and unannounced power disruptions. Approximately two days a week Kenya Power and Lighting Company applies power rationing that shuts off power for hours, sometimes days. This disrupts all the digital Library activities
* Goals of the project/program or goals associated with funds request
	1. **Enhanced Access to Educational Resources:** Safe Spaces equipped with offline and online reading materials on 20 new computers with software, fostering a conducive environment for learning.
	2. **Academic Performance Improvement:** Implement the Each One Teach One project to support 150 girls as Reading Club members, aiming for enhanced reading skills and a significant boost in academic performance.
	3. **Boosting Self-Esteem:** Conduct monthly sessions with guest facilitators, focusing on building confidence and boldness in 150 girl Reading Club members, contributing to improved self-esteem both at school and in their daily lives.
	4. **Cultivating Leadership Skills:** Implement leadership development activities within the project, encouraging girls to translate knowledge gained in the reading club into actionable steps towards their ambitions, fostering a drive for success. This part of succession planning strategy - to build the next generation of Safe Spaces leaders for when the current ones retire.
	5. **Sustainable Power Supply:** Establish solar-powered facilities, providing a reliable and sustainable source of electricity to support ongoing educational activities and enhance the learning environment.
* Description of target population and how they benefit from this project/program

The primary beneficiaries of this project/program are the girls in Mathare, ranging from the age of 5 to 25 years, living in the challenging conditions of informal settlements. This demographic is characterized by high levels of poverty, limited access to education, and a lack of opportunities for personal and professional growth. The following comprehensive description sheds light on this target population and elucidates how they benefit from the project/program:

* + **Age-Related Vulnerability:** 5–19-year-old girls living in poverty in informal settlements makes this demographic particularly vulnerable.: Over 60% face difficulties in completing primary and secondary education due to financial constraints, creating a cycle of limited opportunities.
	+ **Educational Barriers**: Insufficient access to educational resources, overcrowded schools, and financial constraints. Lack of ideal study environments and materials, prompting a dropout rate; thus, this program aims to alleviate these challenges by providing scholarships and establishing libraries/resource centers.
	+ **Transformational Education**: Offer scholarships for primary and secondary education. Breaking the cycle of poverty by providing access to quality learning environments, enabling the girls to acquire essential knowledge and skills
	+ **Community Impact:** The benefits extend beyond the individual, influencing families and fostering positive change within the Mathare community.
	+ **Self-Reliance and Empowerment:** Provide tools, knowledge, and opportunities for self-reliance and success. Empowering girls through education, skills, and sports, nurturing a generation of change-makers poised to transform their lives and the future of Mathare.
* Description of any partners involved in the project/program
	+ Safe Spaces Organization collaborates with a range of partners to ensure the success of our initiatives and maximize their impact. These partnerships are instrumental in delivering comprehensive support and resources to the girls in Mathare, enhancing the quality and reach of our programs. The key partners involved in our project/program include:
	+ **Go Solar Ltd:** Go Solar Ltd, a trusted leader in the Kenyan solar industry since 2003, has delivered over 3000 successful residential installations. They will help reading club project in providing with off-grid solution to supplement our grid solution from Kenya power.
	+ **Guests:** Our key guest speakers are people with valuable knowledge and expanded worldviews. These remarkable individuals shared their wisdom and experiences with our girls, focusing on topics that resonated with the community.
	+ **Local Schools:** We work closely with local primary and secondary schools in Mathare to facilitate educational scholarships and support girls in their academic journey. These schools play a pivotal role in the implementation of our scholarship program.
	+ **Local Community Leaders and Elders:** We collaborate with community leaders and elders who provide valuable guidance, support, and resources. Their involvement is crucial in building trust within the community and ensuring our programs are well-received.
	+ **Government Authorities**: We maintain a cooperative relationship with local government authorities, which is crucial for the success and sustainability of our programs. This collaboration facilitates resource allocation and support for our initiatives
* Description of how you will evaluate the project/program. How will you measure impact?
	+ Safe Spaces Organization is committed to ensuring the success and impact of our project/program through a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to measurement and evaluation. We will employ the following key indicators and methods to assess the effectiveness of our initiatives:
	+ **Educational Attainment:** We will measure success by tracking the educational attainment of the girls who benefit from our scholarships. The number of girls completing primary and secondary education will serve as a clear indicator of our impact.
	+ **Academic Performance:** Success will also be measured by the academic performance of scholarship recipients. We will monitor their grades and academic progress to gauge the program's influence on their educational outcomes.
	+ **Community Transformation:** We will assess the broader impact of our programs by monitoring changes within the Mathare community. Reductions in child labor, early marriages, and other social ills, as well as increased engagement in positive community activities, will indicate the success of our initiatives.
	+ **Self-Reliance and Empowerment:** The self-reliance and empowerment of the girls will be evaluated through their ability to make informed decisions, contribute to their families' well-being, and pursue further education or careers.
	+ **Partnership Engagement:** The active engagement and support of our partners will be another measure of our success. Their continued commitment and collaboration signal the effectiveness of our organization and initiatives.

**PROJECT BUDGET**

**Project Expenses:**

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