



Matibi Nook Project

Annual Report March 2022 - February 2023

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1. Program

1.1 Situation

The Nook is located in a remote area, with high political influence surrounding the community which has embraced the nook concept and in full support of it hence there is still need to sensitise the community. The location of the nook makes it very hard for the team members to procure the tools and materials needed for the projects and that delays timelines as it takes 3-5 weeks for proper acquisition of materials. Due to a lack of accommodation facilities or rented houses in the community, learners from far places could not shift near the Nook Hub and it still is a challenge for most of them to dedicate more time to their projects as they carry the burden of finding money so that they can pay for accommodation at the nearby shops.

1.2 Course of the Program

The report seeks to give details of the period under review from March 2022 to March 2023. The period under review started with Project DEFY visit and nook initialization. Project DEFY visited Matibi Nook Hub for the set up phase and also to officially start the 1st cycle. According to Project DEFY, the visit was meant to last 3 months, however, the team only managed to be on the ground for approximately 1 month. This made the process to be rushed and turned out to be overwhelming. It was discovered after they had left that some of the processes they have in place are not applicable in our context, for example learners going out to look for quotations for their projects. In our context there are no nearby shops where they can get the necessary materials.

As part of the program, the nook has gone through 2 goal cycles, 2 exhibitions and also one Psychosocial Support Training Camp.

All the above was done through a process of

- Recruiting learners and introduction of the nook concept
- Conducting a 10 days projects (Early Projects) for learners
- Conducting a 21 day exploration phase where learners are to explore and familiarise themselves in various learning fields.
- Going through the process of Goal Setting and Design week before they commence their goal cycle
- Paired in small groups to work on their projects (3-4 months)
- Showcasing and exhibiting their projects to various relevant stakeholders and community members.

1.3 Target Group

In the period under review we registered 62 learners, 31 who completed their goal cycle and project exhibition. Some of the learners at Matibi Nook Hub end up dropping out because of pressure to earn some income and the space not offering any quick remedies to earn money. We witness a high number of female representation comprising young girls and young mothers compared to the male counterpart who would drop out and migrate to neighbouring countries in search for a better living condition for their families.

We could not reach our target due to the misconception of the concept by community, the community expected hands out for them to partake in nook activities which hindered the organisation to reach out to its target, it is in our best interest working with traditional leaders in the community and other stakeholders in sensitising the community about the nook concept.

In the same period a total of 231 indirect beneficiaries were reached out to, the indirect beneficiaries comprises of parents, caregivers, family members of the learners, community at large, local business community, local schools, local NGOs and stakeholders who benefited through activities and services offered at nook such as printing services, free internet services for research, educational purposes and holding online meeting, usage of solar power to charge phones, school laptops and other electrical gadgets, baking services, live screening of various sporting activities, repair and maintenance of computers and phones.

1.4 Stakeholders and Network

In the period under review, the nook has had networks with NGOs working in the ward, local businesses and relevant Government departments. The networks enabled learners to take part in community trainings and projects ranging from basic business management, internal saving and lending scheme, peace conflict and resolutions in the family, sporting activities which are being offered by stakeholders such Mwenezi Development Training Center, MUSASA, Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Development, Smallholders Irrigation Revitalization Programme under AGRITEX Department.

The organisation has been working hand in hand with the local business community within the district who have been acting as learning sources for learners as they were offering technical advice in support of the projects which are being done by learners. In both the two exhibition conducted in the period under review, we have different organisations that offered opportunities to further showcase learners projects such as Android Quiz Game which is in local language, Leather Products, Detergents makings and Sisal Products on condition that the projects are ready for market and they have been in constant communication and offering advice on the relevant markets to target for the finished products.

Business community in Masvingo in the baking and confectionery industry managed to identify learners whom there are willing to take for internship, all the above network partner we have gained will assist the nook and the learners to develop further the concept in contextualising as this will go a long way in producing results which will be visible in the community through the learners who will be conducting their businesses. Discussions are still underway to forge solid partnership with some of the stakeholders mentioned above.



1.5 Opportunities and Risks

The local business community and organisations are in support of the program. This has been seen through various meeting held in the community with other advocating for contextualising of the concept and willing to support and mobilise learners from different wards to partake in the process which will see the program expanding to District or Provincial level as it is a kind of its own in the province and will go a long way in improving lives of underprivileged children, youths and community members who can not afford to pay vocational or tertiary college. There is a high opportunity for the organisation to create partnership with other stakeholders who are interested in various learning areas such as horticulture, cooking and baking, welding and solar powered related projects.

There is a risk of local business and stakeholders who are well established and have financial muscle of copying or stealing learner's projects before they are ready for market. The unstable current inflation that hit the country has seen pricing of goods and services having unstable prices and affecting some of our budget lines. There is an overuse tendency from the political side as some players such as the ruling party youth league members and Members of Parliament who wanted to use the Nook and pushing for an agenda which is not in line with what the organisation is trying to develop within the community hence the need to keep sensitising all the stakeholders on our main motive and what the nook concept is all about.

1.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation process of the nook has been done through Project Defy. Setup report and Narrative impact reports have been done with detailed information, Data collection tools provided by Project

Defy have been in use on collecting learners project progress, performance patterns and progression analysis of each individual learner. During each cycle there were internal reviews conducted to assess learners' projects schedule, quality of their projects, community feedback on learners' projects and lessons learned. Learners profiling and success stories have been documented and captured during the period under review in form of text, audio and video as a way to analyse the data collected which will help the organisation and its partners to further develop the concept in a way that will have more impact to the beneficiaries and the community at large.

All the mentioned above tools used to monitor the progress of the nook has helped the organisation and its partners and local stakeholders in realising that the concept which is being implemented on the ground should be contextualised to suit the community we are operating from. Hence using a comprehensive approach in fulfilling the goal of offering a space where beneficiaries can explore their ideas, learn new skills while using local available resources and using innovative ways in creating employment and be able to rise above the donor syndrome which has affected the community where the project is being implemented from.



2. Impact

2.1 Achieved Goals / Outcomes

Achieved Goals / Outcomes reached thus far
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners able to undertake various projects in the safe space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are familiar with using information technology and tools in making different things or solving their own problems. Learners adhere to nook centre guidelines and rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are stimulated to do projects. Learners familiarised with self-design learning concepts. Learners identify their project interest. Learners acquire different skills which benefit them. Learners develop a habit of innovation and thinking outside the box.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners able to produce quality products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners selling their products and getting an income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of 2 goal cycles

- Learners acquire different skills

Learners at Matibi Nook Hub have gone through various projects. This is done through the various stages they go through (early projects, exploration). Apart from the projects they partook in during these stages, the learners pursued their own goals. For example, one learner is now manufacturing detergents to community members and institutions like Matibi Mission Hospital, Mwenezi District Council, and other local stakeholders have started placing orders to try and test the quality of the product.



- Learners are able to produce quality products which are ready for market.

Considering the fact that the majority of the population want an income before anything, the nook adapted by trying by all means to have people make sellable products. This came to pass as some of the projects done included tanning and making leather products. These learners made a variety of products e.g. belts, customised wallets, waist bags which attracted a number of stakeholders who are willing to take the learners for internship and possible startup fund upon completion.



- Learners develop a habit of innovation and thinking outside the box

The Nook environment encourages the learners to explore, think outside the box and be innovative. In particular, one learner was doing a project of manufacturing braid using natural fibre, in this case Sisal. However, the fibres couldn't get soft enough to combine with one's natural hair. This learner ended up thinking of another plan to make designer bags using these fibres while she figures out what to do. One of these bags was purchased by the Director of AGRITEX which is an extension of The Ministries, Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, Climate and Rural Development.



2.2 Adaptations and Innovations

During the course of the reporting period, it was seen that the nook concept didn't fit the rural Zimbabwe context. What people needed more than skills was an income. This led to a slight change in the original DEFY nook concept. The project has thus shifted from only providing a self learning space, to more of an innovation/production hub where people not only learn, but make sellable products and establish businesses for themselves.

Due to the location of the nook and difficulty to acquire materials, a goal cycle was changed from 4 months to 6 months in order to acquire materials in time without disturbing the timeline of activities. Apart from this, we realised that a handful of the learners had personal issues which needed the intervention of PsychoSocial Support Officers. 9 learners and 3 stakeholders were taken through training through our PSS training camp in collaboration with SwiZimAid Trust, which took place in August 2022. Upon return, various activities have commenced including but not limited to Brother To Brother/ Sister To Sister discussion forums, kids corner, and also sporting activities.

2.3 Lessons Learnt

Due to the unstable pricing system and high inflation in Zimbabwe, we have learnt that our budget should be reviewed every half year as this will assist us to have smooth flow in implementing projects and also avoid exhausting other budget lines.

Over the period of time since the nook opened its doors to the community we have seen a high number of girls and young mother's participating compared to the young boys and men which we have seen more female activist in the area praising and lobbying for more activities to be done even outside of the ward through the Nook.

Through the community outreach, sensitization meetings conducted and also projects which have been completed and exhibited at the nook, we are now slowly witnessing a positive mindset change towards the Nook in the community on how people understand the concept and all its benefits. With the assistance of various NGOs and local stakeholders who frequently visit the nook and conduct trainings and workshops in the community, they are able to discuss Nook activities and its benefits at various platforms.

Young mothers who are Nook learners used to find it hard to bring their kids to the nook. After a few months since the nook opened, we created a children's corner whereby someone could attend to their children while they are doing their projects without disturbing their attention. Nook fellows and keyholders take turns in engaging with the children doing things like nappy change, feeding and playing with them. The community is now motivated with such activities and we are seeing more young mothers coming forth to even leave their kids at the center even during weekends so they are able to do casual work and fend for the families.

The Matibi Nook Hub is still growing in terms of physical structures to be put in place. Over the year we have learnt that if we are to have external contractors there has to be a proper tender and bidding process that will allow constant monitoring of contractors who would have been awarded tenders to work at the center. This will reduce mistakes, misuse of the raw material and improve the quality of work and usage of quality materials that will last long.

2.4 Outlook into 2023-2024

In the coming year, the Nook is expecting to commence and create more business opportunities, collaborations with relevant stakeholders, creating structures for the organisation. Below is how the process will be:

- Prototyping rural businesses by experimenting with:
 - Printing Services
 - Baking and Cooking - Food Caravan
 - Building community gardens (solar installation, drip irrigation installation)
- community sensitization through meetings and awareness campaigns
- basic entrepreneurial training to learners for businesses to be officially founded in year 3 of the program
- creating structures within FFM and involve learners e.g. Accounting team, procurement team, human resources team
- Open a leisure center at the space with various activities e.g. live screening of various sporting activities on weekends, snooker/pool
- Offering team building and Leadership training for schools, companies, churches, organisations etc.
- Engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders at district, provincial and national level



3. Implementing Organisation

3.1 Major Changes, Challenges and/or Opportunities

In the period under review, the organisation has had a major shift in staffing, this was seen as the Coordinator of the organisation leaving and the Nook Hub Manager was appointed to replace him and also being the new FFM Manager. The Innovation Lead and students on internship were assigned to different departments to work in. With the organisation growing, we are in the process of engaging an external bookkeeper.

The Nook came and showed us that challenges are just a way for us to learn new ways of solving problems. Below are some of the challenges we faced:

- As the Nook is located in a remote area, it is very hard for the learners and team members to get the materials needed for the projects and that delays timelines.
- As most of the villages are isolated and have dispersed housing, many learners have to walk more than 15 km daily just to come to the Nook Hub. Lack of transportation worsened the situation hence we are still in the process of making plans for building a nook hostel.
- Due to a lack of accommodation facilities or rented houses in the community, learners from far places could not shift near the Nook Hub and it still is a challenge for most of them to dedicate more time to their projects.
- Transportation of tools and material for the nook has been a major challenge as it costs much to do errands for the nook due to unavailability of a project vehicle.
- Some of the learners have to carry the burden of finding money so that they can pay for accommodation at the nearby shops
- Some of the learners at Matibi Nook Hub end up dropping out because of pressure to earn some income and the space not offering any quick remedies to earn money.

Few learners had opportunities to start income generating business through the projects which were made in the first and second goal cycle. The opportunities came through the exhibition process which was conducted with some getting opportunities to get internship in Masvingo and Harare hence the need for them to provide

self accommodation and bus fare becomes a challenge as they do not have relatives in big cities who can accommodate them at no cost.

3.2 Capacity Building and Organisational Development

Nook fellows participated in a conference themed Consortium Of Regenerative Educators organised by DEFY team members in June 2022 where they invited all the team members and partners working on the Nook Project around the globe to discuss the way ahead and collectively design the future of learning and education through a grassroots movement. Putting the needs of local communities first, the conference helped the organisation in implementing and contextualising the concept in a rural setup. During the conference, there were different discussion forums which allowed participants to share and exchange our experiences and views on the concept which we are working on.

During the span of the period under review, Project DEFY organised virtual training and workshops to capacitate nook fellows on different set of skills that will assist in implementing the project in our different locations.

Friends For Matibi together with SwizAid Trust implemented the Psychosocial support training camp to empower and equip camp counsellors to provide Psychosocial support (PSS) to other learners covering all essential elements of positive human development that include emotional, social, mental, physical and spiritual needs. The trained pool of volunteers will work as camp counsellors in the Psychosocial support (PSS) life skills training camps as well as run PSS programs in the areas where the two organisations are operating from. Out of the 35 participants 12 were drawn from Matibi Nook Hub.

