

Nook Project

Annual Report March 2023 – March 2024

01.03.2024





Reporting Organisation	Friends For Matibi Association
Implementing Organisation	Friends for Matibi Trust
Primary Contact for LBF	Oliver Muller
Program Coordinator	Sheldon S. Siziba

Time Span Program	01.03.2023 – 30.03.2026
Reporting Period	01.03.2023 – 01.03.2024
Country / Region / Area	Zimbabwe, Masvingo, Matibi

Planned Total Program Amount (03.2023-03.2026)	\$330.000.00
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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 is in full support of it hence there is still need to sensitise the community. The community which the project is being implemented at has a high number of people migrating to neighbouring countries for survival, a high number of young girls underage getting pregnant and getting married, and a high number of unemployed youths who are misusing drugs. All this has been caused by the country's situation which has not been stable for a long time, with the just held election things have not changed much as we saw huge number of people migrating to different countries and even worse for the people within the community we are working in who survive on farming but we have seen very low rainfalls which is now causing lots of drought and less support coming from various NGOs and government sectors and this worsens the situation. The current inflation rate is at 47.6% as of February 2024 with the government recently increasing VAT on most commodities prices have gone up but it did not affect our initial budget as we did manage to save up some funds for the coming year.

The organisation finally managed to import a vehicle, which now lessened the burden of acquiring tools and materials, attending meetings and monitoring all other projects implemented by the organisation. This also helped us to save some funds as we are now able to do all our things without hiring out transport services which was one of the setbacks on our budget in the past few years of the project. As part of reaching the 10% of funds raised from the nook we are working towards engaging other stakeholders in the district who are facing transport issues like we used to be and the vehicle will start generating funds that will assist at the nook from time to time. However, lack of accommodation in the community still hinders learners from far places to take part in the activities of the nook. Those with facilities available for renting often take advantage and hike charges for rentals which in turn forces learners to spend more time looking for rental fees and thus affecting their projects.

1.2 Course of the Program

The report seeks to give details of the period under review from March 2023 to March 2024. In the period under review the nook successfully completed the following

- 2 goal cycle
- 1 exhibition
- 2 external exhibitions (visitation of relevant institute)
- 1 exchange program (visitation of another nook)
- 2 Psychosocial Support Life skills Community Training Camp
- 9 Stakeholder Sensitisation meetings
- 7 Community Sensitisation meetings
- 146 learners registered*
- 4 business management trainings
- 4 ISAL (internal savings and lending scheme) trainings
- Conducted impact assessment
- Training of camp leaders

**In the month of nov-dec there was a high number of primary school leavers who had just completed their primary level exams and were not going to school anymore. They came and took part in the nook activities, exploring different skills*



and areas of interest. Most of them have gone back to school, now we are working with those that have finished their secondary level studies. However, some of the primary school level do come to the nook on weekends to work on their projects.

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
- Engagement of local stakeholder, community leadership and all the relevant authorities

1.3 Target Group

In the period under review we registered 178 (male 70 - female 74) learners for the 3rd and 4th cycle. 18 learners fully completed their 3rd goal cycle and the 4th cycle exhibition is yet to be done. We witnessed a high number of female representation comprising young girls and young mothers compared to the male counterpart.

In the same period a total of 480 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 the 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. We could not reach our target of 30 learners who were supposed to complete the goal cycle due to lack of accommodation as most learners travel long distances and some come from surrounding wards which requires them to have accommodation close by. The program has attracted the attention of more people from outside the area we are implementing in.

1.4 Stakeholders and Network

In the period under review the nook has had networks with local NGOs working in the ward, local businesses and relevant Government departments. Such networks resulted in learners being undertaken through the business management training and Internal Saving and lending scheme training by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development. The training was a four-part program they completed in the 4th Goal Cycle. This collaboration will go a long way as it will have more impact in the community we are working in developing business skills within the community of Matibi.

The relationship with Mwenezi Rural District Council which is the local authority has proven to be bearing fruits as they are offering Nook learners an opportunity to get easy access to land which they call workspace at an affordable price after they have finished their projects. With such an opportunity this has proven that the nook concept is slowly being accepted in high offices and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rural District Council and District Development Coordinator which has been on the table for a long time was signed at the beginning of the year. This has shown how the organisation is now being recognised within the district.

The Mwenezi business community has continued to support the learners through purchasing of products that are being manufactured at the Nook such as various household detergents, various baked goodies, welding services, printing services and meat.



1.5 Opportunities and Risks

The local business community and organisations are in support of the program. This has been seen through various meetings held in the community, with others advocating for contextualization of the concept and willing to support and mobilise learners from different wards to partake. This will potentially expand the program to District or Provincial level as it is a kind of its own and will go a long way in improving lives of underprivileged children, youths and community members who can't afford to pay vocational or tertiary college.

The learners participated at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair which is one of the main exhibitions in the country. During that period they managed to get an invitation to tour one of the biggest manufacturing companies of cooking oil, bath and washing soap. With this invitation, discussions are still underway as they promised to take learners for internship and further support them after finishing. Also this will assist the nook as they are willing to come and assess how best we can have collaboration not only at the nook but in the community especially in the organic gardens. The Mwenzezi Rural District Council offered learners an opportunity to acquire small working spaces at a very low price as this will give them exposure to expand on their skills.

There is an opportunity to introduce and implement permaculture practices to revive the community since there are no more grazing lands, there is less water and food. Initial work could be done at the nook so that it serves as a model for the community. This also brings another opportunity of offering butchery services providing healthy happy grown meat from pigs and chickens at the nook among other things.

There is a risk of local businesses and stakeholders who are well established and have financial muscle of copying or stealing learner's projects/ideas before they are ready for market as the organisation is in the process of opening a company that will manage and protect products that are being produced by the learners. There are red flags on the political side as some players want to take ownership of the nook project/nook building and push a political agenda which is not in line with what the organisation is trying to develop in the community hence the need to keep sensitising all the stakeholders on our main motive of self designing learning and skills development which will create source of income for most of the community members.

1.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation process of the nook is being done through Project Defy and an external evaluation team. Data collection tools provided by Project Defy are 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 learner's projects schedule, quality of their projects, community feedback on projects and lessons learnt. Learner's profiling and success story has 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.

With the nook concept evolving each day, a lot of work is being put into making sure the concept fits within the community and produces results which are satisfactory. The Defy team and the nook fellows are having fortnight meetings in developing the project further. Those meetings also assist the nook fellows to learn a lot from the pool of other nook fellows worldwide. External evaluation process is underway and the findings will be shared after the process has been completed



2. Impact

2.1 Achieved Goals / Outcomes

Achieved Goals / Outcomes reached thus far
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are familiarised with self-design learning concepts Learners identify their project's interest Learners acquire different skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are able to produce quality and sellable products Learner start income generating projects (rearing pigs and breeding chickens)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Psychosocial Support (PSS) life skills camp held at Matibi nook hub
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition from local authority, business community, local NGOs through external exhibitions

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 and Mwenezi District Council, and other local stakeholders have started placing orders to try and test the quality of the product. Additionally, the nook has started offering specific skills which will guarantee that the learners will have an income (Solar installation training, drip kit installation, etc) through other projects being done by the organisation (Sustainable livelihood, health and education).

- Community PSS life skills camp held at Matibi nook hub

With the help of learners who were trained to conduct Psychosocial support in 2022, SwiZimAid Trust and United Children of Africa (UNICA) Matibi nook hub hosted its 2nd community camp. A total of 98 youths from within and around the community attended the 4-day-camp. During the course of the camp, various sessions were conducted ranging from training on business management and Internal Saving and Lending Scheme (ISALS) which was facilitated by the Department of Women Affairs to Self-Awareness, Sexual Reproductive Health Education (SRHE), Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Peer Pressure and team building activities. The experiential learning concept was being used to implement the camp. The main goal of the camp was to further enhance the capacity of youth to be able to cope with challenges they are facing within the community using different psychosocial support tools. Due to budget constraints and inadequate facilities, the camp was limited to 4 days. These camps gave an opportunity to camp leaders to fully share their experience in programing and facilitating the camp which motivated other campers to join our team of camp counsellors.



2.2 Adaptations and Innovations

During the period under review, it was taken into consideration that besides the skills, people need a way to make some money while still learning. With that in mind, all the learners were taken through training in several skills (solar installation, drip installation, dew ponds, borehole installation, beehives) which are in line with the other projects being implemented by FFM. Through this, the learners were able to get an income after successfully installing solar powered borehole pumps and tanks along with their stands.

Additionally, this will also improve the community's economic situation since the money will now be circulated and kept within the community. The learners, through the assistance from agritex officers, are now keeping broiler chicken to sell as chicken cuts. This initiative came through a few learners who came together and decided to start the chicken project and it is now complementing the feeding program for the learners whenever they slaughter. In addition, pigs are also now being kept at the nook and slowly getting into permaculture practices. So far, 2 ponds have been constructed at the nook to hold and store water.

To date, all the solar stands, water tank stands and signboards have been made and are waiting to be installed under our Sustainable Livelihoods pillar. Making use of the welding skills they have acquired at the nook in the last 6-8 months they are managing to make strong and reliable solar and water tank stands.

The community is accepting the idea of a leisure centre which has been created. In the past months we have seen a high number of children, youths and even older people coming together to access the space and watch the European soccer league which is a major attraction within the football fans around.

2.3 Lessons Learnt

1. **Price changes** - Due to the unstable pricing system and high inflation in Zimbabwe we have learnt that our budget should be reviewed every half year. During the end of the year we managed to purchase a vehicle for the project a Toyota Hiace Van at low the price we had budgeted and saved \$13 500.00 hence we are planning to have another vehicle in the following year that is way more compatible with terrain and also better equipped to cover all the organisational needs.
2. **Mindset Change** - Through the community outreach meetings conducted and also through projects which have been done at the nook we are now witnessing a change in the community on how people understand the nook concept and all its benefits.
3. **Team Efficiency** - Nook fellows and swiss team working hand in hand with the Project Defy team have shown great teamwork and this has made it easy for the team on the ground to work smoothly and in a coordinated manner.
4. **Motivation** - Community members are now being motivated to join the nook by the projects which they see being done by other learners.
5. **Gender disparity** - Over the period of time since the nook opened its doors to the community we have seen a high number of girls, young mothers, and older women participating compared to the young boys and men.

2.4 Outlook into 2024

The Nook is expecting to further improve and create more business opportunities, collaborations with relevant stakeholders, and creating structures for the organisation. Below is how the process will be:

- Implementation and improvement of rural businesses
 - Baking and food caravan
 - Building community gardens



- Butchery

- Community sensitization through meetings and awareness campaigns
- Construction of Learner's hostel
- Opening a company that will manage and market learners projects until they can start their own companies.
- Basic entrepreneurial training to learners for businesses to be officially founded in year 3 of the program.
- Creating structures within FFM and involving learners e.g. Accounting team, fundraising team, procurement team, human resources team as we are in the process of recruiting within the community and strengthening of relationship with the community.
- Open a leisure centre at the space with various activities e.g. live screening of various sporting activities on weekends, volleyball/snooker/pool as this will give the community an opportunity to be part of the activities happening at the nook.
- expanding team building and leadership training for schools, companies, churches, organisations etc. this will act part of the income generating program that will support the nook in the near future.
- Engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders at district, provincial and national level as to get more opportunities which are being availed by various stakeholders countrywide.
- Establishment of permaculture practices at the nook and community level eventually.



3. Implementing Organisation

3.1 Major Changes, Challenges and/or Opportunities

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:

- Lack of learner's accommodation is still a major challenge as people from far places are much interested in taking part in the program. Due to lack of accommodation, we have seen a number of learners stopping to come to the nook as house owners nearby are now taking advantage and charging more than what the learners can afford to pay, resulting in some learners being forced to drop out.
- Prior to the elections, ward 3 and neighbouring ward 2 were combined into one ward. This increases our geographical area of operations. This brings in more people to know and take advantage of the nook and what it offers. Our work as an organisation is being expanded to other places we were not operating in before.
- The Zimbabwe government closed registering and making amends of all community trust organisations and private voluntary organisations documents. This has affected the organisation in formalising some collaboration with relevant government departments, local NGOs and other community business sectors as it was in the process of changing its paperwork. Such laws passed do have a long-lasting impact to the community we are implementing in as it will make some political individuals in high places to take advantage of the organisations and require bribery to process organisation's documents.
- Learners who took part in the 3rd exhibition were given an opportunity to apply for small work spaces from the Mwenezi Rural District Council at a low charge as to expand their skills and start manufacturing their products in place. That will give them more exposure and they will be able to make money. The Mwenezi Rural District Council emphasised that the organisation has to formalise the relationship with local authority. This will give more opportunities to the learners and the nook project will get more support from other government departments such as the Ministry of youth sports arts and recreational, ministry of women affairs, gender and development who are in the process of offering financial support to upcoming small to medium entrepreneurial persons.
- 2 Learners who have been at the nook since the inception of the project are now part of the staff team as a way of integrating the community and also looking at the future of the organisation as we expand.

3.2 Capacity Building and Organisational Development

As the organisation is growing and developing its structures it has engaged the services of an external Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team and a bookkeeping expert that is based in Zimbabwe with the assistance of the Switzerland team. Both are expected to be working hand in hand with the current staff at Matibi nook hub. This move was taken as a step to make sure the organisation's structures in Zimbabwe are in place and also strengthen the relationship with the community as we will be hiring local community members with necessary skills needed. To date monitoring and evaluation of all the activities is underway and the findings will be included in the next report.

As the organisation is slowly growing and developing, we have taken the initiative of inviting nook learners to come and learn on how to handle office and field work duties such as procurement, bookkeeping, human resource, field work and other duties with a motive of hiring them in the long term. 2 learners from Matibi nook hub have joined FFM as part of staff. This enhances the capacity of having staff from the local community who are fully aware and understand the organisation's mission. This also boosts the confidence of the



learners and of the community as this will also see the continuity of the programs which are being implemented.

The Matibi nook hub implemented its 2nd Psychosocial support skills camp program which empower, equip and provide Psychosocial support (PSS) to learners and the community at large, covering all essential elements of positive human development that include emotional, social, mental, physical and spiritual needs. The expected outcome of this program is to have a holistic approach to learning that is imparted to help in coping and developing of each and every learner.

4. Further Information and Attachments

Link to pictures and videos

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oCn3XjOLtmjaWjpWdFHrxRbLMPtrAyMa>